Editorial 28(1): Reflecting on diversity and a format change

Illustrating IIER's diversity

In Editorial 26(2) we declared that "The current issue is a good example of the diversity theme" [1], and in Editorial 26(4) we reiterated the considerable importance IIER places upon maintaining "diversity of contexts, and diversity of topics" [2]. To introduce IIER 28(1), it seems timely to reflect again upon the maintenance of diversity.

To illustrate, 28(1) represents a *diversity of educational sectors*, with primary (4 articles), secondary (4) and tertiary sectors (5) approximately equally represented. *Diversity in country of origin* (according to first author's country) occurs, as Iran, Australia (3 articles), Greece, Portugal, Turkey, USA, Germany, Ireland, Japan, South Africa and Canada are represented. This perspective upon diversity is broadened further when we note that Takahashi's article from Japan belongs in the country context of Rwanda, Blackley's article from Australia includes authors Rahmawati and Fitriani from Indonesia and its country context is Indonesia, and Nhan and Nguyen's article from Australia has country context Vietnam. To diversity of sector and country contexts we can add, for reflection at a later date, *diversity of topics* and *diversity of research design*, also well-illustrated in 28(1).

Turning to 28(1) specifics, Susan Blackley, Yuli Rahmawati, Ella Fitriani, Rachel Sheffield and Rekha Koul authored "Using a *Makerspace* approach to engage Indonesian primary students with STEM". Their use of a social constructivist pedagogical frame for this research deserves recognition as a fine contribution towards developing project-based and inquiry-based learning, as sought by Indonesia's *Curriculum 2013*. In "Children's use of ICT, family mediation, and social inequalities", Ana Diogo, Pedro Silva and Joana Viana provide a substantial investigation of an aspect of ICT in primary schools that deserves increased research attention, namely the family and home environment, and how it interacts with a school's ICT provisions. Dilşad Güven and Ziya Argün, authors of "Width, length, and height conceptions of students with learning disabilities" offer insights into LD students' understanding of one of the fundamental attributes of measurement. In "Action research as professional development: Its role in education reform in the United Arab Emirates" Conley Hathorn and Anna Marie Dillon draw upon their extensive and diverse experiences in Middle Eastern education systems to propose improved ways to integrate action research into professional development. Participants in their research were drawn mainly from kindergarten schools in Abu Dhabi.

In the secondary sector topics, Vasiliki Brouskeli, Vasiliki Kaltsi and Maria Loumakou wrote "Resilience and occupational well-being of secondary education teachers in Greece", giving particular attention to the factors of school urbanisation and working conditions. "Motivation of students for learning English in Rwandan schools" by Tomoharu Takahashi reports upon the rare case of a country which in 2009 changed its medium of instruction from French to English. Maria Tsakeni, with "Inquiry-based practical work in physical sciences: Equitable access and social justice issues" investigated

impediments to implementation of practical work in two South African schools and developed recommendations concerning instructional leadership and assessment practices. Tracy Wong, Xi Tao and Chiaki Konishi in "Teacher support in learning: Instrumental and appraisal support in relation to math achievement" used data from Canada's participation in *PISA 2012* to offer insights into the effectiveness of different kinds of feedback that maths teachers may give in secondary classrooms.

Among the tertiary sector topics, Shirin Abadikhah, Zahra Aliyan and Seyed Hassan Talebi prepared "EFL students' attitudes towards self-regulated learning strategies in academic writing", drawing attention to issues with time-management, goal setting, and learning about process writing. With "Students' perceptions toward academic competencies: The case of German first-year students", Dana-Kristin Mah and Dirk Ifenthaler accorded particular attention to research skills development, and the potential for greater use of learning analytics and digital badges in the personalising of support services. Australian-based authors Thi Thuy Nhan and Huu Cuong Nguyen contributed "Quality challenges in transnational higher education under profit-driven motives: The Vietnamese experience", offering valuable insights into the topics of commercialised TNHE and effective regulatory mechanisms. In "Reflection-on-action in qualitative research: A critical self-appraisal rubric for deconstructing research" Martin Stynes, Timothy Murphy, Gerry McNamara and Joe O'Hara in Ireland draw thoughtful attention to potential pit-falls in qualitative research. Concluding this issue of IIER, Kirsty Young'a article, "CO-CREATE: Teachers' voices to inform special education teacher education", contains survey findings from 77 respondents who were special education teachers or principals or deputy principals in NSW schools with special education responsibilities.

