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Academic dishonesty and plagiarism have become hot issues in newspapers and academia. However, there are few studies of how leading journals are handling these issues. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to analyze the current situation and policies concerning academic dishonesty, plagiarism and paper retractions in academia in general, and business and economics disciplines in particular. Four databases, Ebsco Business Source Premier, Emerald, JSTOR and ScienceDirect, have been examined. This survey shows that while some science journals, e.g. medical journals, are very active in retracting papers due to the dishonesty and plagiarism, business and economics journals are not. The survey also displays that some journals have already published explicit policies regarding academic honesty; within the business field, however, only two established and one emerging journal discuss such policies. Given the extent of the problem, it seems important that more journals openly confront the situation, elaborate and publish explicit policies how to reduce the future occurrence of academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

Keywords Plagiarism, Academic Dishonesty, Retraction, Retracted, Journal Plagiarism Policy.

1. Introduction

Being an editor of the Journal of Applied Economics and Business Research (JAEBR), one of this paper’s authors was promoting this journal during the gala dinner of R&D Management Conference in Grenoble, in May 2012. One senior researcher asked if we had had any problems with plagiarism, and a young researcher from Germany colleague commented “Come on, who will plagiarize?” The sad answer was that plagiarism is a real issue also for this very new journal. The journal sometimes receives a full paper already published by someone else, where the submitter simply changes the author(s) name; in other cases an author changes the title of his or her previously published paper and submits it. Another

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example is when a writer consciously copies portions of published articles and passes it on as his/her own work.

Recently plagiarism and manipulation have become major issues also in academic journals. Some prestigious journals have even been forced to publicly retract papers of well-known researchers. Research Policy, for example, recently retracted Ulrich Lichtenthaler’s papers, “The role of corporate technology strategy and patent portfolios in low-medium- and high-technology firms” (Lichtenthaler, 2009a) and “Determinants of proactive and reactive technology licensing: A contingency perspective,” (Lichtenthaler, 2010).

The aim of this paper is to analyze current academic discussions on dishonesty and plagiarism in business and economics disciplines, document retraced papers in these disciplines and discuss journal policies to combat this problem. The paper is structured as follows: 1) after presenting the data sources for this contribution, the paper will deal with definitions of academic dishonesty, and relevant research, and 2), the reaction against plagiarism and dishonesty in the academic world in general, and business and economics journals in particular.

2. Literature review
2.1. What is plagiarism and academic dishonesty?

There are several definitions of academic dishonesty in the literature (Tibbetts, 1999; McCabe and Bowers, 1994). This paper uses the following definition by Lambert, Hogan and Barton (2003): academic dishonesty is the “fraudulent action or attempt by a writer or writers to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work” (Lambert et al., 2003). Several forms of academic dishonesty such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, duplication, least publishable units, and neglecting support (Akbulut, Şendağ, Birinci, Kılıçer, Şahin and Odabaş, 2008) are defined in the literature. There are different definitions of these kinds of academic dishonesty. Some of those definitions include the following:

- “Fabrication is the use of invented, counterfeited, altered or forged information or data” (Akbulut et. al. 2008),
- “Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record” (Pimple, 2002).
- “Duplication is misrepresents the work as original and a contribution to the literature” (Broome, 2004).
- “Least publishable units are slicing the results of a study to publish in several places in a way that deteriorates the integrity of the study” (Akbulut et al., 2008).
- “Neglecting support is defined as not mentioning the research has scientific fund or is supported by funds” (TÜBİTAK, 2012).

In this list “duplication” can be seen as a synonym for plagiarism. As seen, plagiarism is only one form of academic dishonesty. Specific definitions of plagiarism are found both in dictionaries and scientific publications. The Free Dictionary (2012) defines plagiarism as “the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit”. Scholars define plagiarism in a similar vein; however, some extend the definition, adding that “plagiarism involves intentionality” (Fialkoff, 1993; Honig and Bedi,
2012). While many scholars use this definition, several papers have added *self-plagiarism* in their discussions, editorial forewords (Chalmers, 2009; Dellavalle, Banks and Ellis, 2007; Smith, 2007) or empirical studies (i.e. Honig and Bedi, 2012). In this paper both plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be examined.

