

Making Scholarship Meaningful: Equitable Terms of Exchange in (Transnational) Publication

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Academic publication is not as easy for scholars around the world to produce--whether they are on the side of authors or that of reviewers and editors--as it is for institutions to demand it. It is even harder to make transnational publication meaningful, unless we keep making the process more accessible, product more locally relevant, and exchange across borders more equitable.

Especially in the global south, and more so beyond dominant national centers of academic activity, scholars lack a variety of privileges to be able to publish in journals that their institutions demand/value and the scholars themselves wish to publish. But institutions in the global south increasingly demand their scholars to publish in “international” (meaning Western) venues, to demonstrate indexing and assessment established elsewhere/ internationally, and to write for and about contexts that are not familiar to them can force scholars and educators to produce scholarship that neither comes out of nor is applicable in their own real world. Having to review the scholarly conversation of faraway contexts, using research methods and theories that are “globally” current, and taking intellectual positions that allow writers to speak back to the global disciplinary “community” each poses a layer of challenge for many scholars in the global peripheries. What research questions should one ask? How can one determine what is new and significant (to whom), what has been said and what will be of interest to the readers of the journals, and indeed, who are those readers and on what basis do the gatekeepers (editors, reviewers, etc) assess the writing?

It is quite challenging for scholars in the global peripheries to tackle challenges like the above, especially as university administrators increase pressure

on the quantity of publication, number of citations, name brand or affiliation of the publisher, indexing and impact factor, number of downloads and views. In this situation, scholars cannot afford to just critique the status quo, or those who put the pressure in the wrong places. They must engage stakeholders (especially those with authority and influence) in conversations about making “international” publication first of all relevant/valuable for their own communities and countries, as well as meaningful to their disciplines/professions locally. They must show why respect and recognition of transnational scholarly production and exchange must be accorded not just to numbers and prestige but also to the quality of scholarship defined in terms of inclusion and respect of diverse voices, equity and justice to all people, and the local application of the knowledge produced. Scholars must show other stakeholders how this can be done by shifting the focus of conversation to what makes sense locally first.

Conversations about challenges of international publication usually focus on cross-cultural differences, language barriers, and other logistical and practical challenges such as time and energy, patience and discipline, intellectual resources and funding, access to data and scholarship, or mentorship for less experienced scholars and institutional reward for all writers. These are all very serious obstacles, and universities that demand more publication, international publication, or, for that matter, interdisciplinary publication must provide training and resource for faculty scholars to tackle them.

However, even more significant than practical challenges are affective ones. Most importantly, scholars must feel a sense of purpose and motivation for conducting research and producing scholarship. Universities and professional communities around the world are successful in having their scholars publish in high-ranking journals and with prestigious publishers. But professional reward and social recognition may or may not align with the need for research and scholarship to help solve the most immediate social problems, develop meaningful designs and useful products, explore local cultural or artistic issues. Scholarly publication that is done primarily for prestige (for showing off, reporting, feeling good) doesn’t really motivate writers very deeply, whether the venues are international or local, prestigious or not-so-familiar. In fact, scholarship that is not grounded in the real-world and doesn’t make valuable impact on society can quickly become superficial, vague, or even fake.

Of course, scholarly publication brings communities across social and political boundaries together, as that is exactly the desire of this journal. But significant benefit of international publication--as well as interdisciplinary, intercultural, or across other borders--can only be the product of deliberate and thoughtful design, rather than being incidental. Meaningful scholarly conversation across spaces and boundaries must be created with the intention to cross the borders, counter differences, and create and share mutual benefits. It cannot be done on the terms of one place or a few places that are imposed everywhere. Nor will just calling something “international” create meaningful difference. Transnational scholarly publication/conversation must be done in ways that helps

authors create knowledge that is meaningful to them and is exchanged with others who find mutual benefits in the sharing.

