



Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development

ISSN: 1657-0790

ISSN: 2256-5760

Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

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Building and Strengthening Teacher Communities: Improvement Plan for the *Profile* Journal
Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development,
vol. 24, no. 2, 2022, July-December, pp. 17-30
Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v24n2.103208>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=169272326002>

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Building and Strengthening Teacher Communities: Improvement Plan for the *Profile* Journal

Generación y consolidación de comunidades docentes:
plan de mejora para la revista *Profile*

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Scientific or academic publications have become the best accepted media for scientific and academic communities—mainly established in universities or research centers—to share the knowledge they create and give it greater visibility worldwide. That is, these journals are at the core of scientific communication, which requires permanent assessment of the editorial work and careful planning bearing in mind the responsibilities and needs of the stakeholders that are involved in the production and use of these periodical publications. In this article, I share an improvement plan for the *Profile* journal, whose purpose is to strengthen the journal's editorial management and, thus, support the generation and consolidation of communities of teacher researchers.

Keywords: communities, *Profile* journal, teacher researcher

Las revistas científicas o académicas se han establecido como el principal medio para la difusión del conocimiento generado por comunidades académicas y científicas —ubicadas principalmente en instituciones universitarias o en centros de investigación—, y darle una mayor visibilidad internacional. Es decir, esta clase de revistas se encuentran en el centro de la comunicación científica, lo que implica una evaluación constante de su labor editorial y una cuidadosa planeación que tenga en cuenta las responsabilidades y necesidades de los actores que participan en la producción y uso de una publicación periódica. En este artículo presentamos el plan de mejora de la revista *Profile* con el que se busca fortalecer la gestión editorial y avanzar en el propósito de contribuir a la generación y fortalecimiento de comunidades de docentes investigadores.

Palabras clave: comunidades, docente investigador, revista *Profile*

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How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.): Cárdenas, M. L. (2022). Building and strengthening teacher communities: Improvement plan for the *Profile* journal. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 24(2), 17–30. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v24n2.103208>

This article was received on September 30, 2021 and accepted on April 28, 2022.

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Introduction

In past editorials we have referred to the *Profile* journal's national and international ranking achievements (Cárdenas & Nieto-Cruz, 2021; Cárdenas et al., 2020). However, gaining such recognition and being subjected to the logics of evaluation systems convey a risk: silencing some of the voices that have traditionally been welcomed in scientific journals. The *Profile* journal is not exempt from this potential phenomenon. In fact, since 2020, when the journal was classified for the first time in the Quartile 2 of the Scimago Journal Rank, email queries from interested authors have increased, and so has the number of manuscripts submitted for peer review; and although contributions mainly come from diverse peripheral contexts, the challenge is to ensure the presence of the national and local professional communities that inspired the creation of the publication and that have contributed to its evolution.

The *Profile* journal remains committed to being an outlet for the opinions and ideas of a diverse community of educators with different educational levels and research experience and who are mainly immersed in social and educational contexts with complex circumstances. In this sense, the journal departs from the scheme followed by “mainstream” journals that usually feature renowned scholars or researchers with long trajectories. Even so, a publication like *Profile*, edited outside the dominant sphere of the English language teaching profession (i.e., the English-speaking countries), is forced to measure itself against such mainstream, high impact journals due to the current national evaluation system of Colombian scientific periodicals defined by the Ministry of Science and Technology (Minciencias, 2020), which places great emphasis on the position Colombian journals have in international rankings. Thus, there is an imbalance to be addressed between the vision of the journal and institutional requirements.

Our interpretation of what can be regarded as “quality” indicators is not necessarily aligned with the instrumental and effective nature of Colombian

economic, scientific, or technological policies. In order to fully grasp the quality of a scientific journal, we need to learn more about the actors involved in its publication; especially from what the theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 2001; Woods, 1983) can tell us about the processes those actors follow while performing a given role within scientific publishing.

With all the previous considerations in mind, we carried out a case study with an ethnographic approach to gather the insights from novice writers and reviewers of the *Profile* journal regarding the role scientific journals play in community building within knowledge society (Cárdenas, 2021). The study focused on the experiences and beliefs of readers, authors, and reviewers, which has helped me identify elements that could be introduced into an improvement plan closely related to the English language teachers' local realities. It is hoped that such a plan can contribute to strengthening our communities, our knowledge, and, ultimately, the teaching profession.

