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**ADDRESS OF THE EDITORIAL OFFICE: THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA,
TEACHING STAFF TRAINING DEPARTMENT**

13, Al. I. Cuza Street, Craiova, Dolj, Postal code 200585, Telephone (040)251422567

Web: <https://dppd.ucv.ro/>, E - mail: dppd@central.ucv.ro

Authors are fully responsible for both content and translation of texts.

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INTRODUCTION / INTRODUCATION

The efficiency of the educational process is closely related to the pedagogical research. Specialists in different fields are concerned with knowing, interpreting, understanding and explaining the various aspects of the educational action, identifying cause-to-effect type of relationships, formulating conclusions, theories, outlining of some innovative practices.

The scientific research competences are proof of professional maturity, the high level of the theoretical and practical-methodological abilities that the teacher has developed during his / her teaching career. The responsibility of the work done and the respect for the sources consulted are two defining principles of the scientific research, and the exploitation of the results obtained following an investigative approach must reflect both a critical attitude towards information sources and a reflective, interrogatory one, in relation to the data acquired in the following documentation.

The documentation is an essential step in the designing and writing process of the scientific papers, it is necessary to define the basic concepts for understanding the main aspects of the theme chosen. The inventory progress reached by a problem at a theoretical level, but also in practice, by consulting various information sources, allows to avoid roads already traveled, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, offers the possibility of discovering new perspectives of a creative approach of the educational phenomenon, shaping some of the theoretical and praxiological directions.

The selected information, synthesized, organized following the documentation will then be interpreted and structured in a personal and constructive way.

The Annals of the University of Craiova, Psychology and Pedagogy series, edited by the Department for Teaching Staff Training, through the Center for Psychopedagogical Research (Romanian acronym CCPP), brings to your attention for no. 40 for 2019, the theme ***Scientific research: from the documentary and drafting acribia to ethics and deontology.***

How can we ensure professionalism, objectivity into the research approach? What are the requirements to be observed in the bibliographic documentation? What are the main sources of documentation and the selection criteria? What methods and tools for information and documentation does the researcher have available? How can we capitalize on the results of documentation by avoiding (self) plagiarism? What are the requirements, the rules for using and quoting the sources? What are the rules for editing a work? What criteria do we refer to in (self) evaluation research science? What are the professional standards which ensure a correct conduct of a researcher?

The answers to these questions can be provided by elaborating theoretical and practical-applicative papers to be found in the **topics** proposed for this issue:

1. Documentation - an important step in the investigative approach
2. Selection and capitalization of information and documentation sources
3. Rules / exigencies of writing a scientific paper
4. Distortions and errors in research
5. Ethical a and Standards in country research
6. Criteria for the (self) evaluation of scientific research
7. Reflexivity, objectivity, honesty - essential characteristics of a researcher
8. The voices of the scientific text: primary author, secondary, translator. Modalities of differentiation and enhancement.

The studies are organised in several sections of the journal: **Theoretical Approaches - Re-evaluations and Openings; Educational practice - new perspectives; Research Laboratory.**

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THEORETICAL APPROACHES. REVISITED AND NEW PERSPECTIVES / APPROCHES THÉORIQUES – RÉÉVALUATIONS ET OUVERTURES

ETHICAL FUNDAMENTALS IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Vali ILIE¹, Ecaterina Sarah FRĂSINEANU²

Abstract

Conducted in a complex context, the pedagogical research has the moral purpose of improving the quality of education, by capturing certain relationships between the existing variables. Professional ethics in educational research can be understood as a set of values, principles, rights and obligations of the researchers involved in this professional field. The development of ethical and conduct codes of research in the field of education is a necessity on condition that the world of science values academic integrity.

The present study is premised by the question "What are the reference points we must ethically refer to in scientific research?". Analyzing research from an ethical point of view, we designed a technological model in order to systematize the knowledge related to the existing codes of conduct and to guide the actions characteristic to educational research, thus identifying the fundamental ethical principles.

Keywords: *Research, Ethics, Deontology, Education.*

1. Introduction

If *academic ethics* refers to the moral values that are recognized and respected by the academic community, *academic integrity* implies respecting the ethical and professional principles, the standards and practices of individuals or institutions in the field of education and research. *Academic integrity* means being honest and fair about every scientific activity, all through the specific endeavor (from the formulation of the aims and the outline of the mission, to evaluations, conclusions and proposals). It includes conducting the research in an ethical manner and refraining from manufacturing and manipulating data. The growth of software products and services designed to ensure respect for the academic integrity has been significant lately.

¹Associate Professor PhD., Department of Teacher Training, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: Brainstorming71@yahoo.com, corresponding author.

