

Editorial

Reflections on Restructuring of IEJME

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As an international journal, one of the goals of International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education (IEJME) is to stimulate discussions in our field through publishing significant and innovative research studies. To pursue this goal better, IEJME has gone through a restructuring process recently. The journal is now stronger with its two new associate editors, an editorial assistant, and a renewed international editorial board. We now have a shorter and improved review process. There are certain measures and challenges we needed to take into consideration in revising and improving the structure of the journal. The purpose in this article is to share the changes made to the journal and their impact in its progress.

We initially started restructuring IEJME by refining the Aims and Scope statement of the journal. Previously, this section consisted of a list of topics that are important in mathematics education. In its current form, it gives the message that the journal is not only open to any submission within mathematics education, but it also highlights, “stimulat[ing] discussions at all levels of mathematics education through significant and innovative research” at international level. This new focus helped us revise the international editorial board based on expertise of the participants and their willingness and commitment to help further the journal’s growing reputation. The current international editorial board includes well known mathematics educators from 14 different countries throughout the world. This variety gives us the opportunity to receive feedback from different angles during the review process and in making decisions about the future actions to be taken by the journal.

We then modified the reviewer form and allowed reviewers to submit their reviews online. We now have a more complete reviewer database and an improved electronic review form that the reviewers can effectively use in making their recommendations about the articles. The current review form is less structured and it gives enough space for the reviewer to make his or her own recommendation. The present form asks two main questions: the contribution of the study, and strengths and weaknesses of the study with respect to problem, rationale, research questions, theoretical framework, design, analysis, and conclusions. Instead of filling a checklist in survey form, we believe that this new format of the review form better serves us as editors and provides the reviewers with the opportunity to flexibly make their reviews. As Heid and Zbiek (2009) commented in a recent editorial of JRME, ““Collectively, the set of reviews touches all the main aspects of the work, examines how well the manuscript integrates these aspects, and provides a snapshot of the field’s reaction to the manuscript.” With this vision, we believe that the quality of reviews conducted for IEJME has been increased and they inform the potential authors better. The average time of the review process is also shortening as we make progress with this new structure of the journal.

We can see the level of increase in the quality reviews from the e-mail correspondence of the authors who got their reviews back. We often receive positive reaction about how informative or helpful were the reviews to improve the submitted versions of the articles. The new editorial board took over the job of processing 55 articles since September 2009 not including the articles that were directly rejected after initial editorial screening, which were about 10. We completed the review of 23 of those 56, corresponding to 41%. Among these completed reviews, 20 were rejected (about 87%), 3 were accepted (about 13%) after the second round of reviews. These results suggest that the new reviewing process has been more selective on the submissions and the acceptance rate for the journal decreased to 13%. This indeed in our view indicates an increase in the quality of the articles being published in IEJME and suggests that the articles that have been accepted for publication are accepted with a greater consensus among experts in the field.

Handling the review process is a difficult job requiring much effort on the editors' part. Assigning appropriate reviewers for the submissions is one major challenge whereas being fair to the authors of those submissions in terms of the time it takes to review and providing informative reviews is another major challenge, which altogether makes the editorship a challenging job. The articles submitted to IEJME are judged by at least four pairs of eyes, two editors and two reviewers to make the review process as accurate, fair, and informative as possible. At times, this process can go slower than we anticipate. One major problem is that we sometimes do not receive the reviews within the time frame we request and there have been a few cases in which the review process took quite a long time because we had to assign new reviewers. We certainly hope that the recent changes implemented in the review process at IEJME help move the journal to a more prominent place in our field and contribute to providing a better platform for researchers in mathematics education. A recent search we made in WorldCat (2010) suggests that IEJME is available in 249 libraries throughout the world – indicating that recent efforts of improving IEJME begin to pay off.

References

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