In this article, derived from the abovementioned study, the focus is on the authors and the defining characteristics of the types of communities to which they belong. We will also discuss the analytical template followed in the elaboration of an improvement plan for the journal management.

What Can Be Understood by Community?

Basically, a community can be defined by the relationships between its members: proximity (geographical location), commonalities (interests, functions), or any other sort of connection that may emerge and act as a cohesive factor (Cárdenas-Londoño, 2000). Nevertheless, it should be noted that such a definition may imply certain ambiguity because it can be applied to both freedom movements and systems of oppression (Bautista, 2012). Thus, when framing a concept of community, we should dispense with a notion of territory as well as with the idealist vision so often found in literature. Krause (2001), for instance, proposes three elements that help

distinguish a community from other kinds of human societies: “*belonging*, subjectively understood as “feeling part of” and “identified with”; *interrelationship*, that is, communication, interdependence, and mutual influence among the members; and *common culture*, or the notion of shared meanings” (p. 29; emphasis added, translated from Spanish).

Here, we understand a community as a group of people with shared knowledge, visions, and goals, and who are committed to clearly defined goals, and interact to achieve them. This can be possible even if the members do not inhabit the same geographical area, without face to face contact. A community is not something established beforehand, but it grows thanks to mutual relationships, a disposition to cooperate, the performance of certain roles, and the value given to individual and collective potentiality. The intricacies that arise from the relationships among individuals and collectivities foster the development of educational, learning, academic, professional, and scientific communities. We will next define the last three communities since they have been found to be the main scenarios in which the authors of the *Profile* journal interact.

Academic Communities

An academic community is usually associated to a university environment. In that regard, it consists of “a significant number of intellectually qualified individuals who undertake research and teaching activities and keep communication channels that allow them to share knowledge and control its value” (Díaz, 1997, pp. 109–110; translated from Spanish). Díaz indicates that, in establishing these communities, five main conditions must be met: (a) a command of the written language for effective scientific communication; (b) a productive mindset that is prepared for the generation of knowledge; (c) the sustained effort of the members to get to know the academic output of national peers and to objectively assess it; (d) an expansion of the sources of reference to include not just books but also specialized journals;

and (e) the capability of accessing knowledge in other languages. Regarding the first condition, Romero-Serna (2000) sees writing as the communicative tool that facilitates the rearrangement of the paradigms shared by a community. For this author, interaction through writing helps “modify and generate theory, validate existing knowledge, accept or reject theoretical arguments, and foster the preservation or transformation of dogma for future generations” (p. 21; translated from Spanish).

An academic community is a particular way of academic organization that groups certain kind of individuals (students, educators, administrators, supervisors, and directors) for whom education is the main activity (Cárdenas-Londoño, 2000). Its members have a particular view of the world and an approach to certain theories that is submitted to constant scrutiny (Romero-Serna, 2000). Furthermore, as found by Francis-Salazar and Marín-Sánchez (2010) in a study on the role of academic communities in the construction of university teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, there are subcommunities within communities as a direct result of the environments inhabited by faculty members when performing their work, which is to say, based on professional, disciplinary, or work-related issues. Thus, there are groups formed around, for example, the teachers’ contract type or their relationship with the institution.

Professional Communities

These types of associations seek group cohesion based on professions. Such disciplinary boundary, present in academic communities as well, allows professional communities to set themselves apart from others and to gather their members around three substantial elements: (a) institutions, (b) disciplines, and (c) recognition and prestige (Francis-Salazar & Marín-Sánchez, 2010). Such elements can be found in a community like TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), conceived by Canagarajah (2016) as a professional community focused on pedagogy, research, and theory, and with an evolution from modern to postmodern

orientations in its disciplinary discourse. This is clear in the way knowledge is made available through the *TESOL Quarterly* journal, which brings together authors from diverse geographical areas and features articles that report on a variety of studies with different research methods. We concur with Canagarajah in that, while this diversity can be perceived as a threat to the overall cohesion of TESOL, it may contribute to expanding the range of the community's knowledge base, thus fostering its growth.

