impact-factor publications; (3) to find out what strategies faculty use in order to increase the likelihood of publishing in impact-factor journals; and (4) to reveal the perceptions of faculty members about the effectiveness of the impact-factor publication requirement in raising the research capacity of individual university faculty.

With respect to the first research question, half of the respondents reported that in their universities the impact-factor publication requirement had been incorporated into salary schedules. Specifically, publishing articles in impact-factor journals was said to be directly related to salary increases. About 18% of the respondents mentioned that impact-factor publications are directly linked to promotion in their universities. About 7% of the participants mentioned that inability to produce impact-factor publications can lead to having one's contract terminated.

Speaking of the second research question, we found that one of the main barriers preventing faculty from publishing in journals with an impact factor is lack of access to research funding. This barrier was acknowledged more often by researchers in social sciences and humanities, which are not considered to be areas of strategic importance by the government. Other barriers include lack of access to research facilities and equipment, lack of sufficient methodological training and skills to be able to contribute to international scholarship, as well as lack of access to research software and library databases, lack of time to conduct research due to high teaching and administrative load, insufficient command of the English language or lack of resources to purchase access to editing and translation services.

Regarding the third research question, we found that faculty use a variety of strategies to succeed in publishing in journals with an impact factor. The most important one focuses on improving one's proficiency in English. Many faculty also try to familiarize themselves with the most significant theories and frameworks, as well as with methodological approaches and tools used in the international research community by conducting extensive literature reviews or attending specialized methodological trainings and workshops, including online courses. In addition to that, faculty members try to learn more about the process of preparing publications by attending seminars on publishing in Western journals or by seeking advice from their colleagues from the West during international conferences. Others try to establish long term collaboration with internationally recognized researches. Over 50% of the researchers used specialized editing and translation services to improve the quality of English in their articles.

While the majority of the respondents indicated that they never plagiarize, and it seems evident that most of them take true and honest efforts to publish abroad, a small number of faculty do resort to questionable practices, such as paying for publication or paying other people to produce publishable articles, as well as using junior researchers as co-authors to increase the likelihood of publication.

Positive effects of the policy indicated by the respondents include: (1) increase in the extent of collaboration and international partnership among university faculty; (2) creation of incentives for research and development; (3) improvement in research training at graduate level. However, the policy also has produced some secondary negative effects. The respondents claimed that the new requirement had stimulated brain drain from universities and made academic career less attractive for university graduates. The policy also stimulated interest in the development of English language skills among researchers.

Our study concludes that the introduction of the impact-factor publication requirement has produced some positive effects on the development of individual research capacity in Kazakhstani universities. However, this measure alone is not sufficient in terms of increasing research output and quality. Faculty need to have access to proper research facilities, equipment, libraries, and financial resources. Most importantly, they need to have at least some time free from teaching and administrative responsibilities to be able to conduct serious scholarly inquiry.

References

Kuzhabekova, A. (in press a). The Development of University Research in Kazakhstan during 1991-2013: a Bibliometric View. In Silova, I. and Niyozov, S. (Eds.) Globalization on the Margins: Education and Post-socialist Transformations in Central Asia (2nd ed.).

Kuzhabekova, A. (in press b). Impact factor publication requirement in Kazakhstan as a tool for building university research capacity: Analyzing the experiences of faculty. In Saveleva, T. and Fang, G. (Eds.) Sustainable tertiary education in Asian and Eurasian contexts: Listening to voices of academics.

Can Efforts to Raise Publication Productivity in Russia Cause a Decline of International Academic Periodicals?

Mikhail Sokolov

Professor, European University at Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation
msokolov@eu.spb.ru

My argument in this piece is simple. The attempts to use publication indicators as a measure of academic performance are to a considerable degree to blame for the miserable state of Russian scholarly periodicals. The recent turn to international publications as an alternative measure was largely a gesture of despair on the part of academic administrators — an attempt to transfer the evaluation function, which Russian journals were unable to perform properly, to presumably more reliable international editions. The problem arising at this point is that such turn puts the latter under the same pressure, which has previously corrupted the former. One can wonder if similar process of decay may be repeated now on a global scale.

