

EDITORIAL

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PUBLICATION QUALITY INDICATORS

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Recent times have witnessed rapid expansion in quantity of educational research. The expansion has been accentuated by the multiple effects of the internet that have made possible developing stronger data resources on various areas in which researches are being undertaken. The researcher, to day, without having to travel to many places, has much better access into many aspects of scholarly researches than were available in earlier times. Research outcomes are brought out in the form of research reports, theoretical discourses, graphical presentations, diagrams etc. and are disseminated by getting them published in the form of articles in journals, chapters in books and books. During last decade, Indian higher education has witnessed a surge in scientific publications. As the recent guidelines for promotion and recruitment have given wightages to publications, there has been rise in interest among various categories of higher education faculty as well as aspirants for jobs in higher education system in getting their manuscripts published. This has led to sudden rise in number of academic journals, some of which get printed without any sort of editing. The authors become happy when the journal in which their articles are printed has ISSN, although ISSN is not an indicator of quality. Participants become happy, when the publications of conference proceedings, in which their papers are included, have an ISBN, although ISBN is not an indicator of quality. Statutory bodies having responsibility for improving quality of education have not yet evolved any instrument to check the quality of the journals and the quality of the articles printed therein. Most of the journals do not go for peer review of the manuscripts. Many books having no copyright are being reprinted in India as a new publication, at times, with a pseudo author. The practice of reprinting of books as revised edition without the knowledge of the authors has vitiated the atmosphere of quality in publication.

There have been efforts at the international and national level to improve the quality of educational research. Since last decade, the quality of research publications has improved a lot with the availability of soft ware like Atlas.ti, Cassandre, Maxqda, NVivo9, Transana, Weft QDA, and Win Relan etc.. Software can handle data not only in texts but also in video and other digital media formats. It saves time and makes handling of large amount of data easier and improves the level of transparency. The conventional indicators of the quality of an article published in a journal are (a) peer review status, (b) acceptance/rejection rate for the journal in which the article has been printed, (c) frequency of citation of article, (d) journal impact factor and (e) usage metrics. These indicators are brought out by private agencies, mostly based in USA. The conventional indicators do not cover research publications in languages other than English. They indicate the number of times an article or a journal has been quoted and do not tell about the nature of the citation - whether the publication was praised or blamed. At present, no indicator is available for assessing quality of books and chapters written by individuals in books.

There have been instances of wrong data and outdated data found not only in publications of private publishers but also in publications of government organisations and academic bodies including universities. Although internet has been accused of being used for encouraging plagiarism, it has also been used for checking plagiarism. Reputed journals subject the manuscripts to such tests. Recently, when the abstracts of the last AIAER conference was placed in the web site, an e-mail reported about the availability of the same abstract in another location in the internet and after verification, the concerned abstract was withdrawn. Similarly, in case of peer review of this journal, one reviewer noticed that the same author's article was already available in internet, having most of the paragraphs of the manuscript submitted for review. Placing all articles in journals in the internet is a huge task. Agencies responsible for qualitative improvement of education may need to consider implementing this task.

In April 2008, the European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI) project was initiated to develop new indicators and methodologies for determining the quality of educational science research (Gogolin 2010). Besides involving educational researchers, the project also involved experts from computer science and informatics, biblio and scientometrics, linguistics, educational information centres and publishing houses. The languages other than English covered by the reported EERQI project were Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The reasons, for which the European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI) project was started in Europe, are also the reasons for which, such a project may be undertaken in India. As regards language, Indian situation is similar to European situation. The Indian Educational Research Quality Indicators (IERQI) project may start with English and Hindi languages and later cover Sanskrit and Urdu and remaining official languages of the States. The goals of the IERQI project may be to reinforce and enhance the worldwide visibility and competitiveness of Indian educational research. More specifically, the project may aim to

- develop new indicators and methodologies to determine quality of educational research publications,
- propose a prototype framework for establishing such indicators and methodologies,
- make this framework operational on a multilingual basis (starting with English),
- produce a search and query engine for resource harvesting and text analysis,
- test transferability of the IERQI indicators into other fields in social sciences and the humanities,
- develop a sustainability plan for quality assessment of Indian educational research publications.

IERQI has to be a highly collaborative project and may be based on the participation of various stakeholders. Efforts may also need to be made to ensure partnership of publishers of educational journals and publishers of books for giving permission to digitalise their journals and books or supplying digitalised version of their publications exclusively for development and validation of educational research quality indicators. The universities and boards and councils of school education and the national and state level agencies for production of textbooks may be approached for making their books and journals available for the project.

The activities in the project can be divided into three phases. The actions during the first phase may be (a) Listing and building proof of concept specifications; (b) Developing testing methods to the aggregated relevant documents; (c) Evolving the search and query engine; (d) Collecting, converting and storing the electronic content; (e) Reviewing the type and scope of meta data and full text formats available as well as of server requirements; (f) Revisiting traditional indicators; and (g) Suggesting new indicators. The second phase may be the testing phase and the actions at this stage may be (a) Testing of new indicators and methodologies agreed upon in the first phase on a continuously expanding content base; (b) Specifying work on the search and query engine with integration of multi-lingual thesauri and refining it to accommodate activities in the third phase. At the third phase, the results of the project may be placed before the scientific community as well as before other relevant public, including policy makers on local, national and international levels.

The process of formulation of strategies for operationalising IERQI may start with formation of a core group that may consist of educational research organisations, writers, editors, statisticians, computer software experts, language experts, and documentation experts and also representatives from relevant central government organisations like ICSSR, CIIL, KHS, RSS, etc. An initial workshop may be conducted to develop operational strategies covering issues such as (a) Techniques of harvesting data and developing a search and query engine; (b) Bibliometric issues related to relationship among key words, abstracts and full texts; (c) Types of approaches to develop indicators relevant of specific categories of materials; (d) Process of establishing validity and reliability of these indicators and estimating their

durability and usability from Indian perspective; (e) Preparing an action plan: schedule of meetings, workshops and conferences to thrash out various techniques and approaches suggested in the meeting; (f) Preparing a budget; and (g) Preparing an action plan.

The outcomes of the project will improve the current standards of research quality indicators for the field of social sciences and the humanities, by applying the new sets of indicators utilising multiple educational research methodologies catering to multilingual situation in Indian context. IERQI will have impact not only on research quality and publications, but also on policy issues.

REFERENCE

Gogolin, I. (2010) European Educational Research Quality Indicators (EERQI): State-of-the-Art Report. Available at <http://www.eerqi.eu/sites/default/files/EERQI%20state-of-the-art%20report-december%202010.pdf>