From this perspective, we suggest that teachers at primary and secondary levels can improve their professional practice as well as understand the specific details of research when they belong to professional communities; which, in our case, are teaching communities (Cárdenas, 2002). These communities can emerge within the framework of professional development programs (precisely the kind in which the *Profile* journal was conceived), which may require redefining the way the latter are designed and developed. In the communities thus established, teachers with different academic backgrounds and educational contexts can converge around common interests. Wells (1999) calls this notion of collaborative collective work a "community of inquiry" or research community and differentiates it from a community of practice in that it broadens the point of view to focus not just on learning but also on knowledge building. For Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 1999), these are teacher-led research communities which have an impact on educational reforms. Finally, we would like to underscore that the interactive work between teachers in basic education and teacher educators was the point of departure for the *Profile* journal, which may help explain the role of scientific publications in the creation of communities within the knowledge society (Cárdenas, 2021).

Scientific Community

For Kuhn (1975), a scientific community is made up of professionals of a scientific discipline joined by common elements: permanent communication, unanimity in judging professional issues, and education. Kuhn goes

on to describe the composition of a scientific community through two types of factors: (a) values and norms and (b) theoretical and methodological elements. The former shape the relations among scientists, the way they work and organize themselves, their institutional enclave, and the nature of their leadership. As for the theoretical and methodological elements, these involve shared commitments of scrutiny derived from scientific activity.

For Kreimer (1998), scientific communities gather representatives who, in general, exercise great control over most institutions involved in research, including their funding. The development and consolidation of scientific fields are usually a consequence of dynamic interactions that take place within specific contexts. Kreimer notes that many of those representatives tend to adopt conservative attitudes towards the emergence of new subject interests, research profiles, and disciplinary assignments.

From our object of research, we distance ourselves from such concepts. While publishing in a scientific journal is a challenge and may provide access to a scientific community, it does not mean that one is part of an elite. To become part, as an author, of the community of a periodical journal coincides with the interest of that journal in sharing quality scientific knowledge. Being a member of such a community implies an open attitude to be able to make contributions and accept the outcomes of making our work public. In fact, under current circumstances, indicators such as the number of studies and published articles, conference attendance and proceedings, the communication and relations with communities in the same or related fields, to name a few, are used to frame scientific communities within national and international contexts and to give faith of their existence. Scientific journals help comply with most of these indicators, and their underlying plurality in scope functions as a way to regulate the relationships that arise "within scientific communities and among them and other social systems" (Capurro, 2015, p. 17). Nonetheless, the sense of cloister and exclusion that seems to surround scientific communities indicates that relations of power are part of the scientific

ethos, which can be evident, for instance, among research groups and their impact on training researchers; in search of products that can help rate and classify scholars and their research groups; and, as indicated before, in national policies based on journal ranking systems administered by highly commercial companies.

Some of these inconveniences have been surpassed in time while others prevail and influence, with varying degrees, the classification of Colombian scientific communities as “emergent” or “under development.” Furthermore, despite the perception of superiority that society usually has towards academic and scientific communities, as elites in the production and advancement of knowledge, significant efforts are needed to strengthen them for “neither market forces nor other kinds of spontaneous social forces are enough, on their own, to foster the development of structures for the production and dissemination of a nation’s scientific and technological knowledge” (Forero-Pineda, 2000, p. 9; translated from Spanish). This becomes even more necessary in communities like the one where the *Profile* journal is edited, as well as in those to which the authors and readers of the journal belong.