### 2.2. Studies and discussion on plagiarism and academic dishonesty

Recently, the number of theoretical and empirical studies on academic dishonesty has soared (Honig and Bedi, 2012), and can be found in all academic disciplines such as medical studies (i.e. Anderson and Steneck, 2011), engineering studies (i.e. Osman, Salim, Binwahlan, Alteeb, and Abuobieda, 2012) and social science research (i.e. Pecorari, 2003). However, many of these studies focus on dishonest behavior among students (Arhin and Jones, 2009; Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, and Cauffman, 2002; Küçüktepe, 2011; Şendağ, Duran, and Fraser, 2012). The frequency of articles on plagiarism among academic professionals has also increased in mainstream news media lately (Arenson and Gootman, 2008; Gill, 2006; Goodman, 2011; Karasz, 2012; Kimmelman, 2011). While some of these articles dissect previous researchers who have become politicians, such as Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, Minister of Defence in Germany (Kimmelman, 2011), Pal Schmitt, The president of Hungary (Karasz, 2012), and Viktor F. Yanukovich, Ukraine’s President (Goodman, 2011), others focus on professors and other academic researchers (Arenson, 2002; Arenson and Gootman, 2008). There is now a considerable number of empirical studies on plagiarism and dishonesty among academicians and researchers in general (see Bartlett, 2005; Clarke, 2006; Collberg and Kobourov, 2005; Enders and Hoover, 2006; Gill, 2006; Honig and Bedi, 2012; Hubbard and Vetter, 1996; Lacetera, and Zirulia, 2011).

Studies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty in the fields of economics and business have also increased recently and can be categorized into two groups. The first group focuses on plagiarism behavior among authors. Honig and Bedi (2012), for example, analyze papers submitted to the Academy of Management conference, and found that almost 1 of 4 papers contain some degree of plagiarism. The second group attempts to understand how journals are dealing with this issue. Enders and Hoover (2004) surveyed editors of economic journals about the nature of plagiarism and their strategies related to plagiarism. Overall, these and many additional studies demonstrate that plagiarism can be found in all academic arenas.

### 3. Method

To analyze the occurrence of and reaction against academic dishonesty and plagiarism, this paper builds on recent news reports, a review of the extensive existing literature on the subject, and current retractions reported in online scientific databases. For the academic discussion, the following sources are used: Business Source Premier, Emerald, ScienceDirect and JSTOR databases which include leading business and economics journals. “Plagiarism”, “Academic Dishonesty”, “Retraction Notice”, “Retracted Paper”, “Statement of Retraction”, “Retraction Letter”, “Plagiarism Policy”, “Academic Dishonesty Policy”, “Originality Policy” are used as key words for the search. The last search of those databases was conducted on 20 October 2012. Each identified contribution (paper, etc.) was counted one by one and double counts were eliminated. Furthermore, articles with “retraction” as a term in their titles were also omitted.

This research has its limitations. One concerns the exact number of economics and business journals currently published. The Business Source Complete states that it covers “nearly 2,000 peer-reviewed journals” (Ebsco Business Source Premier, 2012b). JSTOR
(2012b) announces that it contains 1144 business and management journals. ScienceDirect Publisher Elsevier declares that it includes more that 200 business and economics journals (ScienceDirect. 2012b). Being aware of the stated journal numbers, it can be said that this paper is based on sources covering over 2000 management and economics journals. There are some other databases which contain economics and business journals but these databases are not included here.. The key words used in this study constitute another possible limitation, since some journals might use term to state the same act. The authors are grateful for any additional information suggested by readers.

