



Reflecting Upon Ethical Imperatives for Scholarly Research and The Case of A South African University

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Abstract

A university's reputation is built on the quality of its research and teaching output. Often a university with an established track record on research and teaching output can more easily access external funding and further improve on its ranking and standing amongst peers. This enables it to attract and retain better quality students, academics and researchers. Ideally, these staff and students in turn increase the quality of its research and thus a virtuous circle is created. Therefore, it is understandable that universities in South Africa, as in most parts of the world, are constantly scrambling to increase their research output and enhance their research quality. However, whenever issues of compromised academic integrity and unethical research practices arise, university management has often been unable to deal adequately with these issues. This article concurs with the emerging argument among research scholars that it is insufficient to focus on ethical policies and guidelines without considering the culture of the institution. It argues that the ethical researcher needs to be supported by a dominant culture of academic integrity. The article then uses the case of a South African university to illustrate this argument.

Keywords: Ethics; Research; University; Academic Integrity.

1. Introduction

Innovation, and discovery through research, are increasingly the main routes for expanding the frontiers of knowledge in different academic disciplines. An advancement or development of these knowledge boundaries helps people to shape their thinking and find new answers to challenges that they face daily. From medicine, to technology, to social sciences, how people see and interpret the world, and find ways to change or improve it, has been progressively facilitated by research undertaken by scholars in public and private institutions. These research findings, from public and private companies, once promoted to a global audience can have very wide repercussions. For example, pharmaceutical industry research has delivered vaccines for chickenpox and measles which were once killer diseases and has also resulted in the eradication of smallpox. Clearly research can have profound positive impact on peoples' lives.

However poor research practices or insufficient controls could give rise to situations such as the Thalidomide disaster of the late 1950's. In this situation researchers had failed to properly investigate, prior to the release of the drug, its effect on the unborn foetus. Thousands of foetuses were spontaneously aborted, thousands of new-borns died and tens of thousands of children were severely disabled. It took the Thalidomide disaster to persuade the United States government to enact new regulations. These regulations stipulated more scrupulous research trial design and increased monitoring and review through ethics committees. What followed was that ethics in research started to become an area that gained prominence. Regulations and guidelines proliferated because of the devastating impacts that could be created either, when poorly designed research is being undertaken or, by incorrect findings and outcomes achieved when research is badly managed.

This paper addresses the question of whether prescriptions of ethical guidelines are sufficient to constrain ethical behaviours. Or whether the culture of the organisation is an essential component to be considered. The paper uses the example of the issues being experienced by a South African university to illustrate the argument.

2. Key Concepts for Research Ethics

Before undertaking a review of ethical considerations in research; it is necessary to consider the key concepts that are crucial for such a discussion. This will create a context and provide some understanding on the meanings and use of such concepts within this paper. For this article, the concepts under consideration include: research, research ethics and ethical considerations in research.

2.1 Research

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Glossary of Statistical Terms provides for basic, and applied research and includes the concept of experimental development. Basic research is defined as "experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view" (OECD Frascati Manual, 2015:365). Applied research is defined as "original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge... directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective" (OECD Frascati Manual, 2015:365). Experimental development is considered to be "systematic work, drawing on existing knowledge gained from research and practical experience, and producing additional knowledge, which is directed to producing new products or processes or to improving existing products or processes" (OECD Frascati Manual, 2015:369). Welman, Kruger and Mitchell provide a more succinct definition of research as: "... a process that involves obtaining scientific knowledge by means of various objective methods and procedures... These methods include procedures for drawing a sample..., measuring variables, collecting information..., and analyzing this information..." (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2007:2-3).

Examining these definitions and conceptualising them in the context of this article would render a definition of research as; the study, observation and analysis, that is undertaken to confirm certain ideas or generate new insights and knowledge. It presupposes at least one actor, the researcher, and a researched phenomenon that serves as a unit of analysis. The interaction of the researcher and this unit of analysis is often embedded in a research process. It is this research process that requires a high level of integrity and ethical conduct in a researcher. Consequently, this article, when it examines the question of research ethics, must include both aspects. The first being the integrity of the researcher undertaking this scientific investigation and secondly the integrity of the research process itself.

