

Research journals as the topsoil where scientific knowledge grows

Las revistas de investigación como humus de la ciencia, donde crece el saber

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Abstract:

Few pedagogical research journals around the world have managed to continue being a success for 75 years. Therefore, it was reasonable to celebrate this anniversary and reflect on the paths followed to get to this point. Firstly, the need to combat the convenience of acquiescing to what is socially dominant and so awaken a desire to improve the objective quality of educational work are considered. In addition, the importance of encouraging the imagination in order to discover how to meet the challenges of the present moment and the need to protect the Journal's reputation are noted, something as complex and keenly debated as it is necessary.

The piece concludes by providing the main data about the Journal's past and present as well as making a proposal for how to develop it in the future, and to this end it underlines the importance of encouraging creativity in the search for pedagogical answers to the main problems facing education in our time.

Keywords: 75th anniversary of the **revista española de pedagogía**, quality in educa-

tional research, imagination, creativity, dedication to the principal problems of educational work, data about the **revista española de pedagogía**.

Resumen:

Son pocas en el mundo entero las revistas de investigación pedagógica que han conseguido mantenerse con éxito a lo largo de 75 años. Por eso, era razonable festejar este aniversario y reflexionar sobre los caminos que se han seguido para alcanzar este resultado. Primeramente, se propone la necesidad de luchar contra la comodidad de quien se pliega ante lo socialmente dominante, para despertar la preocupación por mejorar la calidad objetiva del quehacer educativo. Pero junto con ello, se señala la importancia de cultivar la imaginación para descubrir cómo responder a los retos del presente y la necesidad de vigilar la reputación de la revista, cuestión tan compleja y discutida como necesaria.

El artículo concluye ofreciendo los principales datos sobre el pasado y el presente de la

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revista así como haciendo una propuesta de su desarrollo en el futuro, para lo que subraya la importancia de fomentar la creatividad en la búsqueda de respuestas pedagógicas a los problemas principales de la educación en nuestros días.

Descriptor: 75 aniversario de la **revista española de pedagogía**, calidad en la investigación educativa, imaginación, creatividad, dedicación a los problemas principales del quehacer educativo, datos sobre la **revista española de pedagogía**.

1. Introduction

When the events that to be held to mark the 75th anniversary of the creation of the **revista española de pedagogía** were announced, several journalists contacted me as the journal's director for comment on the occasion. One expressed his admiration for what he called the «genius of this achievement» and asked me about the secret of ensuring a journal enjoys such extraordinary longevity. His words caused me to reflect on two things: genius and the success obtained.

In fact, *genius* has been a recurring theme since the Enlightenment, especially in French and British culture. The first person to pay significant attention to it was probably the Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), the author of the encyclopaedic *Histoire naturelle*, who, when he joined the Académie Française in 1753, gave the *Discourse on Style* in which he cited *genius* on eleven occasions, first distinguishing between true eloquence, «which involves the exercise of genius and the culture of the spirit» (Buffon, 1753, p. 1) and the natural facility of speaking, which is a talent some people possess. In other words, Buffon attempts to underline the fact that natural gifts are of no value if they are not cultivated, and so it

is claimed he said that genius is a long process of patience, a position supported or rejected by Flaubert, Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde, J. S. Mill, and Thomas Edison and, more recently, Paul Claudel and Boris Vian. This all seems very interesting to me in relation to the observation the journalist made: the *genius* of the long life is closely linked to great patience.

The second reflection is the one I intend to turn into the core of this work. In fact, when I was asked about this secret, I remembered something that happened to one of my sisters, an *aficionado* of the culinary arts, who once asked the chef of a restaurant for the recipe of an exquisite dish she had eaten there. The cook refused to give it to her: this dish, he said, is a speciality of the house and I will not give the recipe to outsiders.

In contrast with this position, I believe that as educators we should share our secrets, and so I will divide the article into two parts. I will start by setting out the main criteria I believe should guide the activity of research journals, especially in the world of education, and I conclude with some observations about the main challenges faced by those of us who direct them.