4. Analysis and Discussion: Reaction against plagiarism and academic dishonesty in the academic world

How does the academic community react when confronted with plagiarized published or unpublished papers and researchers who plagiarize or misconduct? In some publicly reported cases, the consequences for the misbehaving individual have been severe. One such case is illustrated by Danton (2002), Misconduct: The Stars Who Fell to Earth, published in Nature, who focuses on plagiarism behavior and actions of one specific researcher. Later the same journal published a note announcing that this scientist had been fired from Bell Labs (Service, 2002). Another example at this end of the continuum of professional sanctions is Milena Penkowa at the University of Copenhagen who after an investigation of her publications by an international panel resigned from her work (Investigation into the research of Milena Penkowa, 2012). These actions could most probably be seen as extremes, however.

In other cases, journals have publicly retracted plagiarized or manipulated papers. But there are no available information regarding the future career of the involved authors – the consequences (in any) for their current positions, promotions, research funding, evaluations in research assessment exercises, etc.

Unfortunately there is no single database which shows the list of retracted papers. However, two entrepreneurial scientists launched a specific web page, http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com in 2010 (Retraction Watch, 2012), where they try to list all publicly retracted papers. In order to track retractions at specific journals, this and several other databases have been searched and analyzed for this paper.

The numbers of retracted papers vary from database to database. A search using the key word “retracted paper” in the ScienceDirect database shows that over 700 papers have been retracted from scientific journals, mostly from medical journals between December 1985 and November 2012. The first retracted paper in the database is “Increasing the response rate to cytotoxic chemotherapy by endocrine means” in 1985 (Journal of Steroid Biochemistry, 1985). Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications is one of the leading retractor journals with 23 articles (search day: 29 September, 2012). As for management, the ScienceDirect database indicates that only a few journals have retracted published papers. One of them is Research Policy which retracted two papers of Lichtenthaler published in 2010 and 2009 (Lichtenthaler, 2010; Lichtenthaler, 2009a) and one paper of Gottinger, published in 1993 (Gottinger, 1993; Research Policy, 2007). A similar search on “retracted paper” in the EBSCO Business Source Premier database identified more than 20 papers with a retraction notice in management and business journals, whereas a search in the Emerald database uncovered 7 retraction notices from different management journals such as Journal of Business Strategy, Management Decision and Journal of Services Marketing. Academic business journals tend to behave inconsistently in relation to plagiarism and manipulation across papers, however. In the Lichtenthaler case, Research Policy in its Retraction note
mentioned other journals’ papers (Research Policy, 2012). Following this note, Organization Science (Lichtenthaler, Erns and Hoegl, 2010) and Strategic Organization Journals (Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2009a) also retracted the involved papers. However neither Journal of R&D Management (Lichtenthaler 2009b) nor Journal of Production Innovation Management (Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2009b) retracted their mentioned papers.

Table 1  List of Retracted Papers at Business Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pub. Year</th>
<th>Ret. Year</th>
<th>Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lichtenthaler U, Ernst H.</td>
<td>Technology licensing strategies: the interaction of process and content characteristics</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Nov 2012</td>
<td>Strategic Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lichtenthaler U. &amp; Ernst H.</td>
<td>Integrated knowledge exploitation: The complementarity of product development and technology licensing</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Nov 2012</td>
<td>Strategic Management Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lichtenthaler, U.</td>
<td>The role of corporate technology strategy and patent portfolios in low-, medium- and high-technology firms</td>
<td>Apr 2009</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>Research Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lichtenthaler, U.</td>
<td>Determinants of proactive and reactive technology licensing: A contingency perspective</td>
<td>Feb 2010</td>
<td>Jne 2012</td>
<td>Research Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Balan, S.; Vrat, P. &amp; Kumar, P.</td>
<td>Information distortion in a supply chain and its mitigation using soft computing approach</td>
<td>Apr 2009</td>
<td>Aug 2012</td>
<td>Omega</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To assess the number of retractions in economics journals, several searches were also conducted in databases such as Business Source Premier, Emerald, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect. The JSTOR database contains more than 170 economics journals. The search results in this database identified only one paper retracted in 2007 (Gerking and Morgon 2007). Although the title is Retraction note, the note states correction in the paper and the paper is still in the database, Gerking and Morgon (2007).