To enjoin research integrity on its researchers, a set of ethical standards, codes, considerations or guidelines are often prescribed by universities (University of Cambridge, 2014; University of Monash, 2009; New York University, 2006).

2.2 Research Ethics

Ethics in research is normally defined as a set of rules or standards that define what is morally acceptable. Furthermore, and according to the Research Ethics Program of UC San Diego (n.d.), research ethics applies to the "... ethics of the planning, conduct, and reporting of research". The contributing authors to this program assert that whilst research ethics includes the protection of both human and animals it also covers the following: "collection, use, and interpretation of research data; methods for reporting and reviewing research plans or findings; relationship among researchers with one another; relationships between researchers and those that will be affected by their research; means for responding to misunderstanding, disputes, or misconduct; and options for promoting ethical conduct in research" (Research Ethics Program of UC San Diego, n.d.).

A careful examination of the definition and its application makes it clear that research ethics does not only cover the way respondents are to be protected, but is mindful of whether the data was acquired and used in an ethical manner and whether the relationships and interactions of the different role players met the requisite ethical standards. To achieve these objectives certain ethical considerations can be considered as core to the conduct of research.

2.3 Ethical Considerations in Research

The history of defining and enforcing ethical research behaviours and standards has, until recently, been mostly a reactive one.

The most notorious example of unethical behaviour prompting regulatory change, dealt with research on human participants and resulted from the Nuremberg Trials. In 1946, military tribunals charged Nazi doctors with war crimes and crimes against humanity for carrying out experiments on human participants without their consent that tortured, crippled and/or killed them. The outcome of the trial was the establishment of the Nuremberg Code that closely resembled the German Guidelines on Human Experimentation of 1931 (Shuster, 1997; Ghooi, 2011). The Code and Guidelines clearly articulated that for research to meet an ethical standard; humans subject to experimentation must give consent, and the benefits of such experimentation must be greater than the harm inflicted (Vollmann & Winau, 1996: 1447; Shuster, 1997).

Another major step forward in defining ethical guidelines occurred after the Thalidomide debacle. First released in Germany in 1957, Thalidomide became widely used for conditions such as asthma, hypertension and migraine and was

considered and marketed as extremely safe. It was not until 1961 that it was understood that the epidemic of gross limb malformation in children that had occurred was caused by mothers taking thalidomide during pregnancy (Smithells & Newman, 1992:16). The drug had not been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration but patients had been unaware of this fact and thus had not given informed consent. Amendments were then made to the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to force drug companies to prove the efficacy and safety of their drugs before they could be marketed (Tantibanchachai, 2014)

A further and equally major step forward was the Belmont Report. In 1932, 400 already infected African American males were part of the Tuskegee Syphilis study in Macon, Alabama. The intention was to research natural progression of the disease (Rivers et al., 1953; Jones, 1993). Prevalent treatments were withheld and some participants were duped into believing experimental procedures were therapeutic. By 1950 penicillin was available and effective against syphilis, but not administered to these participants. Treatment was only made available in 1972, after a public outcry (Thomas and Quinn, 1991:1498). This atrocity gave rise to a legislative response; the National Research Act (1974) that created the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research that formulated ethical principles and developed guidelines to ensure that future research would conform with these principles (Akpan, 2013:1137-1138). Since then there has been considerable work done by legislators, ethicists, research bodies and other relevant persons to clarify and define a set of considerations for the ethical practice of research.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2007), identify a set of essential ethical considerations in the research process, namely, avoidance of plagiarism and honesty in reporting of results; respect for the rights of individual; protection of humans and animals involved in research; adherence to a code of ethics; and an ethical public standing of the institutions responsible for the research. In addition, they include two further considerations as also important in research ethics. These comprise the fact that the research subjects should be free from any harm, and that informed consent of the subjects should be obtained prior to the research being conducted (Welman, Kruger, Mitchell, 2007:181-182).