One of the purposes underlying this reflection upon diversity in IIER is to share with readers some thoughts on how we may monitor our attainment of diversity, and how it may enable IIER editorial staff to refine the following paragraph, which with various kinds of associated, individualised text is now being used more frequently in IIER Editorial staff comments provided to authors of articles we have declined:

> As a generalist journal, IIER seeks to accord recognition to significant issues in educational research, from a diverse range of contexts and perspectives. If a particular topic and context has been well-represented in recent volumes of the journal, the importance of according recognition on the basis of being an under-represented topic or context is lessened, and consideration of a submission becomes more dependent on other criteria, especially the relevance and importance of topic to researchers based in a range of education disciplines and related sub-disciplines, and the academic merit of the submission.

Publication of IIER in HTML format ends

IIER 28(1) is the journal's first issue to be published without a hypertext markup language (HTML) version for the full text of each article. After publishing 27 volumes of IIER in HTML, including volumes 18 to 27 in both HTML and PDF (portable document format) versions[3], why the change? In summary, the main reason is *time saving* for IIER editorial staff.

The importance of time saving has increased markedly in recent years, owing to rapid increases in the number of submissions to IIER. In 2015 we received 124 submissions, in 2016, 196, and in 2017, 306 submissions. Whilst this indicates IIER's high standing as a well-established journal providing open access publication free from author charges, it has prompted or stimulated a number of changes. The main changes to date are increasing our number of associate editors, and evolving IIER's procedures towards improved routines for sharing the editorial staff workload.

From time to time, readers may see Editorials about new associate editors, for example in Editorial 27(1)[4]. Finding new associate editors is not easy, given the changing and more difficult environment within which we seek volunteers for honorary academic editorial work. On the negative side, usually academics are under increasing pressures to publish more research articles, and time set aside towards helping others to publish their research is time taken from their own research activities. Also on the negative side, the globalisation of scholarly publishing, with rapid increases in the number of aspiring authors seeking to publish in an English language journal, means that new associate editors risk being thrown into forever increasing workloads, made more complex when faced with unfamiliar topics and country contexts, the diversity of contemporary educational research methods, and the need to be an English language helper for an increasing proportion of authors.

However, there is a positive side to the changing environment for editorial staff in scholarly publishing activities such as IIER's. The technological revolution underpinning contemporary scholarly publishing has rejuvenated possibilities for small scale publishers such as IIER, facilitated national and international editorial teamwork, and freed editorial workers from being tied to a campus office and a campus library. The ICT revolution is especially important for opening up a home-based activity for the growing numbers of retired academics, some of whom may wish to continue a limited, easy to manage, but academically challenging connection with their pre-retirement careers. One can *donate money* to the Red Cross, Oxfam, MSF and many other international charities, or one can *donate time* to providing specialised assistance to authors in other countries (or offer some combination of both). As expressed by one of us in a recent publication,

> Aspiring academic researchers in developing and newly emerging economies are
> deserving of encouragement, however modest it may be, towards becoming represented
> in the crowded world of international journal articles. [5]

Turning from the broader picture on editorial staff time to the specific action of time saving by ending use of HTML for full text, there are some important matters for noting. Perhaps the most important is that IIER's practices are becoming aligned with the overwhelming majority of academic research journals. This is the use of a table of contents in HTML to link to another HTML file which presents title, authors, abstract and 'bio' information, whilst full text (including title, authors, etc.) is via a PDF file accessed from the abstract, or often also directly linked from the table of contents. The HTML file which presents title, authors, etc., is also the means for presenting the meta tag information that is very important, even essential, for securing each articles' correct

reading by Google and other search engine 'bots' (IIER uses the advice by Google, n.d.)[6].

Another matter to note is that for volumes 18 to 27 the HTML version provided an obligation to give all articles a second proof reading, as the HTML creation was done 'manually' with a text editor instead of an automated creation such as done by MS *Word's* "save as web page" capability. Without this type of second proof reading, we may find a somewhat higher incidence of proof reading errors, because the HTML creation often picked up some errors overlooked in the initial copy editing [7] or during the authors' proof reading. Whilst we could opt for automated creation of full text HTML, it would require some extra workload, which is unlikely to be a worthwhile undertaking, given the widely accepted dominance of current journal publishing by 'PDF only' for the full text of articles.

Examining articles in IIER volumes 18 to 27 (2008-2017), some readers may find that that the HTML version gives a clearer display compared with PDF, whilst others may find no difference, or PDF better than HTML. It depends on your computer's screen resolution, operating system, fonts installed, your personal preferences, and other factors. For example, Roger's *iMac* shows a PDF display which is slightly 'blurry' compared with our *iPad* display, whilst HTML display is of similar quality on both. For another example that enables a side by side comparison of journal articles in HTML and PDF, see IRRODL[8].