Academic publications perform two functions. They serve as vehicles for communicating ideas and as filters signaling which ideas are worth communicating. In the latter sense, they also signal of individuals who have valuable ideas. Too intensive use of the system of academic periodicals for fulfilling the signaling function, however, may lead to the loss of its ability to perform both of them. To increase the chances of seeing their name in print, individual scholars might do more research — and this is the reaction usually hoped for by administrators. Regretfully, this is not the only consequence stimulation of publication productivity can bring. Most obviously, it creates an overload: everybody is trying to publish as much as possible, reducing the content to the minimal publishable unit and, if circumstances permit, autoplagiarizing. This lowers average quality of publications, at the same time greatly increasing their quantity, and thus inhibits navigation through the literature. What is even worse, it creates a general feeling that as far as publications are concerned, "anything goes." [1] What may be equally damaging, it incentivizes collusion between authors and editors, with editors trading publication space for some kind of benefits.

Ties with journals may be sought after for apparently benign reasons, which, however, can also lead to deterioration of the journal system as a whole. With one's career prospects and a significant share of one's income depending on publications, one is interested in making his or hers path into print as smooth and predictable as possible. On a brighter side, that may result in an optimal match between journals and authors with authors submitting their texts to the journals which are most likely to accept them. In an ideal case, this matching helps maintain thematic profiles of journals and create a hierarchy of quality. However, there are dangers too. Put under publication pressure, authors prefer journals which can guarantee that their texts will be published in time. This preference is clearly incompatible with the very idea of blind or double-blind peer-review, which is by its nature a highly unpredictable process.

Pressure to publish makes the costs of the matching process based on blind peer review enormous. Tactics to cut down these costs include, first of all, practices of soliciting papers when editors go searching for suitable texts. For authors, an invitation means a guarantee that their text will be accepted. For the scholarly community, though, the fact that editors' taste, rather than advice from anonymous reviewers, stands behind the distribution of publication space creates the risks of dependency on idiosyncratic whims of powerful individuals who may be also tempted to use their position to strengthen their own patronage networks.

The history of the Russian academia provides a few examples of the consequences that might follow. Russia can arguably be considered the country where quantitative performance indicators based on academic publications were invented. University professors were obliged to publish a piece every year as early as the 1830s, and the members of the Petrine Academy of Sciences faced such a requirement even earlier. In the early XIX century those occupying certain positions were either obliged to produce a certain number of publications (a predecessor of the "efficient contracts" of our days) or paid bonuses for each on a piecemeal basis. The practice continued through most of late imperial and Soviet history. Performance requirements themselves survived in the laissez-faire atmosphere of the 1990s: anyone holding an academic job was to produce a certain number of publications — but control over their implementation was nearly abandoned. In many universities that meant that the requirements and recommendations of the Ministry were simply ignored but most reacted more cautiously. Instead of challenging the Moscow authorities, universities demonstrated compliance by starting series of periodicals called "Proceeding of university X" (Vestnik universiteta) subsidized from the institutional budget and publishing the university's faculty only. Such periodicals never reached any of the distribution networks. It was common to regard such editions as maintained solely for the benefit of the faculty of respective institutions. Outsiders, if they wanted to submit an article, were either rejected or requested to pay a sizable fee. In addition to such institutional journals, some periodicals were printed by commercial publishers ready to accept anything for a charge. At least 90% of all allegedly academic periodicals existing in the first half of the 2000s belonged to one of these two categories. Along with them, a handful of mostly Moscow-based periodicals with wider readership existed. They were ruled by autocratic editors and often published predominantly members of their close circle — an inevitable result of the practice of soliciting papers.

Partly as a recognition of the inability of Russian journals to play the role of gatekeepers putting the seal of research quality, the Ministry of Science and Education turned to international science as a source of unbiased judgment. There were even rumors of making international publications a necessary condition for obtaining a degree (policy which was implemented in Kazakhstan some time ago). Obviously, the government's attempts to internationalize Russian science had many reasons, of which the desire to get Russian universities into international rankings was probably the most important. But the Ministry demonstrated preference for foreign experts before the positions in rankings were adopted as the central success indicator. The reason given by senior officials behind the scenes was that the Ministry wanted to capitalize on the continuing isolation of post-soviet science. While collusion was likely within the country, few cliques had international connections and could collude with foreigners.

