

Editorial: The Shape of an Article

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DOI: 10.26907/esd16.2.01

There has been some discussion and proposals, from members of the reviewer panel and within the editorial team, of the format of articles submitted to *Education & Self Development*.

It is generally accepted that research articles have a standard structure with six key sections: an introduction, a literature search, the method; results, discussion and a conclusion. These are prefaced by the title, abstract and keywords, and concluded by a list of the references cited in the text. This structure helps the author ensure that all of the key components have been covered, and also helps the reader who knows what to expect as he or she reads through the article. It works well for a traditional research article - and after all, *Education & Self Development* is mainly a research journal.

It has been suggested that we should publish a template to help authors follow this structure rigorously. Indeed, authors of Russian language articles in the Journal will find (in the revised notes for authors) strong guidelines to help them meet the criteria for consideration by *Education & Self Development*.

However, there are other types of scholarly contribution that the Journal is interested in publishing. For example, the article may take the form of a review of the literature on a particular aspect of education or self-development. It can be very useful to have a critical summary of the research that has been carried out in a specific field (please note that this needs to be a critical review – a simple list of the research projects is of little help to most readers. In this case, the methodology may describe the criteria for selection, or the sources that were consulted. It is not clear that a results section is required. The discussion section might highlight the author's perception of unanswered research questions.

A type of article that is rarely found in mainstream literature sets out blue-sky thinking: an exploration of what might happen - and what we would like to happen - in the future. Traditional research moves in a series of steps: each piece of research builds on what is already known and, either explores similar scenarios or identifies a related research question to explore. These thought-pieces are helpful in moving us forward, to make us consider alternative futures and to open up radically new directions for research.

The reader might like to consider the words of the English author and philosopher George Bernard Shaw: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man" (Shaw, 1903). How would we try to adapt the process of education to ourselves?

One of my articles on innovation was written in the form of a play for two actors (Rushby, 1985) while another started life as a paper, was later adapted for the stage and finally turned into a video (Rushby, 1990). One memorable article on illuminative evaluation (alas unpublished but reported in Kemmis, 1975) came from a dialogue in which two protagonists argued the merits of this approach from opposite sides of a room, over the heads of government officials. Such articles do not fit easily into the structure of

the traditional research paper. However, our field needs more of them and *Education & Self Development* looks forward to publishing them!

I would like to leave you with a quote from the bible of writing in English, “Anyone who wishes to become a good writer should endeavour, before he allows himself to be tempted by the more showy qualities, to be direct, simple, brief, vigorous, and lucid” (Fowler & Fowler, 1906).

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