2. Routes to success

Aristotle observed that people ask whether happiness can be learnt or «if it comes in virtue of some divine providence or again by chance» (Aristotle, 1970, 1099b9-25), and he decides that it would be a great error to leave the greatest and most beautiful of things up to chance, and that anyone who does not recognise the role of good fortune in attaining happiness is making an error. In effect, our luck is not in our hands, but exercising the virtues that encourage a happy life is.

Therefore, it is important to reflect on the qualities the director of an academic journal must cultivate in his or her executive duties to achieve the success to which the journal aspires. We will now move on to the ones I regard as most important.

2.1. An interest in cooperating on continuously improving quality: the objective of educational practice

There are some professions in which a concern with constantly doing the job better is the norm; for example, social condemnation is generally unanimous for a doctor who tries to use naturopathic treatments to cure cancer. However, we must recognise that this is not always the case in the world of education, where there is a good number of *indifferent* people. As Margret Buchmann said:

Many American students expect to become teachers like the teachers they have known (not uncommonly their own relatives) and to teach pupils like the ones they went to school with. They typically attend colleges close to their places

of birth and prefer to teach in their home states. They may even expect to teach the same content they learned in school (Buchmann, 1987, p. 160).

Furthermore, so that people do not think this is an American foible, it is worth recalling the account from a book Steiner wrote jointly with a secondary-school teacher from France from a school in a working-class area. This account describes the criticisms she received from some of her colleagues when promoting classical theatre among her students. For these colleagues, this activity «was no more than a cultural and political peculiarity, hiding an instrument of latent repression, intended to instil petit bourgeois elements of aesthetic appreciation in the most disadvantaged students» (Steiner & Ladjali, 2005, p. 36). According to her critics, what she should have done was reappraise «my students' culture, the famous *neighbourhood culture*. But the truth is that every time I have raised this matter with one of them, the only response I have had has been silence» (Steiner & Ladjali, 2005, p. 37). It is not hard to see that the educational consequences of this attitude are especially serious for students from less privileged social groups. If teachers do not have any enthusiasm for personal improvement and indeed if they think improvement is impossible for their students, as though there is no sense in the end in trying to escape from the cave where they live, to use Plato's image, then clearly the hope of a better life is taken away from people who have been disadvantaged by fortune as they were born in homes lacking financial and cultural resources.

An educational research journal must motivate educators to *take an interest*. Not to be concerned with being led by fashionable ideological currents, but instead to be motivated by a desire to seek the truth and follow the most relevant paths: Feuer notes that education has the challenge of integrating theories with empirical research, knowing how to use the pertinent methodology in each field (Feuer, Towne, Shavelson, 2007). In his work, Feuer states that empirical research must do the following: set out the significant questions that can be empirically researched; be able to combine this research with relevant theories; use a methodology that makes it possible to turn to direct research of the problems; propose a chain of coherent and explanatory arguments; and deliver findings that replicate and generalise the studies offered and reveal the data of the research and the methods followed, thus permitting and encouraging personal scrutiny and criticism of the research performed.

Naturally, these features are specific to empirical research, and there is no reason to demand them of other types of work, but they do express ways of acting that must be present in educators and in their research in all fields. For example, teachers obviously have to teach pieces of knowledge. But it is necessary to note that more is asked of the teacher, as she is expected to promote true education of intelligence as a path to achieving a successful life. This requires the ability to encourage teachers, using Green's ideas (Green, 1991), to be concerned with structuring and establishing all areas of

knowledge as a whole. Indeed, an article is not just a collection of different ideas, but rather it is a contribution to human knowledge based on *demonstration* — in other words, on the ability to show the point of connection between the premises and the conclusions— and on the effort to identify the place of this knowledge in the sum of human knowledge. However, educating intelligence opens up a broader perspective, that of a successful life. Accordingly, an education journal must be able to open its pages to those who reflect on Gusdorf's claim that «any teacher, whatever his specialism, is primarily a teacher of humanity: however poor his professional conscience, he does not stop being the witness and guarantor for those who listen to him of the highest standards whether he likes it or not» (Gusdorf, 1969, p. 54), since

a maths teacher teaches maths, but also, even though he does not teach it, he teaches human truth; a history or Latin teacher teaches history or Latin, but also, even if he thinks that the education authorities are not paying him for this, he teaches the truth. Nobody is responsible for spiritual training, but everyone does it, even that person who makes no effort (Gusdorf, 1969, p. 81).