2.2.1. Plagiarism and Honesty

Addressing the topic of plagiarism and honesty Welman et al. (2007) reference competence, literature review, plagiarism and falsification of results as factors to be considered. They define competence as the researcher's expertise and skills to conduct the research. An incompetent researcher, they hold, may harm a subject, abuse a subject's goodwill, damage the reputation of the research institution, and waste time and other resources. In terms of the literature review; they advise that before any research is undertaken a thorough review of the literature should be done to ensure, that the proposed research has not already been done. Plagiarism they identify as unauthorized and unacknowledged use of ideas and data that belongs to another, and as a form of intellectual and publishing theft. Another issue that these authors identify clearly as dishonest and unethical behaviour, is where researchers falsify or mislead in the reporting of their findings. (Welman, et al. 2007:182). Fanelli (2009) in discussing the latter issue, distinguishes between the fabrication of results that are obviously fraudulent and the falsification of results that can be subtle and sometimes not consciously perpetrated by the researcher but rather the result of researcher bias, concealment of conflicts of interest and other similar actions. The author also asserts that although institutions may differ on definitions of scientific misconduct they "all agree" that plagiarism and falsification of results constitute "serious forms of scientific misconduct" (Fanelli, 2009).

2.2.2. Respecting the Rights of Individuals

On the topic of respecting the rights of individuals, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of the Australian Government has published a code that instructs researchers, in addition to recognising the individuals intrinsic value and their right to justice and beneficence, to have "due regard to welfare, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage, both individual and collective, of those involved in research" (NHMRC, 2014). They prescribe that researchers respect the individuals' rights to make their own decisions and where a diminished capacity to do so exists, to empower or protect the individual as necessary (NHMRC, 2014).

2.2.3. Protection of Humans and Animals Involved in Research

Neuman (2006), when examining the question of protection of humans involved in research experimentation considers three different categories where harm could be inflicted; physical harm, psychological abuse and legal jeopardy. In terms of protecting humans from physical harm, an ethical researcher is advised to anticipate any risk associated with injury to the body. They need to consider safety concerns such as the safety risk posed by buildings, furniture and equipment; the risk of exacerbating an existing medical condition or causing a stress induced incident, and the danger of actual physical attack. With regards to protection from psychological harm, Neuman (2006) recognises that this risk arises more frequently than instances of physical harm. He also acknowledges that it is still hotly debated where the line as to risk versus benefit should be drawn. However, Neuman (2006) directs us to be aware of, and minimise harm, and cautions that issues such as damage to the psyche or self-esteem of the participants must be taken into consideration in research design and implementation. Legal harm, Neumann states, can be caused when the researcher commits an act that unwittingly places the subject in legal jeopardy or when a researcher discovers illegal activity whilst undertaking their

research (Neuman, 2006:132-134). In these instances, he cautions that “a researcher must weigh potential harm against potential benefits and bear responsibility for the decision” (Neuman, 2006:135).

Regarding the protection of animals, the National Research Council (NRC) in the United States of America adheres to the principle that responsibility for the well-being of animals used in research, testing or teaching must be assumed by the persons caring, using or producing animals for research. The goal is humane care that obeys principles that are ethical, scientific and practical (NRC, 2011:1).

It falls on the researcher then to take the widest view of all possible sources of harm to research subjects and where these risks cannot be completely negated they should be mitigated as much as possible. Clearly, this is a wider purview than can be contained in a prescriptive set of rules and regulations and the question then turns to how this can be achieved.

2.2.4. Adherence to a Code of Ethics

Resnick and Shamoo (2003) argue that whilst ethical decision making is situational, situation ethics is not “consistent with a commitment to integrity” The authors point out that to be able to act with integrity and justify a decision requires that the researcher commit to “standards that transcend that decision”. Situational ethics, they argue, gives rise to policies that are lacking in integrity and decisions should be made by referencing values and principles that rise above specific situations. (Resnick & Shamoo, 2003:18-19).