Improvement Plan for the Generation of Communities Around the *Profile* Journal

To move forward with the creation of communities, we should bear in mind the external circumstances that can impact the achievement of said goal. Although we, as editors, may not have direct control over such circumstances, it is possible to assess the editorial and publication practices of the journal as well as the actions aimed at contributing to the communities where the authors—and, ideally, the readers—may have some influence. Therefore, we have designed an improvement plan aimed at strengthening editorial management and, thus, advance our contributions to generating and consolidating communities. Based on the protocol proposed by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación

de la Calidad y Acreditación, ANECA, n.d.)¹, the plan includes five elements:

1. Identifying areas of improvement
2. Detecting the main causes of the problem
3. Defining goals for each area of improvement
4. Selecting actions for improvement
5. Scheduling a follow-up plan

The workflow of the editorial process to produce a journal issue generally comprises two great areas: editorial management and visibility. The first includes (a) a call for manuscripts, (b) manuscript review and edition, and (c) design and publication. As for visibility, three post-publication stages are taken into account: (a) launching, (b) distribution, and (c) dissemination.

In drafting the improvement plan, we resorted to the following input: (a) analysis of the editorial process and emails related to it from 2014 to the second semester of 2020 (this was carried out by the editor with the help of the editorial assistant); (b) records of institutional and national guidelines and initiatives that favored the visibility of Colombian journals; (c) interactions with authors, reviewers, and other actors involved in the production of the journal (e.g., the Editorial Center of the faculty, the University’s library division, the indexing and referencing systems); and (d) the suggestions, collected via interviews and emails, made by the participants of the study on which this paper is based.

Identifying Areas of Improvement

The starting point in detecting areas of improvement includes the set of strengths and difficulties drawn from the sources indicated above. Since the editing stages are interrelated, and the strengths and difficulties were at times duplicated, these were grouped into the two great areas that make up the editorial workflow: editorial management and visibility (see Tables 1 & 2).

¹ ANECA suggests a support document to help universities draft improvement plans once they have completed a process of evaluation. The protocol has been adopted here for its ample institutional dissemination without implying our complete alignment with said agency.

Table 1. Areas of Improvement in Editorial Management

Stage 1: Call for Manuscripts		
Strengths	Difficulties	Areas of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2016, an average of 30 manuscripts have been submitted per issue, with an average of 12 articles being accepted for publication in each issue. • The call for manuscripts remains open on the journal website, and it has been shared via email, academic networks (e.g., ELTecs, Publindex), and bulletins from the faculty of Human Sciences and the research Vice Rector of Universidad Nacional de Colombia. • Information about academic events and the launching of new journal editions is ongoing. • To promote the second section of the journal (dedicated to research done by novice teachers and based on their theses or dissertations), we have taken into consideration the suggestions made by some reviewers to expand the submission criteria and allow the tutors of the theses to appear as coauthors of a manuscript. There is also the possibility of submitting manuscripts based on master's theses whose authors have never published in a scientific journal. 	<p>Although tutors of undergraduate monographs have been invited to submit papers, there is still a lack of contributions for the second section of the journal (<i>Issues From Novice Teacher Researchers</i>).</p>	<p>Publication of articles from novice authors.</p>
Stage 2: Manuscript Review and Edition		
Strengths	Difficulties	Areas of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A solid team of peer reviewers has been set up. • We continue to extend invitations to possible new reviewers to respond to the growing number of submitted manuscripts. • There have been no inconveniences in the reception of manuscripts through the OJS system. • Most reviewers prefer not to use the OJS system for manuscript review. In this sense, a successful strategy has been introduced whereby the editorial assistant sends the manuscripts to the reviewers by email and then registers their decisions in the system. This has allowed the review process to run smoothly, avoiding the inconveniences experienced when the reviewers themselves were registering their recommendations (e.g., lost evaluations, undelivered notices, backlogs). • A template of the letter to the editor has been useful in obtaining full and homogenous submissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At times reviewers are insufficient. This is mainly due to the number of papers whose assessment usually requires more than two reviewers. • Delayed responses from some of the reviewers. • Greater awareness by authors of publishing guidelines and their compliance. 	<p>Increase the efficiency of peer review.</p>

Stage 3: Design and Publication		
Strengths	Difficulties	Areas of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of the workflow of the editorial process with the specific tasks and schedule for the actors involved at this stage (e.g. editorial team, Editorial Center). This guarantees complying with the stated publication frequency (January, for the first issue, and July, for the second). Designing the layout and cover of each issue following the publication style of the journal. Steps for facilitating online reading of published contents in different formats, including PDF (of the whole issue and of each separate article), and without restrictions to downloading or printing. In this way, readers chose the contents they prefer. 	<p>Eventual delays in the tasks of the Editorial Center due to insufficient workforce or because other faculty publications require attention in dealing with a backlog.</p>	<p>Earlier delivery of contents for layout. <i>NB:</i> This is not regarded as an improvement area since most of the activities at this stage depend on the management of the Editorial Center. The corresponding requests are made to guarantee the timely publication of the journal.</p>

