

Developing a Research Agenda and Selecting Appropriate Journals

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Developing a Research Agenda

A research agenda is an essential endeavor for the higher education academic as well as others whose work involves considerable research based activities. Like the espousal of one's teaching or leadership philosophy, the development of a research agenda is a process and serves as a tool for organizing one's work. Several high level considerations for the construction of one's research agenda are:

- Distinguish the difference between your dissertation and your research agenda
- Consider the areas of research you are passionate about
- Keep in mind that one's research agenda, while it should be thoughtfully constructed, may change over time
 - Considerer the evaluation of your agenda every few years for currency
- Talk to trusting colleagues, faculty, and mentors about your research philosophy/agenda for feedback and refinement
- Read widely within your field and related fields
- Read the works of others who are highly regarded in your areas of interest
- Consider how your work will add to the body of knowledge and educational innovations
- Think about the types of questions you would like to answer for each of your interests
- Attend conferences, courses, and workshops to gain knowledge about and to understand the current trends related to your agenda
- Spend some time the draft a conceptual framework which articulates the relationships across your research interests. Preferably you would like to aim for interdependence among the interests to the extent possible

- Consider a timeline for actualizing the deliverables of your agenda (e.g., conference presentations, journal articles, concept papers, etc.)
 - Ground these consideration within the culture of your institution, the resources available
 - Do not rule out co-authorship and collaborative projects

Identifying Appropriate Journals in Your Field

Like the development of one's research agenda, choosing the appropriate journal to showcase your work requires effort, information seeking, and evaluative decision-making. While the process is doable, it is not always an easy one, but with time one is sure to gain a certain level of security. Since most journals have been around less than forty year, with more than 400 new journals introduced during the 1990's and 2000's, more time is required of authors to seek out and to evaluate the appropriate fit between his/her work and the journal.

The following are considerations for choosing an appropriate journal:

Pitfalls of journal selection

- The primary reason that editors give for manuscript rejections is that "the manuscript is not appropriate for the journal."

Selecting the appropriate journal

- Familiarize yourself with the aim and scope of the journal
- Consider the discipline and geographic range of the journal
 - Some journals are categorized as comprehensive and accept a broad range of manuscripts
 - Others are discipline bound and focus on a particular area such as . . .
 - ♣ Administration and leadership
 - ♣ Educational psychology
 - ♣ Teacher education
 - ♣ Education technology

- Some journals are regionally bound
- Others are nationally or internationally focused
- Familiarize yourself with the manuscript mechanics for each journal
 - Structured Abstract (e.g., JEA)
 - Word length
 - ♣ Most journals fall within the 5000 to 7000 word limit range
 - References and Formatting
 - ♣ APA (required by nearly 50%)
 - ♣ Journal House Style (around 33%)
 - ♣ Harvard (6%)
 - ♣ Chicago (5 %)
 - ♣ Other (2%)
- Be aware of the target audience. Note that because many journals do not provide information on the target audience, it is important to read as many abstracts and full-length manuscripts as possible to make an informed judgment.
- Consider the number of issues per year
 - Most journals publish quarterly issues followed by biannual and triannual issues, respectively
- Ranking
 - Impact Factor (See Journal Citation Reports) was developed in the 1960's and ranks the frequency that an "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period
 - QScore (Based on esteem perception by reviewers) range form 0 – 29.33

Sample Ranking of Top Journals by QScore

| Journal | Scope | Country | QScore rank |
|--|---------------|---------|-------------|
| American Educational Research Journal | Comprehensive | USA | 29.33 |
| British Educational Research Journal | Comprehensive | UK | 29.30 |
| Review of Education Research | Comprehensive | USA | 29.21 |
| Teachers College Press | Comprehensive | USA | 28.54 |
| Harvard Education Review | Comprehensive | USA | 26.04 |

Source: Fairbairn, H., Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Preston, G., Cantwell, R., & Scevak, J. (2008). *A profile of education Journals*. NSW Australia: SORTI

- **Journal rankings may be important for institutional tenure and promotion decisions**

Source: How to find the Impact Factor of a Journal (see <http://www.hsl.virginia.edu/services/howdoi/hdi-jcr.cfm#tabview=tab0>)