Finally, it should be noted that an interest in quality requires addressing evaluations by referees¹. There may sometimes be circumstances that make us want to appoint new referees, but it is important to be willing to experience awkward moments —even losing friendships— rather than publishing something that has had a negative evaluation.

2.2. Cultivating the imagination

The previous section is clearly pivotal, but it is not sufficient in itself. If we wish to maintain the life of a product, it is also necessary to know how to sell it, without falling back on the old idea that *good wine needs no bush*.

Clearly, the seller's knowledge must relate to the characteristics of the product on sale, but it is also true that some elements are present in all good salespeople and I believe that the most important one is currently *imagination*. The world of the image we inhabit, has perhaps given more strength to the imagination, as we can currently see that successful businesses primarily stand out for their imagination, in the same way that when a lack of imagination is seen in a company, we intuitively sense that its days are numbered, and we are rarely wrong.

Imagination in the management of an academic journal should lead us to sound out the mindset of the moment and thus be able to reveal not only what is fashionable, but also the questions underlying the trends or the problems that can be raised by the fashions raise or can arise in this way.

The imagination can lead us to make changes in how we present our journals, to have an online presence, to sell articles online, to add new sections to the journal's structure, to publish e-books containing articles on a single topic and facilitating awareness of published works, to seek alliances with other institutions, to be present on the most important social networks, to distribute newsletters –which could include videos– and not restricting

ourselves to updating our website when a new issue is published, to consider releasing preprints, including the doi with each article, etc.

As is natural, the imagination can inspire us to develop in how we present ourselves, without the suggested examples immediately being followed by everyone and without them being the only possible ones. But it is necessary to underline the fact that the imagination is an important aid for the survival of a research journal.

2.3. Taking care of the reputation

A few years ago, companies would take care of their image and the brand, but in the 21st century, the concept of *corporate reputation* has appeared on the business scene. The *Dictionary of the Real Academia Española* defines reputation as «the opinion or regard in which someone or something is held» and «the prestige or esteem in which someone or something is held». Nowadays it is necessary to have a good reputation, taking into account what the business is, what it does, and how it explains what it is doing. In journals, as in many other organisations, the well-known *Matthew effect* occurs, first identified by Merton (1968), by which if a journal has a good reputation, it will be cited and publishing in it will be an honour with positive consequences for the academic career of the authors. This in turn increases the number of quality articles submitted to the journal's editors. Not having this good reputation means that *even what they have will be taken from them* and the journal will face a crisis.

Consequently, we provide some observations on how to care for a journal's reputation.

Firstly, it is a matter of showing that the business's distinguishing features include cultivating ethical values and respect for codes of behaviour that are carefully followed. As shown below, this is something that has always been present in the structure of the professions, but it now has a special importance given contemporary globalisation, which means that a misstep by a Starbucks employee in a remote location can lead to general harm to the company's reputation, or that complaints about Facebook selling personal data led to the loss of a significant part of the value of its shares. It is clear that the same thing happens to educational institutions, and discovering that some people have been given favourable treatment in the evaluation of their works leads to the discrediting of the university or, even, the university system in general.

In the world of journals, the problem is more complex, as the ethical reputation not only depends on who the editor is, apparent in his behaviour, but also on compliance with his supervisory duties, and on what authors do. In fact, we ask authors for a sworn statement of ethically responsible behaviour when preparing the submitted text, and we also ask them to confirm the originality of the article, the absence of conflicts of interest in the submitted text, respect for ethical rules in the information collection, and that the text has only been presented to this journal. Nonetheless, extensive experience has shown us that there are authors who present absurd texts to expose

a journal's carelessness, that others send articles that have already been published in secondary journals, that some send the same article to several journals at once, sometimes in different languages, that they reproduce texts taken from the internet without any type of citation, that there are multiple quotes full of errors taken from other articles, that people who have not worked on the article are listed as authors, etc. The directors of research journals have no training as detectives, but we sometimes have to imitate the investigative powers of Hercule Poirot.