Table 2. Areas of Improvement in Visibility

Stage 1: Launching		
Strengths	Difficulties	Areas of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each number is launched in a local event (face-to-face or online): After introducing the issue, two or three authors make a brief presentation of their articles. Starting with Vol. 20, No. 1 (January, 2018) authors are asked to submit short videos about their papers that may be viewed during the launching event. These videos are later posted on the journal webpage and on the YouTube channel (https://bit.ly/3PRlor1) Positive response from the attendees to the launching event and from the followers of the YouTube channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At times, audiences are small. Technical issues with online streaming. 	<p>Capture a greater audience for the presentation of future editions.</p>

Stage 2: Distribution		
Strengths	Difficulties	Areas of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some printed issues of the journal are available for distribution. Authors and members of the editorial board are notified when a new issue has been published online. Only one reviewer requests delivery of a printed copy. Authors receive an email with a copy of their article in PDF format and the recommendation to share it with colleagues and through academic networks. Readers can download from the journal website PDF files of the whole issue or of each individual article. 	<p>The accumulation of printed issues. Although the contents are freely available online on the journal website and on the databases that index the journal, some teachers still prefer the printed edition. It is therefore necessary for this option to remain available.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to reduce production costs, the number of printed issues has been lowered, with the possibility of asking the Editorial Center to print more, if needed. Promoting printed issues in different academic events. <i>NB:</i> This is not considered an area of improvement.
Stage 3: Dissemination		
Strengths	Difficulties	Areas of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of social media outlets, including YouTube. Registering the contents or metadata of each published issue in bibliographical databases and international index systems. Making the articles available in the XML format so that search engines can more easily harvest their metadata. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating expectation among readers on upcoming issues. Promoting contents by linking them to the authors' professional and social networks. Delay in updating the contents in some bibliographical databases. 	<p>Ahead-of-print publication, that is, advanced online publication of some contents prior to the final print or online edition. Alternatively, changes in the frequency of publication (from two issues per year to three).</p>

Action Plan for Improvement

Once the four areas of improvement have been identified (publication of articles from novice authors, increasing the efficiency of peer review, capturing a greater audience for the presentation of future editions, and ahead-of-print publication or change in publication frequency), we establish the cause of the problem. Next, we define goals of improvement, the actions to be taken

within certain time limits, and the expected benefits. Finally, we specify the follow-up tasks for each area with regard to the planned improvement actions. In our case, roles and responsibilities are not included since the editor and the assistant editor are in charge of all the improvement plan. In the following sections, we detail the action plan for each of the areas under scrutiny: editorial management and visibility.

Table 3. Improvement Area No. 1: Publishing Articles by Novice Authors

<p style="text-align: center;">Problem description</p> <p>For the journal, it is important to ensure the participation of teachers from different educational levels, among them, novice researchers. Across a diversity of media (e.g., fora, communications with bachelor's programs, social media), emphasis has been made on the opportunity the journal offers novice authors to publish the results of their first research endeavor in the second section (<i>Issues From Novice Teacher Researchers</i>). However, the submission rate for this section remains low. Then, it is necessary to find alternatives that may help in keeping the section, since it is integral to the vision and mission of the journal.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Cause of the problem</p> <p>An overall lack of publishing culture among novice researchers (bachelor's and master's degree students). It has also been noted that it is rather uncommon for teacher educators in bachelor programs to resort to articles by novice researchers as material in research courses or as a guide for the monographs undertaken by future teachers. In contrast, the journal contents are known to be frequently used in master's degree programs, especially in the Colombian context.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>To guarantee the publication of articles from novice authors in the second section of the journal.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Actions for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend an invitation to the coordinators of bachelor's and master's degree programs to make students aware of the publication options offered by the journal. • Maintain assertive communication with authors who inquire about guidelines for publication or who request an opinion on the texts they wish to send for evaluation. • Tutoring novice writers through revision of first drafts. • Panels with former novice writers, so they may share experiences.
<p style="text-align: center;">Expected benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the three sections of the journal • Motivate new researchers • Increase readership for articles by novice writers

Action Plan for Editorial Management

We found two areas that require attention to optimize editorial management. The first has to do with keeping one of the distinctive traits of the journal: the publication of articles from novice authors (teachers at the end of their undergraduate or master's studies; see Table 3).

