

## Publication, Dissemination and research Integrity: An Educational Scenario by the EnTIRE project

### Background

A postdoctoral researcher specializing in experimental research at the intersection of technology and education has recently taken up a position at a government think-tank. He is part of a six-man team conducting research into the effects of Virtual Learning Environments on the educational experiences of young children. The new project is coordinated by a professor in social science and public policy employed by the University of Advershire.

The postdoctoral researcher has developed an adversarial relationship with the professor. Other team members have heard the professor refer to the postdoc as 'disrespectful' on several occasions. However, the professor recognizes that the postdoc, in collaboration with one of the other team members, has done a great job in analyzing the data for the study using a particularly novel statistical method. As a result, the professor

asks the postdoc to submit the manuscript (M1) on behalf of the six-man team to the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* with the postdoc as lead author and the professor as last author. The postdoctoral researcher submits M1 in early May.

### Issue 1

*The Journal of Virtual Education and Development* is an extremely popular, high-impact education journal with a reputation for taking longer than most other journals to review manuscripts. As a result, the professor asks the postdoctoral researcher to submit the same manuscript to the tech-focused *Journal of Tech and Mech*, which is known to have a much shorter turnaround period for reviews. The professor suggests that they could withdraw the manuscript from the redundant journal once it has been accepted by the other journal

## 1. Questions for Researchers

If you are a researcher working as part of a research team or in collaboration with other scholars, you may find it useful to attempt to answer the following questions. There is no single fixed way of answering the questions though you may find it useful to refer to the suggested resources provided at the bottom of this page, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and/or your own institution's code of ethics or research integrity guidelines.

You may also find it particularly helpful to discuss and answer these questions in a group context.

1. Faced with the professor's request to make a dual submission of the manuscript, what should the postdoctoral researcher do?
2. By referring to the four principles of good research practice detailed in The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, what could be the reasons for not submitting the manuscript to a second journal, despite the fact that the latter has a different target audience?

## Issue 2

The postdoctoral researcher decides not to submit M1 to the *Journal of Tech and Mech* as he thinks that by making a dual submission he may be found to have violated research

integrity standards. Concerned that his failure to follow through with the professor's request will be seen as disrespectful, the postdoc does not inform the professor about his decision.

## 2. Questions for Researchers

- 1) Is the decision not to inform the project coordinator the best course of action? What are the reasons for your answer?

### Issue 3

The professor learns that the postdoc has not submitted M1 to the *Journal of Tech and Mech*. Subsequently, the professor submits another manuscript (M2), employing a different method to analyze the same data set, to the *Journal of Tech and Mech*. The professor lists themselves as leading author. The author list includes all team members except the postdoctoral researcher. All team members apart from the postdoc are aware that the postdoc has not been included on the author list. The manuscript is submitted in early June. The *Journal of Tech and Mech* accepts and publishes M2 in late June.

Whilst reviewing M1 for the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* in early July, an anonymous reviewer comes across M2 published in the *Journal of Tech and Mech*. Noting the similarities between the two manuscripts, the reviewer informs the Editor in Chief (EiC) of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development*. The EiC suspends the review process and informs the postdoctoral researcher, who is the lead author of, and point of contact for, M1.

The postdoctoral researcher compares M1 with M2. He notes that he has not been included on the author list for M2. He also observes that there is no clear, visible reference to M1 in M2. To the postdoc, it appears as if there is extensive overlap between M1 and M2. M2 incorporates the same experimental design, is written according to the same structure and includes some recycled texts with only superficial differences. However, M2 employs a different method for analyzing the same data. Nevertheless, the conclusions reached in M2 are the same as those in M1. The postdoc also notes that M2 was submitted to the *Journal of Tech and Mech* some four weeks after he had submitted M1 to the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development*.

The postdoctoral researcher submits a formal complaint against the professor to the Research Integrity Office (RIO) of the University of Advershire. The RIO undertakes an initial investigation that confirms the postdoctoral researcher's findings above.

### 3a. Questions for Research Ethics Committees and Research Integrity Offices

If you are a member of RIO or REC, you may find it useful to attempt to answer the following questions. There is no single fixed way of answering the questions though you may find it useful to refer to the suggested resources provided at the bottom of this page, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and/or your committee's guidelines and regulations.

You may also find it particularly helpful to discuss and answer these questions in a group context.