Of course, I do not wish to suggest that only authors could lack ethics. We should not forget the case of Sir Cyril Burt², who held a chair in Psychology of Education at the University of London and was director of a well-known journal around the time of the Second World War. He attempted to base his thesis of the absolute importance of genetic inheritance for people's intelligence above any environmental influence on data collected from identical twins raised in different environments. After his death, these data were found to be invented, and some authors who supported this thesis with articles published in his journal also turned out not to be real people. However, it should be recognised that these cases are very rare.

To conclude this ethical element, it is worth noting a question, which has recently arisen and which is closely linked to the matter of reputation being discussed here. In recent months, I have received two letters from Eurasian bodies that offer the collaboration of distinguished people from their countries and are willing to pay the journal a certain amount of money, which

varies depending on how long their work takes to come out. They will take care of the «blind» evaluation of the works, first sending a summary of a couple of sheets so the journal can decide whether the topic falls within its editorial aims. I did not answer the emails in either case, as it is clear that this would lead me into a difficult situation. Having reflected on the intentions of their proposals, I have come to the conclusion that these are countries with reasonable economic resources but which are not included in the most important international databases, generally owing to the low quality of their contributions –not to mention the frequently ideological nature of them– and which are willing to use any methods to be present in international academic debate.

Secondly, a company's reputation is closely linked to the appraisal of what it does. This endeavour, in a research journal, is mainly evaluated by how the criteria mentioned in the previous sections are put into practice, and they are currently summarised by expressing the journal's impact, which should be the object of as close attention as the share price of a publicly listed company.

It is also worth noting that the novel concept of impact can currently be understood in two very interesting and hotly debated ways. The impact of journals first started to be discussed after Eugene Garfield in 1960, following a variety of lesser experiments, created the Institute for Scientific Information, and presented an index of the citations of studies of genetics. This initiative gradually expanded over the years with the creation of Web of Science, Web of Knowledge, and Journal

Citation Reports, where the journals regarded as internationally most important are listed from virtually all fields of knowledge, establishing a ranking among them that largely depends on how many citations their articles receive, especially citations in other journals in the same database. This method of evaluating a journal's reputation, however objective it may seem, has been the object of numerous criticisms that it is not appropriate to present and evaluate here³. I will limit myself to noting that the most common criticism is the weight given to journals in English, which has led academics from the social sciences in France to set up a specific system for journals written in French. Nonetheless, however much we might debate the criteria followed by Journal Citation Reports, initially published by Thomson, later by Thomson Reuters, and ultimately by Clarivate Analytics, it would be wrong to say they are arbitrary and, in any case, to ignore them nowadays would be career suicide.

The concept of impact, secondly, has been expressed in new ways in the United Kingdom, with very challenging approaches, to implement new university funding models. The Higher Education Funding Council for England, which ceased operating in March 2018, defined impact as a positive effect on the economy, society, culture, public policy, or services beyond the exclusively academic. Accordingly, impact was broadly described as the effect on the change or benefit achieved for an activity, attitude, awareness, capacity, opportunity, implementation, policy, practice, process, or comprehension, both for a specific audience or for a beneficia-

ry, community, institution, organisation, or individuals, the geographic limits of which could be local, regional, national, or international. It also establishes that impact includes the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or any other negative effects. This process started in 2008, expressing the decision of the government of the time to promote a model of research in the university sector that had a real effect on society and so the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) took place first, later replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF). As was to be expected, these new policies, which had such an influence on the research lines of university academics have inspired numerous arguments. Especially interesting is the recent analysis by Cain and Allan in an article where they explain how this new policy of supporting research «implies that educational research might achieve impact not only on teaching but on educational arrangements more broadly, including educational structures, systems, and theories» (Cain & Allan, 2018, p. 722). There is no room here to evaluate these policies but, with the necessary precautions to stop them becoming a weapon against scholarship, it seems to me that they contain a more open and meaningful possibility for impact than one limited to how often an article is referenced.

