



Editorial: A New Decade of CERJ

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To cite this entry:

Zhang, Y. (2024). Editorial: A New Decade of CERJ. *Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal*, 11, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.114524>



Link to the article online: <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/377835>



Published online: December 2024



Editorial: A New Decade of CERJ

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As I approach the completion of my Ph.D., the Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal (CERJ) is also celebrating the launch of Volume 11. Based out of the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, CERJ stands out as one of the most author-friendly journals I have encountered, offering fast responses, genuine care for authors' work, and invaluable support to early-career researchers in their professional development. I am honored to serve as the Editor-in-Chief for CERJ Volume 11, which marks the beginning of CERJ's second decade.

There are two key aspects I would like to address in this Editorial. First, over the past year, we the Volume 11 team has implemented many transformative changes that I am excited to share. Second, CERJ has received numerous inquiries regarding its submission process, review procedures, and acceptance rates. Through this Editorial, I hope to address these frequently asked questions and provide potential authors with greater insight into CERJ.

CERJ Volume 11 Efforts

The transition from 0 to 1 is a pivotal stage in a research career, as it often determines whether an individual will continue pursuing an academic path. CERJ has been dedicated to supporting early-career researchers in their growth toward becoming more experienced academics. Aligned with CERJ's goals and mission, we have implemented several transformative changes this year.

Submission

Believing that support for early career researchers should extend beyond Cambridge and the United Kingdom, we implemented a transformative change in this volume, elevating CERJ from a primarily local journal to an international platform that fosters a diverse range of perspectives. This year our team has reached out to 44 universities globally, engaged with various communities and research groups, and organized a submission workshop to address real-time questions authors have and obtained testimonials from past authors to show how submitting to CERJ can empower their research career. As a result, we received contributions from 29 institutions across 11 countries, including Brazil, Canada, China, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Morocco, Indonesia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This includes leading universities such as the University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, UCLA, University of Pennsylvania, University of Wisconsin-Madison, the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, McGill University, UCL, and PolyU. It is important to note that acceptance was solely based on the quality of submissions, regardless of the contributors' university affiliations.

Another change we implemented this year is allowing authors who submit before the deadline the opportunity to revise their manuscripts if they initially fail to meet CERJ's guidelines. In previous CERJ volumes, the editorial review process did not begin until after the submission deadline had passed. This may cause authors who misinterpreted CERJ's submission requirements to miss the opportunity to resubmit. The adjustment made this year not only resolves that issue but also enables authors who submit early to receive feedback more promptly.

Review

CERJ not only offers early career researchers opportunities to submit their work, but also provides a platform for them to develop their skills as reviewers. To support first-time reviewers, our team organized a peer review training session, emphasizing the aspects needed to pay attention in reviewing, and inviting Professor Kevin W.H. Tai to share his insights on the review process. This training was mandatory for all reviewers who have no prior reviewing experience.

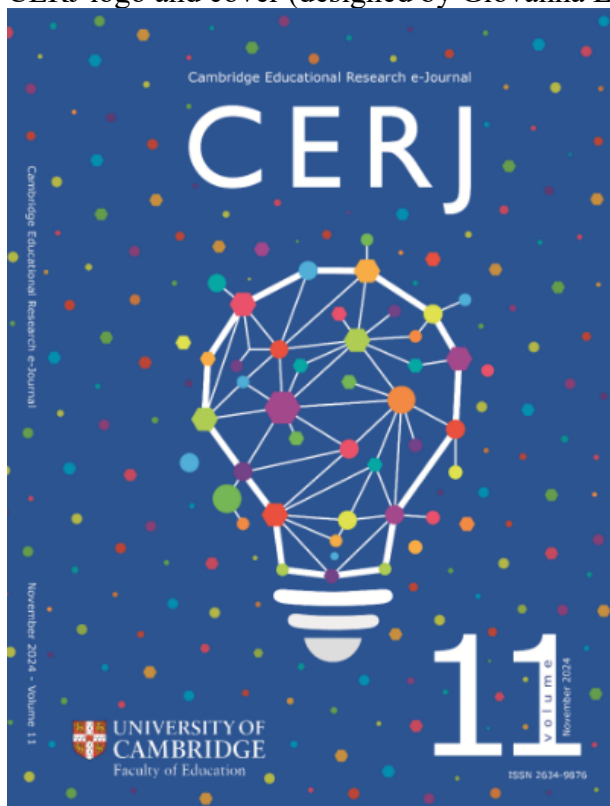
This year, we adopted a strategy of engaging more experts from diverse fields of education to enhance the quality of reviews, moving beyond reliance solely on review training. By expanding the reviewer pool, editors were able to match manuscripts with reviewers who have comparable or greater expertise in the same research areas. Our team issued a *Call for Reviewers* to universities and research groups, successfully recruiting over 150 reviewers this year. To ensure reviewers have equal or greater research experience than the authors, all reviewers assigned to manuscripts this year were PhD candidates or higher, except for one master's student with notable publication experience.

Design

As CERJ enters the second decade, the logo of CERJ Volume 11 has evolved from the previous paper plane design to a light bulb (Figure 1), symbolizing growth, innovation, and new birth. The interconnected nodes within the bulb represents researchers in the field of education, highlighting our connection and mutual support.

