

Editorial

The selection and editing process for journal articles is complex, and dependant on a number of different people with diverse roles to play. It should be a reliable and formative process, because it involves interactions with a number of experienced people.

The word 'edit' itself has several layers of meaning and 'editor' can mean a number of different things. We tell our students to *edit* their assignments or essays carefully. Maybe our postgraduate students need some extra help *editing* their theses. There are editors of newspapers and magazines, editors of books and editors of educational materials, departmental and corporate brochures and newsletters. I am not sure exactly what some of these people do, but I don't think their jobs are quite the same as mine.

I once received an email from a reader of *Issues in Educational Research*, very angry that I had published an article written by someone she did not like arguing a point she did not agree with. I was surprised that it was I who received the blame, as there are invariably a number of people and processes involved in getting an article published. It occurred to me then that some people may think that a journal editor has more control than he or she actually does. These thoughts prompt me to return again to our journal's selection and editing process, to reiterate how we work and how the duties are shared around.

On receipt of a submission, the first job is to assess whether the article is suitable for the journal. Is it about education? Is it research or, just occasionally, research method or methodology? Is it the right length, and written in an appropriate format? Are the references current? Is the research current? Is it relevant to our Australasian readership? Approximately 50% of submissions are rejected at this 'screen read' stage. This is perhaps the result of being a free open access online journal. We attract a high number of inappropriate and irrelevant submissions from all over the world, from hopeful postgraduate students trawling the net for publication possibilities.

Finding suitable reviewers is the next step – sometimes easy, sometimes difficult and drawn out. 'Education' is an infinitely broad topic. Pre- school, primary, secondary, tertiary education; various modes of delivery; various philosophies; specific issues, global issues, historical issues, cultural issues; to say nothing of a wide range of research methods and styles. The possibilities of topics and research styles are endless, and while the members of our Editorial Board are versatile and highly skilled in their fields of research, we frequently have to cast our net more widely to find suitable reviewers.

I personally consider the reviewers as the most important figures in the process. They are sent a form to complete the overall merits of the article, such as focus on educational research, timeliness of the topic, significance, quality of writing (clarity, logicity and conciseness), accuracy, relevance of literature review, design and methodology and appropriateness of conclusions. More importantly they are asked to write constructive comments to the author to help improve the article for publication. It is no use judging a submission, without giving reasons why that judgment is valid. Many of our authors are new researchers, postgraduate students testing themselves against the demands of writing

for publication for the first time. That is the nature and function of our journal. The reviewers need to keep this in mind and treat the authors as they might treat their own postgraduate students.

Then the Editor steps in again, to write advice to the author, based on the reviews. Our policy is to be as supportive as possible. Authors are encouraged to read the reviewers' comment carefully and use these to bring their articles up to publication standard. Sometimes the Editor will add further comments on matters such as the length of the title, the use of APA referencing, the readability of figures and diagrams, and such. It is rare to actually reject an article at this stage, but if the reviews indicate significant problems, the author may not be encouraged to press on with further improvement. Another 10-20% are lost at this stage and are to all extent and purposes, rejections.

The authors then revise and improve their submissions and resubmit them along with an explanation of what they have revised and what they have chosen not to revise in light of the reviewers' comments. In this way the author retains ownership of his or her work and regains control.

The articles are next formatted and edited. We have an Editor, an Associate Editor and an Assistant Editor, who share the final stage of reading carefully and correcting expression, grammar and punctuation where necessary. This is a way of sharing the load a bit as we lead up to publication deadlines. It is also a training ground for the journal's next Editor and the current Assistant Editor is serving a sort of apprenticeship to move up to become an Associate Editor. Our house style requires 1) Australian spelling, 2) minimal punctuation, and 3) APA style referencing [1], with AGPS [2] style permitted.

Normal practice then is to return the final edited copies to the authors for a final check. This has proved to be an invaluable practice, as it allows the authors to re-read their own work in an unfamiliar format and font. Last minute corrections can still be made.

The Editor hands over the final copy to the Business Manager, who is also the journal's Web Master. As he is converting to PDF and HTML for mounting on the Internet, he also is checking and where necessary, correcting. He also makes sure that where authors have cited other articles from *Issues in Educational Research*, or other open access journals and conference proceedings, that correct URLs are added to the References. This ensures that our own journal gets full credit for online citations. The Business Manager then mounts them onto the *Issues* website at <http://www.iier.org.au/>

Thus, the process rolls on with some inevitability, with no one person making all the decisions, but each part of the process leading to the success of the final publication. Perhaps one of the most impressive things about it is that everything is done by volunteers. Indeed we have no budget. We are truly a free, open access, online journal, dedicated to assisting new researchers specifically, and old researchers incidentally, publish their research relatively quickly in a recognised publication.

We have six papers in 19(1) which have made it through the processes described and earned a place in our journal.

John Buchanan, in *Where are they now? Ex-teachers tell their life-work stories* interviewed 22 ex-school teachers to ascertain their reasons for leaving teaching and their perceptions of their present circumstances in comparison with those of teaching. His findings have important implications for teacher recruitment, education, the provision of working conditions in the teaching profession, and for the public perception and promotion of teaching.

The development of lecturer research expertise: Towards a unifying model by Brian Hemmings and Doug Hill discuss the literature pertaining to the development of research expertise in university lecturers. They argue that a model is required to pull together the disparate parts of the literature and conclude by giving illustrations of such a model and noting implications for further investigation, theorising, and practice.

Brian Hemmings and Russell Kay look at *LANNA tests and the prediction of Year 10 English and Mathematics results*. They explore the relationships among LANNA test scores at Year 7 and examine the predictive capacity of these scores in relation to Year 10 School Certificate English and Mathematics results. They discuss the implications of their findings for school administrators or for those who used other nationally-benchmarked literacy and numeracy assessments.

Bruce Johnson, Anna M. Sullivan and David Williams take *A one-eyed look at classroom life: Using new technologies to enrich classroom-based research*. They examine the potential for using digital technology in classroom research. They point to their experiences in six classrooms to support the value of new technologies as tools to improve information-gathering, and enhancing the construction of datasets based upon the dynamism of classroom life.

The research journey: A Lonely Planet approach, by Noella M Mackenzie and Lorraine M Ling explores the impact of research on a neophyte researcher and her supervisor. Using autoethnographic narrative, they reflect on the journey they have made together. Within the metaphor of a journey specific theoretical elements are discussed and contribute to an interpretive framework for deepening the understanding of the research process.

From the USA comes *A mixed analysis of college students' best and poorest college professors* by John R. Slate, Kimberly LaPrairie, Don P. Schulte and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, a study of equal interest and importance to our largely Australasian readership. In a multi-stage mixed analysis design, students' stories of their best and poorest college professors were thematically analysed, resulting in 15 dominant themes for their best college professors and 12 dominant themes for their poorest college professors.

Clare McBeath

Editor

References

1. *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001). 5th ed. Washington DC: APA.
2. *Style manual for authors, editors and publishers* (2002). 6th ed. Wiley Australia. (Previous editions were known with great respect and affection as the *AGPS Manual*).