In IIER 28(1) readers may encounter instances where a URL (web address) in the References section of an article in PDF format does not open correctly when 'clicked' upon, but returns an error message. The use of MS *Word* to write a PDF from a .docx file has some idiosyncracies and various work arounds are available, but it may take some time to develop an economical and reliable routine for eliminating all such errors. In the meantime, advice from authors and readers about failed hypertext links in an IIER PDF file would be appreciated (please email to rjatkinson@bigpond.com). We hasten to add that we cannot revisit failed hypertext links in pre-2018 PDFs, given that for these articles the HTML versions are available, and that over time some hypertext links will change to failures, owing the publisher deleting the file, changing its location, or retiring its website.

Another question worth noting in the context of editorial staff workloads is "Why not use a journal publishing system such as Open Journal Systems (PKP, 2008)?" [9] In brief, we have failed to date to find a sponsor, that is an institution or organisation which has an operating installation of OJS and is willing to allow IIER to use it without charge. For example, during August 2012 the National Library of Australia rejected our request to use their OJS installation, mainly because "... the breadth of the IIER Journal means that its content often has an international theme and is not always centralised around Australian research topics." [10] Another consideration is the feeling that computer programs such as OJS do not save much time, compared with the essentially human time that goes into composing individualised advice on rejections and acceptances. The current 'manual system' distinguishes IIER from many other journals which require authors and reviewers to log in to a system, in contrast to communicating directly with a real person.

A very important, recent innovation in IIER's editorial practices is the introduction of the *duty editor* concept. To date this is best developed for the *new submissions* duty editor, who records new submissions, despatches an individualised acknowledgment within about 1-3 days, and acts as the lead person for conducting an initial assessment process, consulting with one to several others as deemed necessary. The new submissions duty editor then composes and despatches editorial advice in the case of rejections, or in the case of articles flagged for external review, passes the recommendation to the *external reviews* duty editor, a role for which development is in progress. One of the most important features of the duty editor concept is that we envisage relatively short periods of being 'on duty'. Initially we are trialing one month as the period, based upon the feeling that after one month a duty editor will require some months 'off duty', to catch up with the inevitable backlogs, have a rest, and perhaps even go away on a tour or non-IIER activities! In this way we hope to minimise the fear of '... being thrown into forever increasing workloads', without respite.

Several months ago, our initial target date for this issue, IIER 28(1), was 15 January, mainly because 2017's first issue was dated 15 January. We missed that target, but we are likely to attain a shorter period between 28(1) and 28(2), compared with 2017's 27(2) which was published 12 weeks after 27(1). Currently (30 January 2018) we have nine accepted articles for 28(2), of which 6 are at various stages in our copy editing and formatting process, so we expect the period between (1) and (2) to be shorter this year. Helped along, of course, by the *time saving* described above.

Roger Atkinson
Associate Editor and IIER Website Manager
Clare McBeath
Publisher IIER
Anne Power
Editor IIER

References

1. Power, A., McBeath, C. & Atkinson, R. (2016). Editorial 26(2). *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(2), ii-iii. http://www.iier.org.au/iier26/editorial26-2.html
2. Atkinson, R., McBeath, C. & Power, A. (2016). Editorial 26(4): IIER's growth and jobs for reviewers and editorial staff. *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(4), ii-iv. http://www.iier.org.au/iier26/editorial26-4.html
3. See http://www.iier.org.au/iier-arcs-a.html for access to all volumes of IIER from 1, 1991.
4. McBeath, C., Parker, J., Pepper, C., Atkinson, R. & Power, A. (2017). Editorial 27(1): An early start to Volume 27, and our expanded editorial team. *Issues in Educational Research*, 27(1), ii-iv. http://www.iier.org.au/iier27/editorial27-1.html
5. Atkinson, R. J. (2017). ICT: An editor's grumpy old person perspective. *HERDSA News*, 39(3). http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/pubs/herdsa-news/39-2.html

6. Google (n.d.). *Inclusion guidelines for webmasters.*
    https://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/inclusion.html#indexing
7. The high importance IIER places upon copy editing is emphasised in an editorial
    devoted solely to this topic: McBeath, C., Atkinson, R. & Power, A. (2016). Editorial
    26(3): Copy editing. *Issues in Educational Research*, 26(3), ii-iv.
    http://www.iier.org.au/iier26/editorial26-3.html
8. IRRODL (n.d.). *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning.*
    http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/index
9. PKP (Public Knowledge Project) (2008). *OJS in an hour: An introduction to Open Journal
    Systems Version 2.2.1.0.* https://pkp.sfu.ca/files/OJSinanHour.pdf
10. Email to RJA from the Online Content Coordinator, National Library of Australia, 22
    August 2012.

Please cite as: Atkinson, R., McBeath, C. & Power, A. (2018). Editorial 28(1):
Reflecting on diversity and a format change. *Issues in Educational Research*, 28(1), ii-vii.
http://www.iier.org.au/iier28/editorial28-1.pdf