Accepting this argument makes a set of values and principles, otherwise known as a code of ethics, indispensable to the proper practice of ethical research. And makes it a necessary starting point for institutions wishing to instil ethical practices in its researchers.

2.2.5. Public Standing of the Institutions Responsible for the Research

Danchev and Ross (2014) referencing the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens make the point that research institutes build “reputations for fair practice”. This they hold, gives researchers from these institutions an advantage in that there is a pre-existing trust relationship between these institutions that benefits research relationships. It therefore behoves the researcher and the research institute to adhere to fair practice, intellectual rigour and high standards of conduct (Danchev & Ross, 2014).

2.2.6. Informed Consent

According to Trochim (2006), informed consent refers to the research participants being informed about the different “... procedures and risks involved in research...” before they “...give their consent to participate.” In most cases the consent is required to be in a written form and signed off by the subject (Bailey, 1982:409). In other words, informed consent is an area of research which involves making the subject understand the reasons as to why the research is being undertaken, the reason for the subject’s involvement in the research and the impact that the research will have on the subject especially any risks that are inherent in the study. The consent of people in this stage of the process of data collection is a requirement that needs to be clearly understood by everyone involved in that research.

Newby (2010:357) fully supports this position and stresses that the consent should be informed. That is, that participants are both in possession of the correct information and capable of understanding what it means. He states: “... They should be aware of and understand the purpose of the research. They should know why they particularly have been chosen. They should know how their information will be used and how identifiable and locatable it will be. They should know the limits of their involvement- will they see research results, will they be able to comment upon the analysis and conclusions, and if necessary, be able to refute them or withdraw their contribution?” (Newby 2010:357). Arising from this discussion Newby draws our attention to a further question, “How important is the research relative to someone’s position, prospects or even job security?” (Newby 2010:357).

The above issues regarding informed consent are intended to empower respondents or subjects in their participation in the research project. In this case the rights of the subjects are maintained and clarified to ensure that the researcher conducts the study within such limitations as allowed by the informed consent. For example, in the case of minors an added dimension that will need to be considered is whether their understanding of the research is sufficient and whether the consent granted by their parents or guardians is acceptable.

2.2.7. Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

A further consideration according to Newby (2010:357) is the risk that respondents in a research may potentially be exposed to if their information is made public. Without a guarantee of privacy respondents may not feel free to participate in full and disclose any, or all, salient information. A guarantee of privacy implies that no information elicited from a respondent will be disclosed to an outside party without the respondent’s express permission. Respondents need to be assured by the researcher that the information gathered is for the sole purpose of the study and would not expose them to harm. Newby (2010:358) raises the question about group participation and whether every member of that group (for example, focus groups during discussions) will abide by the confidentiality of the information that circulates within that

group. Furthermore, how should one consider information that if not disclosed may result in harm to the participant or other persons. The answer is to ensure that: "...on balance, acting to secure the safety of the interviewee or the wider community delivers a benefit that exceeds the cost of a broken commitment" Newby (2010:358).

There is also the position of the researcher or interviewer which must be borne in mind. Credible information is vital but the environment in which it can be obtained may be unsafe. Sometimes the gathering of information results in the researchers placing themselves at huge personal risks. This often involves going into areas and homes alone and without outside contact. It is important as Newby (2010:358) points out for leaders of research groups to protect their members. At all times the leaders or someone of similar status should arrange for research to be conducted in pairs; know the location of the interviews or research activities; develop procedures to stay in contact with leader or group member; and consider solutions to potential problems in advance. Leaders in research need to manage the risks in the research process not only to protect the researchers but also the quality of the data obtained to ensure results are not compromised.

