IIER Editorial 33(3): (i) IIER's first one third of a century; (ii) *The Voice* and voices; (iii) Peer review ... Revisited!

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(i) The long road to IIER's first one third of a century

The topic of IIER's first one third of a century was foreshadowed in IIER Editorial 33(2) [1], characterising it as "approaching", and as a milestone to be reflected upon in Editorial 33(3). But here we are at 33(3) and where is the milestone, or any other signposts? Why is a new characterisation introduced, namely a "long road"? Well, it is a long road, lacking extended opportunities to 'rest a while', or 'reflect a while', to write a milestone. However, we will set aside that line of reflection, because Editorial 33(2) promised to "... rule out further mention of editor fatigue" [1]. Whilst editor fatigue is certainly a key "long road" issue, there are two other issues that are also "long road" and also worthy of milestone mentions of how we see these as relating to IIER's futures.

The first is *The Voice,* Australia's national constitutional referendum held on 14 October 2023, and "voices", a word and a contemporary concept often encountered in IIER articles, as illustrated below. The second is peer review in academic publishing, focusing upon workloads for editorial staff and reviewer workloads which are perceived by many journals, including IIER, as approaching unsustainable levels.

(ii) *The Voice* and voices

The origins, aspirations, and cultural and political implications for *The Voice*, or more formally, *Indigenous Voice to Parliament Referendum*, have been reported very extensively in Australia's media outlets [2a-d]. As the national political activities underlying *The Voice* [3] gained increased Australian media attention during 2023 a key idea seemed to emerge, with succinct relevance from an IIER perspective: voices. To examine a role we envisaged for the word "voices", related words and phrases such as "voiceless" and "giving a voice", and potentially relevant, complementary concepts such as "self-identity" and "self-efficacy", we undertook some speed reading in recent issues of IIER. Actually, not reading, but mainly speed searching using *Google, Google Scholar* and *MS Word*, the purpose being to find illustrative examples of invoking "voices" and related words. What contexts, purposes and associations? A very brief, exploratory study that we could fit in, whilst very much engaged in 'the last month' peak period of copy editing and formatting for this issue, IIER 33(3) [4].

Beginning with the journal's contents pages, we found five article titles in 2022-23 that included "voices", for example "Voices of novice teachers..."; "Indonesian EFL students' voices"; and "Voices of high school students" [5]. Turning to individual articles in 2022-23, a much larger sample, 65 included "voices", for example "... their marginalised voice"; "leave them feeling powerless and voiceless"; "the voice of teacher education institutions";

"Those whose voices are suppressed..."; "... new decision-making voices"; their voice was appropriately presented"; "... their voice in this research"; and "... listen to the voices of women". Thus it became readily established that "voices" and similar have appeared frequently in IIER, used in diverse ways by IIER authors. To go further, we looked further into some of these examples that seemed most notable, in order to look for common purposes or associations between IIER authors' use of "voices", and "*The Voice*". Three excerpts follow.

> *Excerpt 1: Groenewald (2023) [7]*
> Students in subordinate positions may experience discrimination and marginalisation, based on their language, race, gender, or culture, when their social identities are not recognised on campus. This may leave them feeling powerless and voiceless. [7]

> *Excerpt 2: Tohidian et al. (2023) [8]*
> ... we still suffer from lack of fair attention to those who are at the bottom of the pyramid of power in terms of financial and social status. Those whose voices are suppressed due to engagement with attaining very basic needs. [8]

> *Excerpt 3: Sims et al. (2022) [9]*
> We share our experiences amongst our Special Interest Group of researchers through the process of collaborative auto-ethnography, which "acknowledges the social and communal nature of academic meaning making" (Tuinamuana et al, 2019). In this way,
>
>> (w)e contribute unique and autobiographical perspective to a multi-voice text. This combination of voices can create rich, complex and layered texts as individual voices are interrogated within a community of practitioners (Tuinamuana et al., 2019). [9]

The first two excerpts illustrate "voices" invoked in the course of research interventions that serve those whose *social identities are not recognised*, and *those who are at the bottom of the pyramid*. Being *voiceless* equates to being *powerless*. These are circumstances having much in common with the circumstances underlying *The Voice*.

