EXPLORATIONS OF RESEARCH ETHICS IN LITHUANIA: THE UP-TO-DATE FINDINGS AND FURTHER RESEARCH TRENDS

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Abstract:

Research ethics is a phenomenon which is just acquiring institutionalized forms in Lithuania. However, the process is slackening because of a lack of exhaustive explorations in the field: existent versatile perceptions of the phenomenon outgrow into endless debates about nature and sources of ethics rules, scope of their application, etc. In this work we regard research ethics as a phenomenon applicable to both normative and empirical and both fundamental and applied explorations accomplished in all fields of science, and at all stages of the study starting from the initial one, i.e. developing the study idea, to the completion, i.e. presenting and disseminating study findings. The poster is designed to present the most recent empirical findings on prevailing approaches towards research ethics and existing formal definitions of the phenomenon in Lithuania. All presented materials are based on the findings of several research projects (RP) which were funded by the Research Council of Lithuania in 2010–2015. RP Scientific research ethics in Lithuania: the status quo analysis (MTEtika) (2010–2011) – Comparative analysis of the EU and Lithuanian legal documents defining research ethics issues revealed that bounding international documents are implemented into the national legal system. However (excluding the case of biomedical research), the documents are of rather general content. – Analysis of the national legal documents outlining research ethics issues in Lithuanian science system unfolded significant improvements of research ethics supervision on the national level and, additionally, exposed gaps between legal imperatives and actual behaviour of the institutions in the realm of research ethics institutionalization. – Analysis of internal documents (i.e. ethics codes) of national science institutions (e.g. Lithuanian scientists' society) and research organizations (e.g. universities) defining research ethics showed that research ethics is presented to the communities, but in rather abstract terms. – Analysis of the interview data with representatives of ethics committees in academic institutions led to the conclusion that these bodies are rendered rather narrow functions and lack institutional power in general. Hence, the bodies are not efficient in regulating research ethics in the organizations. – Results of a web-based survey in the national academic community highlighted the main problematic aspects related to research ethics: unclear rules and responsibilities, lack of knowledge, occurring violations and not transparent sanctions, etc. Additionally, some effects of institutionalized research ethics measures were revealed. RP Academic authorship: normative definition and empirical reality (AcadAu) (2013–2015) – Analysis of the definition of academic authorship and related issues on international level ended with scanty results which lead to repetition of the statement that unified European research ethics system is absent. – Analysis of the national legal and international organizational documents showed that, in addition to academic authorship being an object of authors' rights legislation, a ternary approach to the phenomenon can be traced in the organizational documents: (a) a disregarding approach, (b) a unified approach, and (c) an expanded approach. – Analysis of national (and international, but published in Lithuania) scientific journals requirements for authors suggests that the instructions lack particularity in many cases because the given descriptions of the review procedures do not clarify the essence

of the authorship concept. – Analysis of the interview data with editors of the academic journals published in Lithuania provided rich descriptions of the "gate-keeping" procedures and revealed the main obstacles for ensuring proper authorship (i.e. lack of funding) as well as the best practices in the field. – Results of a web-based survey among the members of academic community not only confirmed existing cases of different forms of violations, but also revealed existence of a multi-sided attitude towards academic authorship: traditional (or idealistic) attitude vs. attitude based on rational exchange, which can be either voluntary or forced (and with negative outcomes). A general conclusion to these RPs is that institutionalization of research ethics seems to be gathering speed because of the establishment of the Ombudsmen's institution for Academic Ethics and Procedures. However, the process is rather slow. N. B. Both projects were of a national scope: all Lithuanian science institutions and research organizations were involved (i.e. document analysis, scientific journals, ethics committees, etc.). N. B. Methodology details, the main results and general findings will be presented in the poster.

Key words: academic authorship, ethics institutionalisation, research ethics, Lithuania

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