Trochim (2006) mentions two standards that are applied to assist in protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. The first is that almost all research guarantees the participants confidentiality and give an assurance that information that could be used to identify the participant will not be disclosed to persons who are not directly involved in the study. The second and stricter standard that he mentions, is the principle of anonymity. This he takes to mean that the participant will maintain anonymity even from the researchers themselves. Although this would clearly be a higher standard of anonymity and a stronger guarantee of privacy, Trochim (2006) recognises that it is not always possible to accomplish this requirement. An example of this would be where participants need to be tracked or polled multiple times during the course of the research and need to be contacted again. In these cases, identifying details will need to be available to the researcher (Trochim, 2006).

In addition to the areas that have been discussed already, Trochim (2006) notes another important additional area that needs to be considered when establishing the ethics of research. This is the principle of voluntary participation. This requires that participants are not "coerced" into participation. Trochim (2006) raises this issue as historically research has been conducted on participants such as prisoners, university personnel and students and other similar cohorts who did not have, or were not given, the right of refusal.

A careful examination of the ethical considerations put forward by the various authors above clearly indicates that it is not possible to define a set of ethical considerations for research without examining the behaviour and conduct of the researcher. Issues such as respect for the rights of individuals, and plagiarism that were highlighted, implicitly recognise that ethical research is not just about the rules governing the process but in also about the integrity of researcher.

Giving due consideration to the authors reviewed above it can also be concluded that essential to the practice of ethical research is a clear set of ethical guidelines. Further that the researcher must exemplify ethical behaviour throughout the research process and its after management. Rossouw, van Zyl and Pope (2014) go even further and make explicit the need for a culture of research integrity. They argue that research ethics should be promoted by individual researchers, research and academic institutions, editorial boards and publishers of scientific journals, national and international professional organisations, national governments and government departments, funding bodies, and research networks and ethics training programmes.

If established and respected scholars are arguing that what is needed for the promotion of ethical practices and conduct is a culture of ethical behaviour, it is important to consider how South African research institutions have fared in this regard and whether this is indeed a requirement.

3. Towards an Ethical Research Culture: A Reflection

Numerous incidents of violations of research ethics and lack of academic integrity: from the plagiarism admission by the Vice-Chancellor of a university in the Eastern Cape (Sutherland-Smith, 2008:61); to the investigation by the Hawks into allegations of fraud; and the subsequent resignation of a Dean at a university in Johannesburg (Mkhwanazi, 2014), have placed the topic of research ethics and academic integrity squarely in the public spotlight.

This paper considers the case of a specific university in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. In doing so this paper does not argue that this institution has been any better or worse in terms of its actual practices than any other tertiary or research institution. The sole reason for choosing this university as an example is because the university has received a large amount of negative publicity in this area. The appointment of a new management team gives hope that going forward the university will be able to set a higher standard of trust and integrity, enhance the quality and standing of its researchers and research output and generate a turnaround in public confidence. As such, an analysis of the problem may prove beneficial to the new management team as it develops future research management strategies.

2.4 The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and Academic Integrity

During recent years UKZN has had some very unfortunate public exposure when it came to issues of ethics and integrity. Comprehensive policies and procedures to enforce ethical behaviour and sanctions for non-compliance with research

ethics have been defined, yet the issues have persisted. What follows is a summary of some of the issues that have impacted the university, and an attempt to understand why they persist. The first question that needs answering is whether the actual policies and guidelines provided by the university provides sufficient direction and guidance to its researchers and academics.

It is not possible to duplicate the UKZN's entire research ethics policy here as it is too voluminous¹. But any examination of the policy clearly identifies that UKZN's published code is consistent with the ethical guidelines proposed by the scholars in the literature review undertaken above.