Specifically, I would like to underline an aspect that has interested me greatly; the implicit idea that an excessive proportion of pedagogy journals dedicate themselves to handling statistics about students' learning outcomes –often in fairly restricted environments– and to playing with statistics gathered about

opinions put forward by lecturers and students, without pedagogical proposals to try to improve the results obtained. Maybe the moment has come for us to go back to thinking more about theories that try to explain educational reality and how to improve it. We may be in circumstances where education researchers have to make a greater effort to be close to politicians, to ensure their shadowy collaborators do not propose or impose measures affecting education that are much about defending an ideology than seeking what is best for the public. The limited opposition by academics to politicians' efforts to reduce standards so everyone is the same is striking. It took Blanquer, Macron's education minister to affirm in April 2018 that «this is against the interests of the lower classes» (Blanquer, 2018), and it was he who reintroduced Greek and Latin to the school curriculum, «as these are not dead rocks but living elements of language» (Blanquer, 2018), overriding those who see the curriculum as a politically correct cake to be distributed according to a group's interests. It is equally striking to see how the underlying structure of the pre-university education system is designed in accordance with the demands of the largest groups of teachers at this level without taking into account the requirements of personal development, the knowledge and aptitudes that should characterise teachers at different age levels, or, frequently, the civil liberty to choose a type of education. Of course, these are all complex matters, but I would like this complexity to be more widely rationally debated and not just decided by the groups in power.

2.4. Obsessive attention to detail

We started this work by discussing the relationship between genius and patience, and so I feel that this central section on the routes to success should conclude by noting the vital importance of close attention to detail. It may not be correct to claim, as some marketing authors do, that the sum of the details creates excellence, but anyone who thinks that excellence is only judged based on the academic quality of articles is very much mistaken. In addition, we must underline the fact that a journal has a commitment to pay attention to detail not just as a way of maintaining its reputation but also as a duty to the authors who put their works in our hands. It is clear that nothing is achieved alone, and so the director would like to thank the often unrecognised work of the people responsible for publishing the journal. Many years ago, a friend of mine who had studied to attend film-making school told me that these courses were very complex as the director is ultimately responsible for the film and the lighting not being right was enough to ruin it. This observation inspires us to give thanks for the work of people who dedicate their skills and time to the task of publishing the journal, a job that appears to be secondary but is not. Indeed, a journal must comply with all of the formal requirements of the moment, it must be published on time, the data it contains must be comprehensive and accurate, no errors of any type can slip in, especially in the pages that are not sent for review by the authors, it must have an appealing form and presentation, etc. Obviously, it is not the director's responsibility to take care of all of these formal requirements. But the

director will seriously compromise the excellence of a journal if he is unwilling to dedicate a great many hours to supervising the absolute fulfilment of these tasks.

There are people who say God is in the detail, and they may well be right. In any case, there is no doubt that readers tend to reject journals that do not take care of details.

3. Future challenges

3.1. Some information about the past and the present

The **revista española de pedagogía** (REP) was founded in 1943 under the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spanish National Research Council - CSIC), Spain's highest public research body, as a medium of expression for the Instituto San José de Calasanz, dedicated to pedagogical research. The journal was initially directed by a philosopher, who was the first head of the Institute, but it was soon taken over by Víctor García Hoz, an eminent professor of experimental pedagogy at the Universidad Complutense after he was appointed as director of the Institute, and he kept both roles until he retiring in 1981.

During that year, the managing committee of the CSIC decided to eliminate various research institutions as it decided they did not have the critical mass of researchers to make them viable; these included the San José de Calasanz Institute. However, as the **revista española de pedagogía** had a large number of subscribers, it was decided to maintain it, and I was appointed as director, as I had

initially been suggested by the Institute's advisory board to replace García Hoz.

Consequently, the journal started a second era. Objectively speaking this was unusual as it was not attached to an institute. With the passage of time, various changes occurred and the managing committee eventually decided to close the journal. At that point, I spoke to various colleagues and friends and we created a private association, the Instituto Europeo de Iniciativas Educativas (European Institute of Educational Initiatives - IEIE), while at the same time starting to make approaches to the CSIC to suggest they give the title to us, so that a widely respected pedagogical research publication would not be lost. Consequently, the IEIE had to make a great effort to raise the necessary material resources to enable the continued existence of the journal. This was not easy, but it was done over the period between 1995 and 2014. From 2014, we decided it would be better to pursue a different policy and we studied several offers we had received, some from British publishers specialising in publishing journals and one from the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR). We thought it was better to maintain the Spanish character of the journal and so the journal has been linked to the UNIR since 2014.