This journal began as a humble attempt to create scholarly conversations and mutual benefit among educators and scholars researching or otherwise involved in education (pedagogy, practice, or policy) across national borders, including perspectives on higher education across the disciplines. As we publish the third issue this year, we are able to report a few progresses we have made, from the technical to the social and professional, with the journal. First, with three issues being published, we have applied for indexing/listing the journal in a number of databases including ERIC, Ebscohost, Cabell's directory, Google Scholar, CiteFactor, Higher Education Abstracts, ResearchGate, DOAJ, and Open Journals Directory. Articles now have the doi (digital object identifier) number, as well as being available for free download from the Open Journal and Zenodo databases. The journal has also moved from a standalone site to a platform which facilitates the peer review and production process, as well as indexing and promotion in a variety of ways. All these initiatives will increase access and visibility for authors, as well as potential for better recognition and reward for their work.

More importantly, the journal is now part of the STAR (Society of Transnational Academic Researchers) Network of scholars, a network that publishes a number of academic journals and shares support and resources in the background, helping scholars collaborate to make significant improvement in rigor and quality of the journals. The Network, driven by its mission of contributing to global social mobility through academic research and knowledge-production, allows the members journals to share and strengthen their vision and mission, such as those of this journal described on its home page (www.ojed.org/jimphe). As significantly, we now have more reviewers contributing to the process and additional scholars who will be supporting editorial, review, and production process from the next issue. We plan to continue building on all the above progresses in future years.

One issue that I brought up above is worth unpacking a bit more as I conclude with a promotional move (this being a relatively new journal). If you are reading this issue and would like to submit your article manuscript to future issues, please consider in particular that the readers of this journal are very diverse. Like the writers and issues of the articles, the readers are also in different countries and contexts, have different disciplinary backgrounds, and may be teachers or teacher-scholars or staff members in very different education systems around the world. This means that authors cannot assume the readers to readily understand disciplinary jargon, specialized issues, or educational and other contexts; instead, authors must explain, however briefly, those elements in their writing. You may also want to read the journal's past issues, as well as skimming through information about the journal on the site, in order to familiarize yourself with the journal and its mission. Please also consider analytically reading a few articles, considering how you might be able to communicate your ideas most effectively with audiences across countries/cultures and disciplines. Of course, these are

common strategies for submitting manuscripts to fit *any* journal; the point here is that in the case of journals like this, the strategies above become particularly important and productive. Diversity and access are at the heart of this journal.

The articles in this issue reflect a diversity of authorial backgrounds and perspectives, and with the help of our reviewers and editorial colleagues, I believe the articles are accessible for readers in different places. In an article on the effects of rurality in higher education, Amankulova has presented some thought-provoking perspectives on the issue, sharing personal experiences and critical insights about education in Kazakhstan. Fattal and Alon have highlighted the importance of global awareness, illustrating its benefit through an international experiential education program. Writing about the same issue with a focus on teacher training, Kyle Blankson and Nur-Awaleh show the value of study abroad programs for prospective teachers. Kim, Jones, and Pham write about a very different dimension of education, the building of character. Mamun advocates for a more nature-centered view and practice of education, which he argues is no less relevant for our time than it was in the 19th century. Focusing on teacher development again, Dhakal shows the value of information technologies for the professional development of mathematics teachers. And, finally, Dong highlights the importance of sexual health literacy for international students.

I am deeply grateful to Krishna Bista for his support with the new platform, with review and copyediting, and with indexing/listing of the journal in a variety of databases. I was fortunate to be able to work very closely with such a capable and generous colleague on this issue. I would also like to thank Uttam Gaulee and other colleagues on the board, as well as all the reviewers who have given their time generously.

I hope you find the articles in this issue worth your time and that you will help us promote the journal among your professional colleagues and networks. Please direct any questions to jimphejournal@gmail.com.

Editor Bio

Shyam Sharma is Associate Professor at the State University of New York in Stony Brook where he also serves as Graduate Program Director in his department. His research and publications, which have appeared in flagship publication venues of Writing Studies, focus on writing in the disciplines, international students and education, cross-cultural rhetoric and communication, and new media. A graduate of the University of Louisville's Rhetoric and Composition master's and doctoral programs, Dr. Sharma is recipient of prestigious awards such as the Cross Award from AACU and the Nepal Bidya Bhusan from the government of Nepal, the country where he received his earlier education.

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