The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning
Editorial policy

NOTES:
- This policy is adapted from two sections in The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Policy (IIE007), which was revised and ratified in March 2020. The 'Editorial Policy' section in this document is adapted from section (**13**) Editorial Policy and Procedure – The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning (The IJTL) and the 'Ethical malpractice statement' is adapted from section (**4**) 'Research Ethics'.
- Both this policy document and the 'The IJTL publication and double-blind peer-review process', which is aligned to this policy, are available for download on The IJTL website.

Editorial policy

For the source of this version, see §13 'Editorial Policy and Procedure' in IIE007.

The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning[1] (IJTL) is an education-focused, peer-reviewed journal. Fully published biannually by The Independent Institute of Education, the journal is fully online and Open Access. The aim of the journal is to make a difference to educators at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, providing a scholarly forum for academics and education practitioners to share research on teaching and learning. The journal's focus is increasingly on applied teaching and learning in both the private and public sectors.

The IJTL is accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa and appears on the DHET List of Accredited Journals. In accordance with the DHET's Research Outputs Policy implemented on 1 January 2016, at least 75% of contributions published in the IJTL emanate from multiple Higher Education Institutions. The IJTL has complied with this rule since it came into effect.

The IJTL is indexed by:
- EBSCOhost
- Sabinet ePublications in the Education, Social Sciences and Humanities Collections – Open Access;
- The African Journal Archive; and
- The Independent Institute of Education Institutional Repository.

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[1] The first six editions of the Journal were published under the name *The Journal of Independent Teaching and Learning* (2006-2011). Thereafter, its name changed to *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning* (2012-2020). The first 11 editions of the journal were all printed and physically distributed. The editions that follow are all Open Access – freely available online. This change is accompanied by an ISSN change: from 1818-9687 (2006-2016) to 2519-5670 (2017-present).

The following types of articles are considered for publication:

- Research-based, empirical, reflective, theoretical or synoptic articles that would be of interest to the educational practitioner;
- Review articles that critically examine research carried out in a specific field;
- Discussion or advocacy papers in the section entitled 'Practitioners' Corner'; and
- Book reviews that comprise a clear and concise evaluation of recently published books.

The journal also publishes Doctoral abstracts in the section 'Doctoral Corner'. The journal invites recent doctoral graduates in education to provide a forum for them to showcase their doctoral research. This, in turn, provides researchers and practitioners with the opportunity to access cutting-edge research in their disciplinary field, which may be of benefit in their area of work. These are not classified as articles and do not appear in the article section. The Doctoral Corner submissions must all have permanent links for accessibility to the full thesis and these links are checked on submission and in the finalisation process.

To ensure that papers published in the journal are relevant to educational practitioners and are of good quality, each paper accepted for review undergoes a double-blind peer review, the process of which is detailed below in the section entitled 'Procedure'. This procedure has been written in line with the ASSAF National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review

Procedure

Please see the document 'The IJTL Publication and Double-Blind Peer-Review Process' for a more elaborate view of the double-blind peer-review process. Before an article can be sent for its double-blind peer-review, it must meet the following requirements:

a) the paper must fall within the scope of the IJTL – if it does not, the article is not sent for external peer review;

b) it is sufficiently and rigorously conceptualised and robust enough to meet the conventional requirements of an academic publication within the demands of the discipline; e.g. philosophical, sociological, and so on; and

c) the author has not published in the journal within a three-edition cycle. 'Three-edition cycle' means one and a half volumes. For example, if an author has published in volume 15 (1), the author will not be able to publish in volume 15 (2), 16 (1) or 16 (2) – only in volume 17 (1).

If the article meets the above requirements, it goes through the double-blind peer-review process, in which it is sent to at least two established researchers in that field either locally or abroad. This is to ensure fair and critical review of each paper as well as to assess its suitability for publication in the IJTL. Reviewers are given guidelines for review. In addition, to further reinforce the 'blind' nature of the review as well as to avoid any conflicts of interest, reviewers who do not work for the same academic institution as authors are recruited. The Managing Editor and the Journal Administrator are responsible for communication with both authors and reviewers; it is up to them to ensure that the author and the reviewer are never exposed to one another. The reviewers are asked, if they in any way feel that they may know the author(s), have a vested interest in the paper or suspect any other conflict(s) of interest, that they immediately inform the Managing Editor. If this happens, a new reviewer is found. If there is a discrepancy between the findings of two reviewers, a third reviewer is found to review the article.

After review, the combined results of the reviewers yield a decision:

a)   the article is either rejected, though guidelines are still provided to authors on how to rework their article; or

b)   the article is accepted, either subject to revisions or not.

At least half of the reviewers for each edition will not have reviewed articles for the preceding edition. Reviewers are not remunerated.

Copyright arrangements

The Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd is the publisher as well as the copyright owner of the journal articles. The IIE has a flexible and negotiable system when authors or their institutional libraries approach us to use the article elsewhere, as long as the final edited version is utilised, and The IJTL is credited. Over and above The IIE repository, we do allow for archiving in other institutional repositories, but this must be done by means of a formal written request sent to editor@iie.ac.za.

Reprinting of articles

There is no embargo period on published articles. For any other use of a published article, the authors must request permission in writing from editor@iie.ac.za.

Research ethics, ethical malpractice statement and retraction policy

For the source of this version, see §4 'Research Ethics' in IIE007.