This is not the place for a history of the REP. I will simply say that the most important moment for me was when the IN-RECS index, which then grouped 130 Spanish periodicals on education, identified the REP as the most cited Spanish journal in the field of education for three consecutive years (2005, 2006, and 2007),

something which perhaps explains why I received a letter from Thomson Scientific Products and Services in 2006 offering to index the REP, from 2005, in the Social Sciences Citation Index and in Journal Citation Reports, and that shortly afterwards I received the same invitation from Scopus, and so the REP became one of the few journals in Spanish to be in both indexes.

Naturally, this has an impact in numerous fields, not just administrative. It is impossible to know how many people consult it online, as, in addition to our website, there are the different databases that contain copies of the REP. As for the details of the people consulting the REP in JSTOR, a US-based database we were also invited to join, as the only Spanish journal in the field of education, 17,531 people from 94 different countries visited the REP there in 2017 and they downloaded 9839 articles. In turn, our journal was visited that year by 64,276 people. Furthermore, as of April 2018, the REP had 1959 followers on Facebook, 627 on LinkedIn, and 355 on Twitter.

I believe this outlook will grow in future, as, while we have had a policy of accepting articles in English for several years and are present online, we have now decided to make English-language versions of all of our articles and book reviews available online, keeping the printed version in Spanish only. It is important to bear in mind that while we have been open to publishing in other languages for several years, we have also been open to any methodology and any theoretical perspective with a reasonable basis, and so I believe that from this moment the num-

ber of people reading the REP and the number of researchers who wish to publish in it will increase considerably, since 95% of the journals in the Education and Educational Research section of Journal Citation Reports are written in English. In fact, in 2017 122 submissions were made, 25 of which were published. Many of them are consequently rejected, generally because their quality is not outstanding, but also because, even if they are of reasonable value, they are not as good as others and so must give way to them. We try not to approve more articles than we can publish in a waiting period of one year from receipt, as we feel this is the longest an article can wait for publication without becoming outdated.

3.2. Encouraging creativity in the search for pedagogic solutions

This journal has no desire to receive large numbers of submissions that are not published, but instead the challenge is to ensure the REP has the impact that is now demanded from the best academic research journals. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to fight on two main fronts.

The first is to encourage creativity by providing pedagogical responses to educational problems, taking fully into account the contributions of new technologies. For example, a Uruguayan company –The Electric Factory– has just won in Austin (USA) the 2018 prize in the «Innovation in Connecting People» category of a competition entered by companies as important as Microsoft. The prize was awarded to the *Read to Me* project, which uses the internet of things and augmented real-

ity to recover the tradition of reading children bedtime stories. This invention comprises a projector that first records the words read from any children's book by the parents and then turns them into images, taken from the cloud, making reading a practice that is not solitary –the child is listening to its parent– and is embellished with the appeal of images that transform reading into a film. It is well known that Jules Verne imagined things that would be invented years later: we need people with imagination who can apply their creativity to improving educational results.

Finally, I believe another important challenge is to promote research into questions that are especially relevant in the field of education, require a considered pedagogical response, and are nonetheless often resolved in an unscientific manner. I will give a few examples, such as setting pre-university educational levels and the subjects that should comprise the core curriculum of basic civics education, the pedagogical importance of internal and external evaluations, and the problem of students who abandon their studies prematurely, the impacts on educational policy of the discovery of the importance of leadership in educational centres, and the need to go into greater depth in specific pedagogies to train those who wish to work in specific professions, in particular teaching.

These topics are all of great pedagogical importance but are, nonetheless, often settled on the basis of ideological arguments rather than scientific ones. It is not possible to study them all here, but, to give some clues about them, I will men-

tion some questions about the last two themes. In effect, the importance of leadership requires an in-depth pedagogical reflection and specific decisions in educational policy⁴. Unfortunately, this matter is frequently solved not by seeking people who could be teachers' leaders to manage public schools, but by turning the director into the state's representative in the centre, while in other political spheres, the choice is left in the hands of the teachers, with the risk this entails of turning public schools into the private property of the teachers rather than paradigms of democracy.