- 1) Based on the results of the initial investigation, what are the next steps for the RIO?
- 2) By referring to The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, what (if any) are the grounds for the complaint? What standards of good research practice has the project coordinator violated (if any)?
- 3) If there are grounds for a case against the professor, what additional details would the committee require in order to reach a conclusion?
- 4) Assuming you have all the necessary information relating to the complaint, what would be an appropriate verdict for your committee to come to? Why have you come to that conclusion?

### 3b. Questions for Research Administrators

If you work in an administrative capacity for a RIO or REC, you may find it useful to attempt to answer the following questions. There is no single fixed way of answering the questions though you may find it useful to refer to the suggested resources provided at the bottom of this page, the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and/or your committee's guidelines and regulations.

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- 2) By referring to The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, what (if any) are the grounds for the complaint? What standards of good research practice has the project coordinator violated (if any)?
- 3) If there are grounds for a case against the professor, what additional details would the committee require in order to reach a conclusion?

## Issue 4

The RIO informs the postdoctoral researcher of the outcome of the initial investigation. The postdoc, subsequently, contacts the EiC of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* with details of his comparative assessment of the two manuscripts. The editorial board of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* confirms the postdoc's assessment. In addition, it contacts the EiC of the *Journal of Tech and Mech* to determine whether the authors of M2 have – in the letter of submission – disclosed the fact that the manuscript

contains, in part, material located in M1. The board also asks whether the authors of M2 have signed over copyright to the *Journal of Tech and Mech*.

The EiC of the *Journal of Tech and Mech* confirms that the letter of submission does not reference any prior publication or submission. The EiC also confirms that the authors of M2 have all consented to hand over copyright to the publishers of the *Journal of Tech and Mech*.

### 4a. Questions for Researchers

There is no single fixed way of answering the questions though you may find it useful to refer to the suggested resources provided at the bottom of this page, specifically, the details provided by COPE and the ICMJE.

You may also find it particularly helpful to discuss and answer these questions in a group context.

- 1) Should the editorial board of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* continue to suspend the review of M1? What are your reasons?
- 2) If favorably reviewed, should the editorial board of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* publish M1? What are your reasons?
- 3) Should the editorial board of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* provide details of the case to the editorial board of the *Journal of Tech and Mech*? What are your reasons?

#### 4b. Questions for Research Administrators

There is no single fixed way of answering the questions though you may find it useful to refer to the suggested resources provided at the bottom of this page, specifically, the details provided by COPE and the ICMJE.

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- 2) If favorably reviewed, should the editorial board of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* publish M1? What are your reasons?
- 3) Should the editorial board of the *Journal of Virtual Education and Development* provide details of the case to the editorial board of the *Journal of Tech and Mech*? What are your reasons?
- 4) Should the article be retracted from the *Journal of Tech and Mech*? What are your reasons?



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## Suggested Resources

For Researchers:

ECCRI: [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)

COPE: [Suspected Plagiarism in a Published Manuscript](#)

COPE: [Suspected Redundant Publication in a Submitted Manuscript](#)

COPE: [What to do if you suspect a reviewer has appropriated an author's idea or data](#)

ICMJE: [Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors](#)

ICMJE: [Copyright](#)

ICMJE: [Overlapping Publications](#)

For Research Administrators:

ECCRI: [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)

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For Research Ethics Committees and Research Integrity Offices:

ECCRI: [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)

ICMJE: [Copyright](#)

ICMJE: [Overlapping Publications](#)

ICMJE: [Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors](#)

## Related Scenarios

This scenario has been inspired by the following case studies:

American Physical Society, 'Dual Submissions',

<https://www.aps.org/programs/education/ethics/publication/dual-submissions.cfm>.

Accessed 18 July 2019.

Committee on Publication Ethics ('COPE'), 'Duplicate Submission and Authorship Dispute',

<https://publicationethics.org/case/duplicate-submission-and-authorship-dispute>.

Accessed 18 July 2019.

Committee on Publication Ethics ('COPE'), 'Self-Plagiarism and Suspected Salami Publishing',

<https://publicationethics.org/case/self-plagiarism-and-suspected-salami-0>. Accessed 18

July 2019.

Elsevier, 'Multiple, Duplicate, Concurrent publication/Simultaneous submission Case study 2',

[https://www.elsevier.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/70226/casestudy\\_multiple\\_publication\\_case2.pdf](https://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/70226/casestudy_multiple_publication_case2.pdf). Accessed 18 July 2019.

Elsevier, 'Multiple Publication Case Study 1',

[https://www.elsevier.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/70225/casestudy\\_multiple\\_publication\\_case1.pdf](https://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/70225/casestudy_multiple_publication_case1.pdf). Accessed 18 July 2019.