In this section, the ethical principles to which all authors must adhere are listed. Additionally, this section contains the stance of the journal on matters such as plagiarism. Particular procedural points that embody the IJTL's stance are included.

The Context

There are three fundamental principles that guide ethical research. They are (1) respect for persons, (2) beneficence and (3) justice. If these are principles are upheld during the research and reporting process, the more technical aspects of this process become easier to address.

Respect for persons means that, where necessary (and necessity is determined by the rights of participants), informed consent (and in the case of minors, informed consent from a parent or guardian) was obtained and participants will have their dignity respected. Respect for persons includes respect for intellectual property. Respect for intellectual property, as a matter of course. implies the complete prohibition on plagiarism.

Beneficence is a more complex concept. In the context of academic article publication, it means that the aim of the research needs to be for the benefit of those being researched, and if not for them directly then for those who will follow them. That which is learnt from research must then be used to improve the lives or experiences of those being researched. Where this is not a direct benefit (such as to the subjects of the research), it should be possible for the research to be used to benefit others in the future. Though research rarely directly benefits participants, it must, above all, neither directly nor

indirectly harm any of the participants. At the very least, the research must contribute to the growth of the field, such as improving the quality of teaching or to contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

Justice in the academic publishing context requires fair, valid and reliable reporting on research, which must be characterised by reasonableness, truthfulness and integrity. For research to be just, it must promote the pursuit of knowledge that is in line with human rights and democratic principles. Research reports should not be manipulated to provide answers that serve specific agendas characterised by preconception and/or prejudice.

These simple principles suffice to guide the basic decisions that must be made when designing and conducting research. These considerations should reflect in the academic writing of authors. Authors must be able to demonstrate that their actions show respect for persons, and that they are beneficent and just. Should it not be possible to account for all three of these principles, the article may be rejected.

Consequent Principles
Principle of ethics
Authors must adhere to both the ethical practices and the fundamental ethical principles of their discipline(s).

Principle of research freedom
The purpose of research is primarily to extend the frontiers of knowledge for the benefit of humankind. The freedoms enjoyed by researchers must only be used in accordance with the norms of ethical principles and practices within the researcher's respective discipline(s). Such limitations must not undermine adherence to accepted ethical principles and practices.

Principle of professional responsibility
Researchers must seek to undertake research that is aligned at its core to the ethical and constitutional principles of a democratic, human-rights-centred developmental society such as South Africa.

Plagiarism in all its forms must be actively avoided. The principle of intellectual property and, in the case of research carried out in collaboration with a supervisor(s) (as opposed to simply under supervision), joint data ownership and/or other researcher(s) must remain sacrosanct. Validating new observations through reproduction of a research process must always explicitly identify the data or finding to be confirmed. See the section 'Retraction policy' in this policy for more details.

Principle of accountability
Research freedom carries with it the responsibility of accountability. Authors are not only accountable to the institution or to their employers or sponsors but also, especially on ethical grounds, to society at large.

Methods of collection and analysis, outputs and details of the data should be open to internal and external scrutiny, where applicable and whenever necessary, upon request from the appropriate authorities.

Research Code of Ethics

Authors are required to:

a) familiarise themselves with ethics guidelines and observe such guidelines throughout their projects;

b) accept that they are ethically accountable for honesty, objectivity (that is, avoiding undue bias), and integrity of reporting on their research;

c) strive to conduct research of a high standard and report on it accordingly;

d) always clearly indicate the limitations of their research;

e) ensure that data is not falsified, misinterpreted, fabricated, misrepresented, or changed;

f) ensure that data is collected in a manner that will not affect their validity, and, if the validity may be affected, declare the aspects of the project that might be the cause;

g) disclose research methodologies and processes in a transparent manner to uphold their integrity;

h) credit sources of information by accurately and appropriately referencing them and respecting the copyright of all reference works and sources;

i) avoid placing the safety, security and integrity of participants at risk through any research that is conducted or through the reporting thereof;

j) adhere to the conventions associated with the publication of academic articles, which includes only submitting one article to one publisher at a time and always citing where papers have been used before; and

k) uphold the integrity of academic research in all stages of the research process and the reporting thereof.

Research on Sensitive Topics

A sensitive topic for research is defined as one that generates any concern about sensitivity on any one of the three dimensions as follows:

a) issues considered private, stressful, or sacred, such as sexuality or death;

b) issues that, if revealed, might cause stigmatisation or fear, such as youth studies that reveal illegal behaviour; and

c) issues that are related to the presence of a political or other threat where researchers may study areas that are subject to controversy or social conflict.

Research with or on Vulnerable Groups

Any research project that will focus on a vulnerable group, or a group not able to give informed consent, or any group that could perceive that there could be any pressure to participate, requires ethics clearance even if the topic is not sensitive. It will be assumed that the author has taken all necessary precautions to protect the vulnerable group involved, particularly when reporting on the relevant research. Additionally, the author will be expected to explicitly state that all possible measures were taken to protect the vulnerable group involved and that the necessary ethics clearance was obtained from the institution with which the author is associated.

Retraction policy

Though *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning* takes every step to avoid publishing plagiarised work, it cannot be held accountable in the event of plagiarised work being published. However, should it come to light after a work is published that it is plagiarised, either wholly or in part, the work in question will be retracted publicly in the edition immediately following the discovery of the plagiarism. Authors are required to submit with their article a fully marked-up similarity report generated by software such as Turnitin, iThenticate or SafeAssign. A significant similarity index will be grounds for rejection of an article if the similarity concerns are not addressed by the author.