A common reaction on the part of academics was to search for connections with international editors and other academic power brokers. Those who were regarded as accessible and potentially helpful were courted, and their readiness to pay back with positive evaluations for whatever benefits they received tested. In the most infamous episode occurring so far, international scholars visiting one of Russian university cities were notified that their travel and accommodation would be paid for if they would promise to evaluate the host university favorably during the next reputation survey. Overall, the most visible reaction to ministerial attempts to internationalize Russian science manifested itself in attempts by academics to export the practice of collusion outside of Russia.

Was the prospect of world-wide export of practices characteristic of Russian scholarship realistic? There is some good news and some bad news. The good news is that Russian academics are too few and not resourceful enough to make a difference globally. Colluding requires providing something in return for compromising academic integrity — and here Russians simply do not have much to offer to more than a handful of academic tourists agreeing to patronize them. As far as publications are concerned, there are a few documented cases of establishing partnerships with editors of important journals that resulted in emergence of various thematic issues which allowed to bypass the more unpredictable regular submission, but this cannot be considered a big impact on the system of periodicals in general. Unless Russian academic market becomes significantly more important globally, it is hardly a major threat to international academic virtue. The bad news is that scholars all over the world experience similar pressure, and while Russia may have a dubious honor of being the first to suffer the consequences, it will probably not remain the only one.

References

[1] We are not discussing here other costs of publication pressure, such as alleged loss of originality as a result of desire to make a paper a hundred-to-one stake.

Under Pressure: Transformation of Academic Work and Discoursein a Globally-Oriented Russian University: Case of National Research University Higher School of Economics

Ivan Gruzdev
Director,
Center for Institutional Research,
National Research University
Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation
igruzdev@hse.ru

Roman Abramov
Associate professor,
Faculty of Social Sciences, Sociology Department,
National Research University
Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation
rabramov@hse.ru

Evgeniy Terentev
Leading Analyst,
Center for Institutional Research,
National Research University
Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation
eterentev@hse.ru

Pressure pushing down on me,
Pressing down on you, no man asked for [1]

The Russian government has recently launched a national academic excellence project that aims to enable a handful of leading universities to take positions in top-100 of the global rankings by the year 2020 (The 5-100 Project). Fifteen and, later on, six more universities selected to participate in the program have already received or have a chance to receive extra funding and are expected to perform better in the global education market. Having more resources, these institutions have realized the necessity to strengthen their teaching and research functions with a special stress on the latter. Institutional consequences of this academic excellence initiative are widely discussed but what happens to academics within these institutions? The most straightforward aftermath for the faculty at participating universities is higher pressure to publish and, moreover, to publish internationally. Thus, the motto "publish or perish" that has been working the academics' nerves for years already is nowadays more then relevant in Russia's leading universities. Basing on the data of the annual faculty survey conducted at Higher School of Economics and the analysis of public debates reflected in the media and on Facebook, we make an attempt to reveal the changes that are happening to HSE faculty under pressure to publish.

Generally, the academic world has reacted to this pressure with the discourse of alarmism, which is characterized by sentiments predicting the decline or even immediate death of the academic life. The fact that a large proportion of faculty share and represent such views in public discussions is not entirely new but alarmist discourse is getting more and more robust. Publishing issues are an essential part of this discourse. There are at least three typical complaints voiced by faculty. First is that academics are expected to show high productivity in compressed times frames, although "good scholarship requires time" [2] and the term "productivity" itself is inappropriate for traditional university life. In a certain sense, it sounds like a slightly naive call for professional autonomy to stand against the invasion of managerialism in academia. Then follow complaints against the spread of bibliometric indicators as measures of scientific outcomes. The relevance of international citation databases is questioned. The ways bibliometry is employed