Figure 1

CERJ logo and cover (designed by Giovanna Lucci)



Policy

With the growing diversity of submissions to CERJ from authors worldwide, representing a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, the inclusion of a disclaimer becomes essential. It ensures that the journal remains an international platform that fosters inclusivity and respects the diversity of perspectives, while

avoiding any misinterpretation that CERJ, its editors, or its publisher endorses specific views or arguments. Consequently, in this Volume we have introduced the following disclaimer for CERJ: “*Publication of articles in this journal does not imply endorsement by CERJ, its editors, or its publisher. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and are intended solely for academic discussion*”.

Demystifying the editorial process and peer review

Types and Themes

Three types of submissions have been received this year: research paper, review articles, and critical theory pieces. The articles accepted by this volume are grouped into six themes: Teacher Professional Development, Equity and Access in K12 Education, Students’ Learning & Curriculum Development, Language Education, Art Education and Mathematics Education, and Higher Education. It is important to note that the thematic grouping in this volume is intended solely for organizational purposes and to guide the presentation of the accepted articles. The selection of these themes does not imply that each article fits strictly within a single theme, nor does it restrict the scope of the scholarly discourse presented in this volume.

Review process

CERJ follows a double-blind peer review process (Figure 2). After the manuscript is received, the Editorial board conducted a desk review to check whether the submission is in line with the theme of education, the scope of CERJ, and align with the submission guidelines. If the theme is within education and follows our submission guidelines, editors then assigned the manuscript to two peer reviewers, matching them based on their topic or expertise. Peer reviewers separately reviewed articles, completed feedback forms, and submitted to the editors. Editors read review forms completed by peer reviewers, and decided whether the submission would be accepted with revisions or rejection. Additionally, the editor may provide feedback to address gaps in the reviewers’ comments, highlighting areas where authors could make improvements. Authors may be required to undergo several rounds of revisions before a final decision is made.

Figure 2
CERJ review process



Acceptance rate

CERJ does not adhere to a formal acceptance rate but instead focuses on accepting high-quality work reflective of the research level of early career researchers. Our priority is the quality of submissions rather than maintaining a specific acceptance percentage. This year the acceptance rate is 34.8%. Specifically, 11.6% manuscripts were rejected during the desk review stage, while the remaining manuscripts proceeded to the

double-blind peer review stage, where 39.3% of them got finally accepted after revisions.

Acknowledgments

While it is not possible for me to list all the names for acknowledgement in this Editorial, I hope to particularly place on record my appreciation to CERJ Volume 11 Editorial Board members, who have been with me throughout the editorial journey and have played an essential part in success of CERJ Volume 11. Running a journal is challenging, and running one led by PhD candidates is even more so. We have a strong team this year, although struggles, disagreements, and conflicts occurred sometimes, in the end each member's strengths complement one another to achieve what we have accomplished today. My profound gratitude goes to Rasman Rasman, who collaborated with me in initiating key documents, provided steadfast support and professionalism for both myself and CERJ, and has made huge contribution to CERJ Volume 11 since day one; to Max Aantjes, who has always been meticulous, held a keen eye for detail, consistently delivered high-quality work, and whose taste in format and design has always been remarkable; to Nan Shi, who has been acting like sunshine, sweet and supportive to all members, took on additional work without a word of complaint, and reliably offered help when most needed; to Professor Julie Alderton, whose professional feedback has guided us through several important situations and dilemmas; and to Professor W.H. Kevin Tai, who provided professional review training to our reviewers to uphold CERJ standards and attended Editorial Board meetings to guide us through when needed.

Second, my appreciation extends to the FERSA committee, who elected us and entrusted us with the invaluable opportunity to serve as the editorial board for CERJ Volume 11, without whose support CERJ could not have achieved its current standing. I would also like to thank Rizqarossaa Darni for her kindness in supporting our team such as passing important documents via FERSA's official emails. Additionally, I acknowledge Giovanna Lucci's consistent effort and creativity in helping CERJ design its cover.

I would also extend my gratitude to the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge for their invaluable support. Special thanks go to Professor Maha Shuayb for dedicating her time and generously co-hosting the submission workshop with us. I am also deeply appreciative of the consistent IT support provided by Justin Hodgett and the IT office to our team. Furthermore, I extend my sincere thanks to Professor Ricardo Sabates Aysa, Yusuf Sayed, Sonia Ilie, Ros McLellan, Hilary Cremin, Mark Winterbottom, and Jo-Anne Dillabough for providing professional advice and offering their guidance during the conclusion of this volume when we faced challenges beyond our expertise.

I am also grateful to previous CERJ authors—Anju Kinoshita, Can Jin, Esther Anwuzia, Junlong Li, and Hiu Ching Wong—who generously provided testimonials sharing their experiences with CERJ for us to use in the submission workshop and on the website. Last but not least, thank you to all the authors who trusted CERJ and submitted their work this year; thank you to all the reviewers who dedicated their time to providing constructive feedback, which has received much appreciation from the authors this year. Without your contributions, CERJ Volume 11 would not have achieved its current success.

Ying Zhang, Editor-in-Chief
Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal
Cambridge, United Kingdom, December 2024