The university's research policy on ethics: Research Policy V, commences with an unequivocal statement of the necessity for academic honesty;

“Researchers are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to the following, is a serious offence (a) Falsification of Data (b) Plagiarism (c) Fabrication (d) Non-declaration of Conflict(s) of Interest, (e) Misuse of Research Funds, (f) Any other form of dishonesty in research that undermines the integrity of the research and which may bring the University into disrepute” (UKZN, 2007)

The research policy covers in thorough detail the ethical considerations to be considered by the conscientious researcher and provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for ensuring this. The guidelines cover issues such as: management of research data and records including data storage and maintenance and confidentiality of data; publication including giving appropriate credit, personal credit for collaborative work and overuse to provide more publication credit; authorship; citation and acknowledgement; acknowledgement of financial support; peer review; redundant publication; plagiarism; research misconduct; conflict of interest and conflict of commitment; and safety. It further provides for researchers who need extra guidance to consult with the Biomedical Research Ethics Committee; Animal Research Ethics Committee; Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee; and the Institutional Biosafety Committee. There is also clear warning of disciplinary action for breaches of the research policy code (UKZN, 2007).

As is clear from this list, the policy and regulations of the university cover all of the areas that the various authors referenced in the literature review advocated and has even set up advisory bodies offering extra support to assist researchers facing ethical conundrums. Yet, notwithstanding this excellent code of ethics and the advisory bodies, an examination of the controversies that UKZN has been experiencing does not paint a pretty picture.

An example of the serious issues that have confronted the university include the nullification of the UKZN's Chief Financial Officer's Master's degree in 2007, after it was revealed that he had an improper relationship with the Dean of Management (Basson, 2011). In the following year, 2008, the university stripped the former Head of Acquisitions for the Armaments Corporation of South Africa of his PhD degree when it was discovered that almost two thirds of the work had been plagiarised (Basson, 2011). A more recent unfortunate event at the university concerns accusations that a syndicate of academics and administrators have been selling sought after seats in the medical school (Hadebe, 2016; Shaikh, 2016). Since this has been made public, the South African Parliament has called for a report and a student has been arrested and charged with fraud (Shaikh, 2016).

Since the university's code of ethics is a robust and comprehensive code, the fact that it has proven insufficient would suggest that in and of itself a code is insufficient. Neither is it possible to argue that the process of implementation was inadequate, since to the extent that academics and researchers see themselves as professionals and therefore obliged to meet the standards of professionals, responsibility for adoption of the code would be each academic's or researcher's personal responsibility. The question then becomes; how was it possible that ethical failures abounded?

In a speech at the 2016 Serious Social Investing Conference in Johannesburg, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng stated; “When you are a leader, you have the authority to influence those you lead and it is what you do that largely determines what those who follow you are likely to do.” (Mogoeng, 2016). A good place then to start an examination into the culture of UKZN would be to start with the management team.

In 1996, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of a university of Johannesburg who was to become Vice Chancellor (VC) of UKZN from 2004 to 2014, was accused of falsifying his curriculum vitae (Daley, 1996; Angelil-Carter, 2014:132). In the inquiry that followed he acknowledged that parts of his curriculum vitae “lend themselves to misunderstanding” (Garson, 1996). Since the VC was a notable scientist and academic and therefore would have been assumed to be aware of the need for precision, this explanation would not have reassured the academic community. Later in 1997 he defended his actions in a book that he authored. The book was referred to by Radebe (2009) as, “a book that verges on plagiarism and is marred by inadequate referencing, sloppy proof reading, and unnecessary repetition. The book is also remarkable for the excessive, over-the-top self-aggrandizement” (Radebe, 2009:18). In 2005 UKZN's VC together with his co-author, the former acting Vice-Chancellor of Vista University were accused of plagiarism. UKZN's VC asserted that he

¹ UKZN Research Policy can be accessed at:

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:e1NfU1lqgBEJ:research.ukzn.ac.za/Files/Research_Ethics_Policy_V_-_Final_rec_from_ACB_31_July_2007_sen_30_may_2007_and_council_29_june_2007_2.sflb.doc+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au&client=safari,

was not responsible for the areas that were plagiarised and the acting VC of Vista accepted responsibility for the 'sloppiness' (Maclellan, 2005). Eventually vindicated, headlines generated did little to help the reputation of the already beleaguered VC. In 2007, UKZN's Chief Financial Officer's Master's degree was nullified because an improper relationship existed between himself and the and Dean of Management (Basson, 2011).

