

Editorial 29(2): Two items from recent editorial correspondence

The usual editorial in an academic research journal provides readers with one or two sentences about each article, highlighting the significance of its contribution to the new issue, often with linkings to broader themes within the journal's range of research topics. However, departing from the conventional style, for Editorial 29(2) we will adopt an "author agenda", based upon two items from recent correspondence. To begin with the first of our author correspondents:

Hello Dear Prof. Atkinson,

Hope you are fine.

I have published in ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH. The journal is excellent and of repute. I have a suggestion. The website needs to be improved in terms of quality, icons, structure, visibility, etc.

Also, I think it is better to update the website and change the way manuscripts are submitted via e-mail. The journal needs to be moved to a new journal management system. Online submissions need to be inserted.

Thank you,

Our reply to Correspondent 1, anonymised, minimally edited to add references and maintain clarity for other readers, centred upon priorities:

Thank you for the suggestions about IIER's website <http://www.iier.org.au>. Although these are well-intentioned suggestions, we are not in a position to consider website improvements, or to accord any priority to matters such as a journal management system. Perhaps we could reiterate some key features of IIER's circumstances which underlie this response:

1. IIER does not have any income from "article processing charges" or from subscriptions. The absence of such charges is highly appreciated by authors and readers, but the downside is that all expenses have to be covered by sponsorship or *pro bono* work. Currently, our sole sponsorship is by WAIER for our website <http://www.iier.org.au>, whilst our last *pro bono* contribution (other than editorial staff and reviewers) was by Dr Lou Siragusa of Curtin University, who in 2008 provided the home page design and logo that IIER has used since then. Some attempts to find a sponsored (free) access to a journal management system such as OJS [1], have failed, and paid access to such services is too expensive. Other paid services, such as the DOI service [2], are also not affordable.
2. IIER's editorial work is conducted by a small number of volunteers, the "Associate Editors" [3], who are familiar to many authors as they take turns to be a "Duty Editor" for a month, in one of two main roles: duty editor for acknowledging submissions and providing initial advice (decline or flag for external review); and duty editor for conducting external reviews. There are other roles, at present continuous rather than on a monthly roster, these being copy editing of accepted and revised

submissions; and formatting of articles and responding to authors' final proofreading prior to publication. A part of the Associate Editors' effort could be diverted into website enhancement, or into new searches for sponsors, but that would reduce our capacity in the really vital central core of academic publication, "looking after authors" (which is the topic arising from the second of our author correspondents).

3. Notwithstanding the downside from having no income, IIER is proving to be attractive to authors and readers. The evidence is mainly from numbers of submissions and bibliometric data [4], but this is supplemented by anecdotal evidence found frequently in editorial correspondence, for example, from Correspondent 1 above, "The journal is excellent and of repute". Ironically, we receive appreciations from authors who find that their submission is acknowledged by a real person, experienced in educational research publishing, instead of by a computer program.

Viewing the "really vital central core of academic publication" as "looking after authors" may seem somewhat radical, given that many other descriptors need to be also in mind, such as "academic merit"; "contribution of new knowledge"; "novel findings"; "significant advance in topic X in field of research Y"; and so on. However, attaining these qualities is the core purpose underlying our "looking after authors". Correspondent 2's plea illustrates one aspect, "removing possible faults", which from an editorial staff and reviewer perspective equates to much work in providing advice on how to improve authors' research and its presentation.

Dear Editor

Hello

Attached we have sent a paper to your valuable journal. Unlike any submitted research, it is not free from possible mistakes or deficiencies, but we have done our best attempt and pinned our hope on publishing it in this journal. Language teachers are in a terrible pressure in (non-Western country X) due to financial problems and many cultural issues. Despite that we have conducted this research and direly stand in the need of its publication for educational and professional promotion. Please help us in removing possible faults and publishing it in this worthy venue. In spite of severe economical problems we are ready to pay the expenses of reviewing and publication to some extent. We impatiently wait to hear good news from you.

At this stage we cannot offer Correspondent 2 anything more than the usual acknowledgement of a new submission, adding only the routine information that "Publication in IIER is free, that is, IIER does require any payment of page or publication charges." [5] We can understand authors who have "pinned our hope on publishing it in this journal", as IIER does strive to be more inclusive towards ESL authors and non-Western contexts. Among other measures, we use this routine advice to authors:

We recommend to prospective authors that they self-assess the quality of a proposed submission, by searching IIER (see <http://www.iier.org.au/about/iier-search.html>) using keywords that are relevant for their research. The main question will be, "Can I do as well as, or perhaps even better than, similar articles already published in IIER?"

Such advice points to *what* is being published in IIER, and to matters such as academic merit, novel findings, etc. It also points to information about *who* is being published, showing to all the diversity of authors and country contexts that is a particularly notable feature of IIER's activities. [6]

Roger Atkinson
Co-editor IIER 29(2), 2019

References

- [1] OJS (Open Journal Systems). <https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/>
- [2] For IIER's consideration of DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) see Power, A. & Atkinson, R. (2017). Editorial 27(2). *Issues in Educational Research*, 27(2), ii-v. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier27/editorial27-2.html>
For information about DOIs, including costs, see <http://www.doi.org>
- [3] For IIER editorial staff list, see <http://www.iier.org.au/iier-inf.html#staff>
- [4] Information about numbers of submissions and bibliometric data for IIER appear in a number of Editorials, the most important and most recent include Editorial 29(1): Revisiting some IIER statistics; Editorial 28(3): Reflecting upon the numbers for 2018; and Editorial 25(4): Surfing the waves of change in IIER's first 25 years. Access via <http://www.iier.org.au/iier-arcs-a.html>
- [5] IIER: Notes for intending authors. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier-submissions.html>
- [6] See, for example (needs updating!), Atkinson, R. (2013). Journals with borders, journals without borders: Under-representation of Asian countries in educational research journals. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 32(3), 507-510. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.790528>

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