The third excerpt, though very much based on *voices*, cites a new topic, *collaborative autoethnography,* which we imagine may have at least something in common with the composing of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017* [3]. However, post-2017 and especially in the last few months before *The Voice* Referendum Day, 14 October 2023, Australia's respect towards such collaboration seems to have receded markedly. At the time of finalising IIER 33(3) and this editorial, 8 October 2023, Australia's media and political pollsters are predicting a heavy defeat for *The Voice's* "Yes" case and thus a firm rejection for *Uluru*.
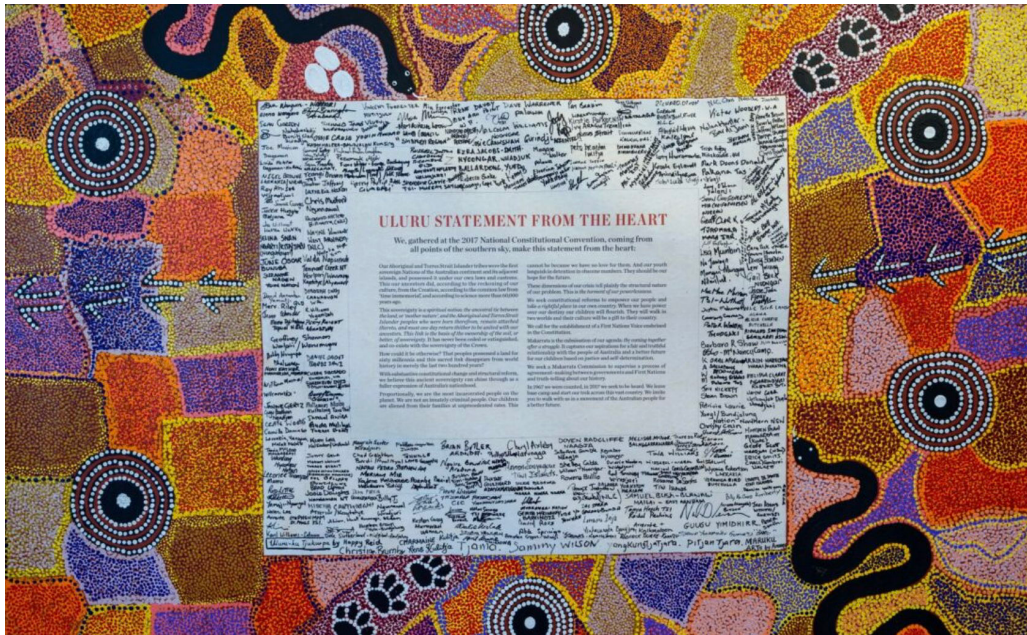
Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017) [3] (use web or PDF reader "zoom in" function to view)

So, does defeat for the *The Voice* and rejection for *Uluru* have specific implications for IIER as an academic research journal? No; probably at the most only minimal, though the same cannot be said concerning our Australian authors and sponsoring society members - for many there will be a long road to recovery. It's different for IIER because over the years we have sustained a good representation of topics relating to indigenous education, especially in international contexts [10]. IIER's international authors are unlikely to be deterred by political events within Australia. Or so we hope!

To illustrate, may we recommend to readers interested in multicultural and cross-cultural matters, some browsing in IIER 33, for example, Fatgehipon (2023) [11] and Dewantara et al. (2023) [12]? To illustrate further, we may see increased attention to researching links between indigenous education and the topics of identity (or self-identity or social identity), and efficacy (or self efficacy). Or, in other fields of social sciences research, even links between *Uluru* and *Yes* rejection, and the sub-fields of *identity* and *efficacy*.

(iii) Peer review in academic publishing: Challenges ... revisited!

The main reason for revisiting the topic of peer review, so soon after our comments in Editorial 32(4) [13], is viewing Taylor & Francis Author Services' advice last year – excerpt and graphic quoted below [14]. It prompted in our minds a question, What is meant by "ensuring that the review process is as objective as possible"? To delineate one kind of analysis, we could extend the question to ask, "Is being 'as objective as possible' feasible, appropriate, and the best directive for contemporary scholarly discourse?"

Anonymous peer review

How to make your article ready for double-anonymous peer review

> Before submitting your article, you may need to make it anonymous if your chosen
> journal uses double-anonymous peer review (you can check the instructions for authors
> to see if this is the case). This is to ensure that reviewers won't be able to identify you,
> your co-authors, or the institution where the research was carried out, ensuring that the
> review process is as objective as possible. [14]

This is a basis for a "musing" that is very relevant for IIER and perhaps for many other journals. To begin with, is being objective feasible? No, cannot be achieved in the case of IIER, because being "subjective" is firmly embedded, owing to our declared intention to use "significant issues in educational research" as a criterion for acceptance. However, it is difficult to define a clear, objective dividing line between "significant issue" and "not a significant issue".

Appropriate? No, at least in the case of IIER and possibly many other journals, because being "subjective" may be a necessary tactic under the severe pressures arising from our current circumstances of a high submission rate, a low acceptance rate, acceptances capped at about 80 per year, and a chronic shortage of skilled, knowledgeable and empathetic volunteers for editorial duties. Economies in editorial and review staff time per submission are needed, and "remaining subjective" on the question of "significant issue" is one kind of economy. Subjective judgments, with little need to compose and record reasons for accepting or rejecting, may require much less time per article than objective judgments that incorporate good reasons, which may be time-consuming to compose and record. Can efforts to become 'as objective as possible' be appropriate if they contribute to an ever-lengthening queue of submissions?

