Editorial

Sticking to Service

Shyam Sharma

Stony Brook University
(State University of New York), USA

As we complete five years, and the journal is now published bi-annually, this issue also represents a more diverse group of scholars. The six standard articles, ten peer reviewed essays, and one book review are from scholars in Botswana, Canada, Ecuador, Finland, Nepal, South Africa, Turkey, and the United States. They cover a wide range of issues from curriculum to institutional and global perspectives, from bias to inclusion and justice in higher education, from academic leadership and good governance to international education, from virtual learning and innovation in education. Many others directly focus on issue about or raised by the ongoing pandemic. We hope that you will find a few articles worth browsing and skimming through, with one or more to read closer.

With the global pandemic raging in many countries, the difficulties continue to affect our work, logistically and intellectually. We continue to grapple with difficult questions about Covid-19's impact on higher education, on society, on the planet. The economic impact of this crisis may delay important social action on all kinds of fronts, exacerbating inequality and injustice, as well as draining away resources from social progress. The authors in this issue continue to foreground issues foregrounded by the crisis.

Strangely, the pandemic seems to have increased the quantity of scholarly production around the world—if not quality as well—an issue also touched upon in the previous editorial. Just to share what I encounter as an editor, many manuscripts we receive seem to reflect aggravations of emerging dynamics in the global publication landscape. For instance, an author from India emailed recently to ask how much we charge for publishing an article; he had not considered the name or scope of the

journal, indicating that he'd like to publish a computer science article that had nothing to do with higher education. The pressure to publish is rising dramatically around the world. Scholars regularly ask where this journal stands on the impact factor, an important question for sure, but the description of their projects don't reflect any originality, substance, or rigor. The pressure to meet standards is similarly rising, without matching support through time, resource, or reward by their institutions. Looking up titles of some submissions reveal that the manuscript was previously published by some of the coauthors, with slight variations, and so on. Research questions and findings often seem obvious, the engagement with current scholarship patchy, and argument lost in the author's language proficiency. The same authors could have done a far better job if their institutions didn't demand "international" publication, if scholarship was driven more by social impact than by counting citation or the number of publication, if knowledge production was valued in local languages. The rising demands for English-medium, international, prestigious journals are driving scholars around the world desperate.

So, instead of just looking at the quality of the text we receive, we try to focus on what a colleague of mine calls "thought per line" and then on what problem the work seeks to solve, what it seeks to change or challenge in the world, what it adds or clarifies significantly. We provide support on the side of language and writing. Unfortunately, the landscape of publication is likely to make it harder and harder for editors and reviewers who want to contribute their service to the advancement of knowledge to focus on what we believe really matters. Corporate-owned journals seem to be publishing just about anything that helps them make money. So, it is tempting for many scholars to go that route, instead of the more rigorous and time-consuming path of conventional journals like this. That is to say nothing about predatory publishers that financially exploit desperate scholars across the world and contribute to potentially dangerous publications even more.

Universities in the global south aren't investing resource, providing support, or making the effort to maintain standards of research ethics and originality. Their grand visions to be "ranked" globally are often based on technocratic solutions and missions that inadvertently lead to results that stink. From high proportions of scholars publishing with predatory journals to fabricating data to publishing paraphrases of others' ideas, the problems seem to be spreading—and they're likely aggravated by the pandemic, which may be offering more time but not more access to resources, better data, richer experiences, or more reliable process of research.

But it is with the awareness of the challenges I describe above, an increased realization that we must stick to basic principles of academic service, a stronger desire to push the world of publication against the wrong directions, that we contribute our small bit. Thank you for reading the journal.