²Associate Professor PhD, Department of Teacher Training, University of Craiova, Romania, e-mail address: sarah.frasineanu@yahoo.com.

From an etymological point of view, the word "integrity" comes from Latin, where it is found in the form of "integritas", meaning "whole, complete". Thus, "integrity" defines the integral character of an individual, the feeling of dignity, justice and conscientiousness, expressing the quality of being or remaining intact, of keeping their qualities unchanged. It is important to understand and value academic integrity as an expression of our beliefs about what is good and right.

Research ethics is a set of criteria and norms that guide the research activity and its full exploitation, i.e., the ways of ensuring the human interactions involved in the research. It is a specialized discipline based on the study of ethical values and norms that serve the purposes and objectives of the research. Ethics in research is especially interested in analyzing the ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in it.

It is necessary that the academic policies and practices of the community should send a clear message that data forgery, falsehood, fraud, theft and other dishonest behaviours are unacceptable. University studies and research promote the ability to work independently and in collaboration with others. As the results of evaluation must truly reflect personal learning and performance, it is important to be aware of the limitations of collaboration in certain situations. In our opinion, the values underlying the research objectives can have ethical implications on how people should be treated. Researchers operate under the auspices of several roles that may affect their judgments about what is and what is not ethical. Therefore, the provision of a quality assurance framework for the service of ethics in the field of research is highly required.

Cultures differ in the priority they attach to certain ethical principles and issues (e.g., the importance attached to individual autonomy in relation to loyalty to the group, the perception of power and authority, the ability to deal with uncertain situations). However, at the international level, there are a number of common requirements and measures, standards and principles for the ethical foundation of research, that are valid regardless of the field of knowledge and the topic or type of research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Scientific research today

The word "science" derives from the Latin word "scientia", which means "knowledge". Thus, *science* is a systematic ensemble of knowledge about nature, society and thinking. Most scientists consider that scientific inquiry is that which corresponds to the scientific method, so necessary in the progress of human knowledge. Scientific method allows researchers to independently and impartially test the pre-existing theories and previous findings and to submit them to debates, changes or improvements. Viewed retrospectively, sciences evolved from a pre-scientific, proto-scientific (pre-consensual) phase, characterized by divergent thinking, towards a stable consensus. The world of science always curves upon itself, creating new fields of thought, nurturing knowledge and offering research new problems, themes, topics to investigate. The purpose of science is to create scientific

knowledge, and the purpose of scientific research is to discover laws and theories that can explain natural or social phenomena, or, in other words, to create scientific knowledge.

The attribute *scientific* characterizes that form of knowledge that satisfies a series of methodological, general and particular requirements and criteria. Developed and put into operation by cybernetics and general systems theory, the new paradigm of scientific knowledge is far from being a cumulative process, achieved by expanding the old paradigm. Among the features of the scientific spirit there are: respect for the truth, intellectual curiosity, intellectual independence, the belief that there are stable principles of existence, critical thinking, problem solving skills (Rădulescu, 2011, pp. 26-33 – our translation).

Research is a rational approach that seeks to discover the answer to the fundamental questions that man poses in relation to the surrounding world. It is carried out in the laboratory, in the archives, on site or in the University, underlying sustained effort, individually or collectively. It can be completed by significant innovations or it can make modest contributions. But it always refers to certain ethical values and principles. The basic element of research is the search for knowledge, that is, the collection of data, information and facts, if necessary, their challenge, decanting and evaluation, in order to increase of knowledge. Research and scientific knowledge involve various options, debates and controversies. There are several types of explanations and strategies regarding the origin of scientific knowledge. Thus, we can access the following types of research strategies (Agabrian, 2004): inductive, deductive, retroductive, abductive and transductive.

The *research functions* include:

a) The descriptive-explanatory function (it determines their causes and effects, expresses the effort to find "statistical representativeness", i.e, a sufficiently large number of cases belonging to the same type that gives credibility to conclusions, it presupposes the call for an initial theory in the interpretation of data, it establishes relationships, priorities, hierarchies, etc.);

b) The praxiological function (it allows for the formulation of some improvement hypotheses in different contexts and concrete situations in order to efficiently intervene, to implement innovations);

c) The predictive function (it proposes models, solutions for carrying out a process, event, perspective act, it offers confrontation possibilities, it exercises control over the future evolution).

Because the results of the research are fed into the teaching process, and the information and experience gained in the teaching process can often lead to a contribution at the research level, it is difficult to say where the education and training activities end and where the research activities start (OECD, 2002, p. 36). Researchers are specialists who work in the design or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems and in the management of the related projects. From an organizational perspective, "the role of the researcher is that of initiating the process of change in groups and organizations" (Chelcea, 2007, p. 203).

