

CORRECT CITATION PRACTICE: AN ATTEMPT TO RANK SHADES OF GREY IN PLAGIARISM

Lex M Bouter

Abstract:

In 2012 a prominent Dutch scientist was accused of self-plagiarism. This was massively picked up by the Dutch media. A confusing debate followed about whether plagiarizing one's own work would be research misconduct. The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences responded by installing a committee – of which the author of this abstract was a member – that was asked to “clarify how issues in the transitional area between plagiarism and self-citation should be interpret and assessed.” In April 2014 the resulting Academy Advisory Memorandum appeared (<https://www.knaw.nl/en/news/publications/correct-citation-practice>).

The memorandum sketches the spectrum from correct reuse of texts, ideas and other published materials to clear instances of plagiarism. It is concluded that there are many shades of grey and it is not always easy to judge whether a specific instance should be labelled as research misconduct, as questionable research practice, or as acceptable behaviour. A taxonomy of reuse of materials without correct attribution is proposed, taking into account the harmful consequences of the behaviour at issue.

The presentation will focus on the analyses and recommendations of the memorandum and place them in the context of the specific case that prompted its production. Also the consequences for codes of conduct and education in responsible conduct of research will be discussed.

Key words: plagiarism, self-plagiarism, taxonomy, reuse of materials

Author

Lex M Bouter (lm.bouter@vu.nl), VU University Amsterdam, Welgelegen 6, 2152BH Nieuw Venneep, Netherlands