ABOUT ME: I am a senior research analyst, having worked as Science and Technology Correspondent in London, and later as systems researcher and lecturer. I hold an MSc in IT from UKC and a PhD from University of Strathclyde (2012). My organisation ISTCS.org runs a programme on Research Ethics.

Executive Summary:

1. Doctoral research theses are routinely not cited, plagiarized and used without attribution by key UK research initiatives, events and publications

2. The plagiarised research/papers are then edited out and published and heavily promoted in the names of prominent UK academics (Generally full professors, deans and other high ranking academics), and are also used to obtain further research funding to carry out activities and to achieve goals already published in the plagiarised PhD Theses

1. UK PHD THESES

According to OECD latest data, the UK Universities generate the third largest amount of Doctoral Theses in the world [1]. The UK provides generous funding for international students and scholars:

Funding bodies support PhD students in different ways; some will pay course fees only; some will include a stipend (maintenance costs) or travel expenses while others will simply be a one-off award to ease the financial burden of further study. At PhD level full funding will tend to be awarded on academic merit, but there are also some that take into account financial background and other criteria such as gender (such as in the case of the British Federation of Women Graduates). Among the main sources of funding for UK based PhD students are seven Research Councils funding around 19,000 doctoral students in the UK. through the participating universities. Eligibility criteria and award amounts are standardised (with Research Councils UK acting as an umbrella the seven Research Councils work under), and you will find many other funded PhDs referring to research council rates when defining their own. [2,3]

2. PROBLEM

A number of related problems have been identified in the sector, that impact directly the Research Integrity and credibility of UK Universities

1. Various statistical investigations report that the vast majority of published research articles are never cited [4]
Non-citation rates vary enormously by field. “Only” 12% of medicine articles are not cited, compared to about 82% (!) for the humanities. It’s 27% for natural sciences and 32% for social sciences (cite). For everything except humanities, those numbers are far from 90% but they are still high: One third of social science articles go uncited! Ten points for academia’s critics. Before we slash humanities departments, though, remember that much of their most prestigious research is published in books. The uncited rate is also sensitive to other factors: how long a window is used to check for citations (e.g., 5 years); when the article whose cites are being counted was published (2000s or 1990s); and what counts as a citation. The uncited rates I gave as “the” rates are really five-year citation rates in all Thomson’s Web of Science journals, and that is not comprehensive. The details of whether to include self-citations, non-academic articles, and so on, also matter. Another reason for the various uncitedness rates floating around is confusion between the average citation rates of journals and citation rates of articles. Within a given journal, some articles have many citations while others have few and many have zero—citations within a given journal are skewed. The average rate of citations for a whole journal, the impact factor, is pulled up by the few articles with many citations. Focusing on the impact factor will make it seem like more articles get cited than actually do. Ironically, a Chronicle of Higher Education article bemoaning the low rate of citations under-stated its case by assuming the average citation rate for journals applied to articles [4]

2. RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

According to recent investigations [5] the following breaches of research conduct routinely take place in UK Research Institutions:

- Falsification of research
- Passing off others' work as one's own
- Data in a published paper taken from other sources without due acknowledgement

Official data points to about 30 allegations of research misconduct between 2012 and 2015. However, figures obtained by the BBC under Freedom of Information rules identified hundreds of allegations over a similar time period at 23 universities alone. Requests by the BBC under Freedom of Information rules show that at least 300 allegations were reported at 23 of the 24 research-intensive Russell Group universities between 2011 and 2016 among staff and research students. About a third of allegations of plagiarism, fabrication, piracy and misconduct were upheld. More than 30 research papers had to be retracted. Universities UK, which represents vice-chancellors of universities, was asked to comment on the data obtained by the BBC, but declined.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UK Institutions should hire intelligent and competent, reliable and honest researchers in their ranks (many of whom are unemployed) instead of promoting liars without qualifications who are not capable of producing original research of their own

2. A system should be devised to track PhD theses content and match it to research publications by the government

3. Various content analysis and online distributed technologies exist capable of identifying the provenance of research data, and analyze when and by whom the misappropriation takes place they should be adopted

4. Investigate the relationship between the two problems under consideration
   a) lack of citations and b) research misappropriation

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REFERENCES

1. OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016
   http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/sti_in_outlook-2016-en
   The fully revamped and re-titled OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook is a biennial publication that aims to inform policy makers and analysts on recent and future changes in global science, technology and innovation (STI) patterns and their potential implications.