Apart from this paper, there was no other ‘Retraction Notice’, ‘Retracted Paper Notice’, ‘Retraction Letter’ or ‘Statement of Retraction’ listed in any of the journals in this study.
database. Another database, Emerald, did not show any retractions of economic papers. Search in ScienceDirect resulted in 5 retracted papers. A summary of all identified retracted economics papers is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 List of Retracted Papers at Economic Journals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pub Year</th>
<th>Ret Year</th>
<th>Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hahn S.</td>
<td>The convergence of fictitious play in games with strategic complementarities</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>Economics Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nofsinger J. R.</td>
<td>Social mood: The stock market and political cycles</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Jun 2009</td>
<td>J. of Socio-Economics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ebsco Business Source Premier (2012a), Emerald (2012), JSTOR (2012a) and ScienceDirect (2012a)

*The articles are ordered according to their retraction years.

The scarcity of retractions in economic journals pose some interesting questions, such as “Are economics in general more academically honest than for example medical researchers?”, “Do these journals have more effective and explicit policies in place to stop plagiarized or manipulated papers to enter the publication gate?”, “Do leading journals have any open-plagiarism or academic dishonesty policy?” or “What do they do when they encountered an academically misconduct or plagiarized submission?”. To answer these questions, the key words “Plagiarism Policy”, “Academic Dishonesty Policy”, “Originality Policy” were used in searches of EBSCO, Emerald, JSTOR and ScienceDirect.

The EBSCO database which includes leading management journals such as Academy of Management Review, Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Management Studies and Strategic Management Journal revealed that only the Academy of Management Journal has published a specific policy for plagiarism and screening (From the editors, 2012). JSTOR contains leading economics journals such as Econometrica, The American Economic Review, Journal of Political Economy, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Econometric Theory etc. No plagiarism or academic dishonesty policy was published in any of the economics journals covered by this database. A search in Emerald resulted in a similar lack of published policies in business and economics journals. The same key words were used to search ScienceDirect. This search only identified one established management journal with an explicit discussion of academic dishonesty and plagiarism (Martin, 2007: “Keeping plagiarism at bay - A salutary tale”, Research Policy). It might not be wrong to state that only two established business journals, Research Policy and Academy of Management Journal, have specific policy for now. Recently one emerging journal, Journal of Applied Economics and Business Research, registered in Econlit, published its Academic Dishonesty and Originality Policy.

Summarizing the different searches, it seems safe to say that leading management and economics journals either do not have explicit plagiarism and academic dishonesty policies,
and/or they do not screen submitted papers for plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Accordingly, it could be asked if there is no problem of plagiarism among leading economists or business journals, or if they have no rigorous process in place to check the originality of submitted papers? Moreover, apart from a few publicized cases, the consequences of exposed misbehavior are unknown and above we have also noted the highly inconsistent response in academic journals in a highly publicized case.

5. Summary

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the current situation and discussions concerning academic dishonesty, plagiarism and paper retraction in academia in general, and business and economics disciplines in particular. The analysis shows that management journals rarely retract papers, and economics journals do it at an even lower rate. Although there are many indicators of academic dishonesty and plagiarism among academicians and researchers in general, the leading business and economics journals’ response to academic dishonesty and plagiarism has been slow.

We as stakeholders of the economic and business disciplines are keenly waiting for the leading economics and management journals to clearly and explicitly present their policies and processes regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and their record of keeping dishonest submissions at bay – if they keep any such records. Action and explicit policies from the “academic rating agencies” such as ISI/Web of Knowledge would also be warmly welcome.

Acknowledgement

The author is grateful to De Martin, DzamilaBienkowska, Unal Ay and two additional reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions to the earlier version of this paper.

References