On the other hand, the question of teaching professions is a path Shulman started to follow in a very interesting work where he noted that good pedagogy for professional training entails showing the essential structures of the profession, distinguishing between the *superficial* structure –the ways of teaching, showing, and demonstrating– and the ways of questioning oneself and responding that are typical of the profession, and the *deep* structure, which is the set of principles on which the profession is based, and which result in a specific way of teaching and know how in the management of the groups of students that enables them to learn to think as members of that profession, as well as the *implicit* structure, which corresponds with what is often called the *hidden curriculum* (Shulman, 2005). This path is rarely taken. Furthermore, if from professions in general we move on to the teaching profession, which is one of the ones the European Union particularly wishes to safeguard, we again find that it is very often covered by designing a master's with a curriculum

that tends to reproduce the desires of dominant interest groups, and which is often delivered by the teachers the department heads want to keep happy or want out of their sight and away from the teaching of bachelor's programmes, with complete disregard for the interests and needs of the students, who wish to acquire specific training to be education professionals.

Maybe I am too demanding with social initiative, expressing my idea that as academics in the field of education we cannot resign ourselves to it being a field that is so dependent on political power. I believe that if we make an effort to study these problems seriously and offer solutions in prestigious journals, we could eventually have significant social influence, something we currently lack.

4. Conclusion

There have been times when it was thought that the role of journal articles was more about popularisation than academic research, something which was usually reserved for books.

It is clear that the prospect for development in the sciences has changed, relating to both the current speed of progress of knowledge and to globalisation, which demands that one can immediately discover contributions by researchers from all over the world on the internet especially by subscribing to a database, or for free in the web of the journals.

However, on similar lines to the recent emergence of widespread criticism of fake news –untrue stories that can be spread with a minimal cost, and that can cause

major harm— it is necessary to fight against the appearance of predatory journals, which appear online and attempt to present themselves as sources for disseminating scientific knowledge when they are actually no more than a business that take advantage of the current desire of many academics for their names to appear as the authors of works, even if their content is of very poor quality.

Consequently, academic journals must pay special attention to the previously identified criteria for establishing the quality of a publication, ranging from attention to all of the formal requirements to cultivating imagination in the journal's initiatives, as preliminary steps to the effort to ensure quality scientific results are always presented, having been checked by independent referees, and paving the way for the journal to have the reputation it merits.

It is true that the discussion about the criteria that should be followed when publicly stating the academic standing of a journal are the subject of debate. This is not the place to go into details about this debate. To conclude this piece, I would like to note that the main criterion for evaluating this standing is by responding to the challenge of ensuring journals do not devote themselves to fashionable questions, which might garner many citations, but which are no more than colourful distractions. They must also prevent studies full of irrelevant statistics from appearing in the journal, encouraged by misguided criteria often used to select research projects. Instead, they should attempt to ensure that academic journals in the world of education become the top-

soil where the seminal works that lead to the growth of pedagogical knowledge are planted and flourish.

Notes

- ¹ On this subject, see the interesting article by Burbules, which he published after twenty years as the editor of *Educational Theory*: Burbules, N. C. (2014) Philosophical Reflections on Editing. *Educational Theory*, 64 (4), 317-331.
- ² The case of Cyril Burt is quite surprising. During his lifetime he was held in high regard and was knighted by the British crown. However, after his death, there were numerous arguments about his life, including because his studies tended to give a secondary importance to environment in which intelligence developed, something rejected by the dominant doctrine. Probably the most interesting work on Burt, on which the leading educational psychologists of the time collaborated, is: Mackintosh, N. J. (1995). *Cyril Burt: Fraud or Framed?*
- ³ The observations Ordorika makes about this question in this issue are very interesting: Ordorika, I. (2018). Las trampas de las publicaciones académicas | *The academic publishing trap. Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 76 (271), 463-480. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22550/REP-3-2018-04>.
- ⁴ The reading of these topics in the work of Drago-Severson, E. (2007) is highly recommended: Helping teachers learn. *Teachers College Record*, 109 (1), 70-125; and (2012) New Opportunities for Principal Leadership: Shaping School Climates for Enhanced Teacher Development. *Teachers College Record*, 114 (3), 1-44.

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Author's biography

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