On the other hand, we can all benefit from sharing our ideas with other researchers from a wide range of backgrounds and from all over the world. Interacting with others, sharing experiences and building common networks is a central means of learning and research (even beyond the topic itself). Those who work on their own need a certain self-awareness, a way to keep an internal monitor on their approach. In general, it is suggested that "the only constraint under which the scientist would be found, would be the one exercised by data of the controllable intersubjective experience and, possibly, by accepted theories. Kuhn argues, on the contrary, that the critical exercise in mature science will be drastically limited by the very nature of vocational education" (Flonta, 2008, p. 26 – our translation).

More recently, there has been a growing interest in ensuring ethics in research and a number of operational specifications are being made. For example, the recommendations offered by the *APA Scientific Directorate* to help researchers avoid ethical issues are the following (Smith, 2003): honestly discussing intellectual property, raising awareness of multiple roles, observing informal consent and confidentiality rules, using ethical resources.

Inquisitiveness is specific to humans in general. If, in terms of character, it is necessary to answer questions such as *Am I honest in presenting the results of the research? Do I trust the partners I collaborate with during the research?*, from the level of training point of view (that partially reaches the motivational sphere), the answer to the following questions helps us initiate, as well as to continue and complete the research.

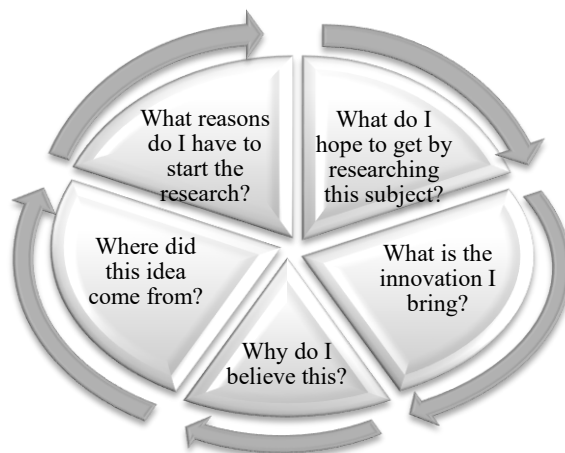


Figure no. 1. Questions needed in the investigative process

One of the topics of interest of the regional debate in Timișoara (2016) was ethics, impartiality and scientific rigor, which addressed the need to develop a culture of ethics and institutional ownership, institutional responsibility regarding academic/scientific ethics, as well as the implementation of preventive measures. The preventive measures promoted within it are (The Presidential Administration, The Department of Education and Research, 2016, p. 18 – our translation):

- The introduction of a separate chapter in the Law of Education with explicit provisions for observing scientific rigor, with sanctions and concrete measures (e.g., peer review, anti-plagiarism systems, etc.);
- The elimination of incompatibilities and inconsistencies in the doctoral legislation;
- The alignment of the codes of good practice and research ethics to the international ones;
- The establishment of an independent commission to analyze the conflict of interest of any kind;
- The building of a centralized database for PhD / Master's / Bachelor's degree/ articles in the Romanian language;
- The improvement of the software dedicated to identify cases of plagiarism, the obligation to introduce sanctions for all cases of non-compliance with good conduct in research.

From a managerial perspective and in accordance with the ethical principles, moral values and norms, academic institutions should focus on the following directions of action (Fishman, 2014, pp. 30-31):

- To develop and publish clear, accurate academic information, integrity policies, procedures and statements that can be consistently understood and implemented;
- To promote the positive aspects of academic integrity;
- To inform all community members about the standards of academic integrity so that expectations are understood as part of the community culture;
- To practice actions described in the campus policies consistently and correctly;
- To develop, explain and administer transparent systems for judging integrity violations;
- To keep up to date of current developments in technology and educational practices in order to anticipate the increased risks and to address potential problems;
- To periodically evaluate the academic effectiveness, integrity policies, procedures and practices, revise and revitalize them, if necessary.

The proactive approach to reducing academic deviations should be a team effort at the level of academic institutions. Some institutions require students to sign a contract of integrity at the beginning of each academic semester. Other institutions require students who repeat unwanted behaviour (or engage in what is considered a flagrant violation) to participate in an integrity course. This course may or may not be mentioned, at the end of the academic preparation, in the student's transcript of records. Each institution must find its own direction and develop standards that best suit its own mission and goals.

There are a number of reasons for which scientific fraud occurs: career pressure (generated by the obligation to publish periodically a certain number of studies, as results of the research conducted), the competitive environment (the fear that another colleague or group working in the field may publish faster); convenience