

Editorial

I recently received a visit from a professor from a recognized university in my country, who invited me to visit her university to make a presentation on the internationalization of scientific publications. Around the same time, I received an e-mail from a colleague and friend from my own university, referring to a study analyzing discrimination regarding citations used by scientists, made by two colleagues from the Universidad Carlos III of Madrid and the Universidad Complutense of Madrid (Camacho Miñano, M. and Núñez Nickel, M. (2009). The Multilayered Nature of Reference Selection. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60 (4), 754-777).

When my Colombian colleague spoke of the importance of internationalization, she recalled the long process undertaken by the *Revista Innovar* to position itself as one of the world's most important Spanish-language academic publications and the difficulties in getting known academics to start to write for the journal and be cited in other relevant publications, and I thought to myself: what good work! But on reading what I could find about the above-mentioned study, I discovered things that brought me back down to earth and made me think deeply about our role as academics and how to go back to evaluating academic activity *per se*, and not so much for the results that do not always show what academics do on a daily basis. This in turn led me to reflect on all of the work that lies before me in order to make this journal the best in its field in Latin America.

The research puts forward the idea that science is not necessarily altruistic but rather selfish, and that this selfishness starts with discrimination about citations. In my view, this is something that has always occurred and could sometimes be caused by the arrogance that characterizes us as academics (I include myself because, even if we don't want to, we all do it) or by our desire to be faithful to the parameters that we are taught at the universities of the world, to maintain a *status quo* of the important publications and the not so important ones. So, throughout our education, we have been taught that Journal X or Y is relevant and the others are not, and therefore, we must not cite them. In this way, we demonize authors or publications, sometimes applying some criterion, and at other times without much thought.

Given that citations are the mechanism for following up on the evolution of disciplines or sciences, they are seen as indicators of academic evaluation. Not only are international indexations necessary for publications (and sufficiently difficult to obtain), nowadays the impact factor constitutes an additional criterion. But in our Latin American sphere, very few academics have been able to publish in the top journals with a high impact factor (again under subjective criteria, even though they are presented objectively). The paradox is that our systems increasingly aim towards this type of evaluations (such as in the Spanish case, where the impact factor is a requirement for professors to obtain more favorable evaluations). On the other hand, citations are used as an indicator of the relevance of scientists and institutions: the more citations they have, the more recognition they obtain. In some countries this implies increased access to sources of funding, recognition and even higher salaries, which means that academics tend to cite more according to the probability of being published (given the non-formal requirements that certain journals place on citations) and not according to how they have carried out their research.

According to researchers, this discrimination is based on the author's personal characteristics (gender, race, where they obtained their doctorate, current or previous affiliations, if they are part of the editorial team of a certain journal, etc.), characteristics of the article (methodology used, number of pages, if it is a bibliographical compilation, etc.) and, finally, the type or characteristic of the journal (if it tends to cite articles published in journals with a higher impact index).

In the context of all of these criticisms, I was somewhat reassured by a recommendation from the editorial board to the associated editors and scientific advisers of this journal, an aspect that has been one of its policies. As long as it is related to the topic of the journal, "If you submit quality research work, we are interested whatever you do; and if we feel that it is not quality work, we reject it".

The authors of the study recommend that we as editors be more attentive to "eradicating" discriminatory behaviors, which is not only difficult because of the editor's specialty, but also due to the quantity of research papers



submitted for review and the lack of punctuality regarding the handing in of opinions on the articles (which is understandable because academics have many activities to carry out, but which in any case frequently requires greater effort to “hunt down” opinions than the work put into actually drafting them). On the other hand, my experience in building an international and inclusive journal such as *Innovar* has taught me that when a juror recommends references to be taken into account, they do not always do so for selfish motives, but rather from a constructive attitude (sometimes they find defects in the approaches and recommend studying articles that would

provide clarity on the topic). This, in my view, is a proactive attitude that is truly significant in terms of knowledge development, above all when applied to disciplines that have not had the development that the basic sciences have had.

Although I do not agree with all of the results of the study, I found it excellent both in its objective as well as its results, particularly in terms of reflecting upon and rethinking the way in which our publications include or exclude academics, due to factors that we may or may not like, but which are customary in the world we live in.

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