It was with this organisational leadership history that the Vice-Chancellor was attempting to champion ethics at UKZN. According to van Onselen (2013) the VC was quoted thus, "academic credibility and scholarship are the sine qua non characteristics of a vice-chancellor. If they cannot be demonstrated in a candidate, the institution will suffer an irreparable credibility crisis within the wider community of scholars. The whole academic project of a university suffers and gets defeated." van Onselen uses the VC's statement to draw attention to the VC's co-authorship of the 2005 article and adds that the VC "resigned his position when serving at a university in Johannesburg as a deputy vice-chancellor after he was found to have "embellished" his curriculum vitae" (van Onselen, 2013). Van Onselen was attempting to make the case that according to the VC's own standards the VC had been found wanting. Whether such a case exists or not is moot. What remains relevant is that as late as 2013 the earlier scandal was still casting a shadow over the reputation of the VC.

It is not the purpose of this article to investigate the veracity or otherwise of the allegations against UKZN's management and it should be noted that numerous persons who brought forward allegations against the VC have themselves been sanctioned or accused of dishonourable conduct (Chetty and Merrett, 2013:19; Regchand, 2008). However, what is crucial to this argument is how these issues were perceived and how these perceptions impacted the institution. Certainly, the reputations of the management team about academic integrity would not have been seen to be unblemished by several of the UKZN's staff and students.

If as the Chief Justice asserts, the tone of the organization is taken from the top then it is hardly surprising that since a management team with apparently tarnished reputations took office, UKZN has been riven with accusations of lack of academic integrity. It would be nigh impossible for the management team to enforce the rules when they themselves were perceived to have not only transgressed them but to have absolved themselves of the transgressions. An opinion piece in the Mail & Guardian in fact states that the university is a place characterised by a "lack of collegiality, its backstabbing amid the politics of power" and that accusations had been made against the VC and his deputy to do with "copyright infringements, misrepresentation, plagiarism and betrayal" (Karumbidza, 2010). The latter quote referring to a claim made by the previous Pro-Vice Chancellor that a book originally submitted to publishers with his name included as an editor and to which he made substantial contribution was eventually published with his name excluded (Karumbidza, 2010; Chetty, 2010). Neither Danchev's and Ross's trust relationship nor Rossouw's, van Zyl's and Pope's culture of integrity was present. Instead the perceived behaviour of some of the leadership team and the pervading culture of the institution, notwithstanding the university's excellent research policy on ethics, was overwhelmingly that of academic dishonesty and lack of integrity.

4. CONCLUSION

Research institutions need a code of ethics. the 'University' has an excellent set of guidelines and controls to promote research ethics. Yet it has continued to reel from one academic scandal to another. Consequently, UKZN as a case study demonstrates that more is required to ensure ethical research practice than policies and regulations however exemplary these may be.

There is a point of view amongst some scholars that a code of ethics is insufficient to guarantee ethical behaviour. These scholars argue that what is needed is a culture of research integrity. In the case of the UKZN the scandals and controversy that senior management and leadership appeared to be embroiled in and that have been widely and publicly reported has led to a tarnished image of the institute and resulted in a culture where academic abuses have arisen. This supports the view that in such an organizational context, and notwithstanding the policies and provisions prescribed by the institution, the culture of the organisation, unless radically transformed, will continue to give rise to abuses of research ethics.

A culture that is supportive of the code of ethics may not be a sufficient condition to guarantee ethical behaviour, but it does appear to be a necessary one. It would have benefitted the UKZN to have dealt much earlier with these perceptions by investing in dispelling any allegations however spurious, that cast a shadow on the reputations of senior management. Where actual infractions had occurred however, the institution ought to have dealt, severely; and most importantly, publicly and transparently; with them, thus putting paid to rumour and sending a clear and unequivocal message to staff and students that no instances of unethical behaviour would be tolerated.

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