The best directive for contemporary scholarly discourse? No, because in practice being "objective" may obstruct, or curb, or inhibit attainment of another purpose that is also highly valued, namely being "inclusive". At end 2020, IIER declared [15]:

> ... discussion of human resourcing for a journal that we believe is a fine contributor to
> *Open with purpose: Taking action to build structural equity and inclusion* will be held over until
> IIER 31 in 2021. A rather large number of authors have been promised publication of
> IIER 30(4) on 10 December 2020, and as usual the Editorial is the final task prior to
> publication, so for the time being, "Cut!". [15]

Here we are, nearing three years later and approaching the end of 2023. Almost no action on that long ago promised hold over, and again having to invoke a similar hold over on discussion about peer review reform, until publication of IIER 33(4) in mid-December 2023. As usual the Editorial is the final task prior to publication, so for the time being, "Cut!".

References

1. Atkinson, R. (2023). Editorial 33(2): (i) IIER's 2022 review outcomes; (ii) Approaching IIER's first one third of a century. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(2), ii-iv. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/editorial33-2.html

2a. *ABC News* (2023). *Indigenous Voice to Parliament Referendum.* https://www.abc.net.au/news/voice-to-parliament-referendum

2b. *The Conversation* (2023). [searches for 'voice'] https://theconversation.com/au/search?q=Voice

2c. *Guardian Australia* (2023). *Voice to Parliament.* https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/indigenous-voice-to-parliament

2d. *The Monthly* (2023). [searches for 'voice'] https://www.themonthly.com.au/search#gsc.q=voice
   Note: These media outlets are a convenience sample - known to and read or viewed frequently by us; are open access/free to air (one gift subscription, *The Monthly*).

3. Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017). *The Uluru Dialogue.* Sydney NSW: Indigenous Law Centre, UNSW. Sydney. https://ulurustatement.org/ [image from https://ulurustatement.org/prof-megan-davis-mundines-national-press-club-speech-inflammatory/

4. Atkinson, R. & McBeath, C. (2019). Editorial 29(4): 'The last month' copy editing and formatting. *Issues in Educational Research*, 29(4), ii-vi. http://www.iier.org.au/iier29/editorial29-4.html

5. Search for "voice*" in IIER web pages "20**.conts.html" (year range 2022 to 2023; 144 articles).

6. Search for at least one of the words "voice voices voiceless" in all articles in IIER 2022 and 2023, including 33(3) (iier22/*.pdf and iier23/*.pdf; 144 articles)

7. Groenewald, E. (2023). A student's journey in South African higher education: Positioning and repositioning within a new space. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(2), 591-607. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/groenewald.pdf

8. Tohidian, I., Khorsandi Taskoh, A. & Abbaspour, A. (2023). Stories from children of labour in Iran: Do universities have a social responsibility to help resolve the problems? *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(1), 414-427. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/tohidian.pdf

9. Sims, M., Calder, P., Maloney, M., Rothe, A., Rogers, M., Doan, L., Kakana, D. & Georgiadou, S. (2022). Neoliberalism and government responses to Covid-19: Ramifications for early childhood education and care. *Issues in Educational Research*, 32(3), 1174-1195. http://www.iier.org.au/iier32/sims.pdf [see for Tuinamuana et al, 2019]

10. To explore representation of indigenous education topics in IIER, use this or similar Google Scholar searches (copy and paste into web reader address box): https://scholar.google.com.au/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&as_ylo=2013&q=indigenous+education+source%3A%22issues+in+educational+research%22&btnG= [About 80 results since 2013]

11. Fatgehipon, A. H. (2023). Multicultural education through social studies subjects for junior high school students in Maluku, Indonesia. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(3), 937-956. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/fatgehipon.pdf

12. Dewantara, J. A., Sulistyarini, Prasetiyo, W. H., Efriani, Riyanti, D., Afandi & Ulfah, M. (2023). School teachers, national identity and an Indonesian-Malaysian border community: A case study in Entikong. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(2), 510-528. http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/dewantara.pdf

13. Atkinson, R. (2022). Editorial 32(4): (i) An editor's lament; (ii) Peer review in academic publishing; (iii) Update on new .au namespace. *Issues in Educational Research*, 32(4), ii-vi. http://www.iier.org.au/iier32/editorial32-4.html

14. Taylor & Francis (2023). *Anonymous peer review.* Author Services T&F. https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/publishing-your-research/peer-review/anonymous-peer-review/ [we recommend visiting the home page for T&F's author services at https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/, for excellent, professional advice]

15. Atkinson, R. (2020). Editorial 30(4): Views from and about Open Access Week 2020. *Issues in Educational Research*, 30(4), ii-v. http://www.iier.org.au/iier30/editorial30-4.html