

Editorial 26(4): IIER's growth and jobs for reviewers and editorial staff

Last year, 2015, IIER received 124 submissions and accepted 43 (acceptance rate 34.7%). Of the accepted articles, 24 were published in 2015 (volume 25), 18 were published in 2016 (volume 26), and one is pending. This year, 2016, to date (23 October), IIER has received 152 submissions and accepted 25 (22 published in volume 26), with 40 pending. From current trends in review process outcomes and editorial staff workloads, we expect that the next issue of IIER will be 27(1), published early January 2017. After publishing 31 IIER articles in 2015 (volume 25) and 40 articles in 2016 (volume 26), we may expect a further small increase in articles published in 2017, perhaps to 50 (numbers for earlier years are given in Atkinson, McBeath & Power, 2015).

To make some tentative estimates about outcomes for 2016, the total number of submissions may be about 175, representing an increase of about 41% on 2015. If acceptances number about 50 (an increase of about 16% over 2015's acceptances), the acceptance rate will drop to about 28.6% compared with 34.7% in 2015. Of the many questions that may arise from current trends and these forward estimates, perhaps we could pick out just two questions. Firstly, why is IIER experiencing such a rapid growth? Secondly, what are IIER editorial staff, reviewers and our sponsoring institutes doing about this growth?

The first of these questions is perhaps the easier to answer, within the limitations of a brief editorial report. IIER is attractive to an expanding number of authors for five main reasons, which may be summarised concisely as open access, no charges levied upon authors, a record of publishing work by authors who are outside the 'Anglobubble' (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016), a reputation (we hope) for being a high quality provider of formative advice to authors, and a reputation (again, we hope) for a high standard of copy editing (McBeath, Atkinson & Power, 2016).

Looking upon the bright side of rapid growth in the activities of academic journals, we should promote understanding and empathy with a deeper, underlying reason why this is occurring. In the last 30 to 40 years the world has experienced a rapid emergence of 'home grown' academic research in many developing countries, with one characteristic being a desire to become 'contributors' to international scholarly discourses, in contrast to being merely 'consumers'. Surely this is desirable, and in a very small way IIER and similar journals are supporting this emergence.

The second question is more difficult to analyse. From the perspective of an individual journal, we could identify the basic, main components of the response to rapid growth as increasing selectivity (increasing rejection rates), increasing the numbers of editorial staff (more volunteers needed), increasing the number of reviewers (also volunteers), reducing the amount of time devoted to composing each dispatch of review and editorial advice, increasing the proportion of submissions that receive review advice composed by editorial staff instead of external reviewers (the 'editorial rejects' category), reducing the amount of

time devoted to copy editing (which in practice means being less receptive to ESL authors), and a narrowing of the journal's scope. In this brief editorial report, we cannot expand upon any of these components; more detailed discussion on how we may best integrate these responses in a sustainable way will be offered in future editorial reports.

However, "narrowing of the journal's scope" could warrant some immediate, brief comment. As a 'generalist' journal with an established international reach, IIER cannot readily invoke a narrowing of scope or geographical reach. What we are seeking is improved use of a growth limiting measure mentioned briefly in Editorial 26(2) (Power, McBeath & Atkinson, 2016) which suggested:

... that we consider whether the topic and context in a submission has been accorded good recognition in previous volumes of IIER. Data can be obtained in an objective manner from *Google* searches specifying domain 'iier.org.au', or *Google Scholar* searches specifying journal 'issues in educational research', using appropriate keywords. IIER's editorial staff may decline a submission if its topic, method of investigation, context, sector and perspectives have been well represented in recent volumes of IIER. Advice of that type is accompanied, as best we can within the limits of time available and expertise, with advice on alternative journals and suggestions on improvements that may help improve prospects for acceptance by another journal.

The explicit invoking of this kind of limitation upon the growth of a journal is somewhat unusual in academic publishing, though in practice it may be used by journals which publish only review articles. For example, "As [journal] has recently published an extensive review on [topic] with similar attention to [context, methodology, etc.] as accorded in your submission, we regret to advise ...". More usually, journals may use a criterion relating to *novelty* or *new knowledge* to decline a submission. Whilst that criterion is also relevant for IIER, we place considerable importance upon maintaining IIER's "diversity of contexts, and diversity of topics" as outlined also in Editorial 26(2) (Power, McBeath & Atkinson, 2016). IIER 26(4) is a good continuation of the diversity theme, and we compliment the authors and commend the issue to readers.

After these reflections on how to respond to increasing numbers of submissions, we could record a pleasing instance of 'no increase' (and no extra work) that occurred in last week's editorial staff activities. This was the 2016-17 renewal of IIER's website hosting by Sydney-based company Netregistry Pty Ltd. *No increase* on the 2015-16 charge, \$142.95 (Atkinson, McBeath & Power, 2015)! *No extra work*, all was done by Netregistry's computers talking to a bank's computers.

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