The second area refers to increasing the efficiency of peer review (see Table 4).²

² Table 4 does not include the elements of academic writing and content that were also pointed out by authors and reviewers as publishing difficulties. These are discussed in Cárdenas (2019), but they also are part of the editorial management of the journal.

Table 4. Improvement Area No. 2: Increasing the Efficiency of Peer Review

<p style="text-align: center;">Problem description</p> <p>Each manuscript must be assigned to, at least, two peer reviewers in the initial round of review so that the evaluation process is kept to a maximum of five months (including subsequent rounds of review). It is also necessary to bear in mind that some manuscripts will need the opinion of a third reviewer to solve any discrepancy between the recommendations of the two original reviewers. However, the efficiency of the peer review process can be affected by some reviewers when they do not respond to review requests, submit their feedback late, or perform poor reviews. It has been observed that late reviewer response is usually due to difficulties in understanding the manuscripts. All this has a negative impact in the time spent on evaluation since reminders need to be sent when there is not a prompt confirmation or additional reviewers have to be assigned in the absence of confirmation or due to poor reviews. Therefore, the review process must be closely monitored to ensure that authors receive opportune responses or instructions; on the contrary, the image of the journal may be affected.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Cause of the problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time on the part of reviewers. • Discomfort with some authors' neglect in the organization and style of their manuscripts. • According to the evaluation of the journal done by Scopus in 2018, when the journal was first included in this database, "academic quality is not uniform across articles." Even though this may be debatable, depending on the views of this database reviewers with regard to the diverse focus of the journal, it is something to bear in mind when assessing the overall quality of the feedback submitted by the reviewers of the journal as well as when editing the final version of the manuscripts approved for publication.
<p style="text-align: center;">Objective</p> <p>To increase the efficiency of the review process of the manuscripts submitted to the journal.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Actions for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the number of reviewers. • Send more detailed information to new reviewers on the nature of the journal and on the kind of papers expected for each section. • More guidance for the authors regarding the type of papers the journal publishes and the guidelines for submissions. • Supervise reviewers' performance.
<p style="text-align: center;">Expected benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fluid evaluation process to optimize the editorial workflow • Assertive and prompt communication with authors and reviewers

Action Plan for Visibility

Even though the *Profile* journal has made progress in terms of visibility, we acknowledge the need for improvement in two areas: a larger audience for the launching events and earlier publication of articles. With regard to this last issue, and as detailed below,

the expectations of readers and the trends in scientific publication should be analyzed to help decide whether to opt for the ahead-of-print dynamics or change the publication frequency of the journal. Tables 5 and 6 show the details of the plan for improvement in the mentioned areas.

Table 5. Improvement Area No. 3: Capturing a Greater Audience for the Presentation of Future Editions of the Journal

<p>Problem description</p> <p>From 2000, when the journal was first launched, each published issue has been presented to the interested audience in biannual meetings and through electronic media. However, given the pedagogical interest of the journal in gathering around it the academic, professional, and scientific communities, it is a matter of concern that, even though a lot of teachers register for those launching events, the actual number of attendees is not as high as expected.</p>
<p>Causes of the problem</p> <p>It has been observed that the invitations to attend the launching events reach the potential audience through mailing lists or other media (social networks, print flyers, or radio announcements). Nevertheless, the addressed professional communities seem to be unwilling to take advantage of academic spaces like the one offered by the journal. It is also the case that the teachers' busy agendas may have a deterrent effect, making attendance to face-to-face events difficult.</p>
<p>Objective</p> <p>To increase visibility of the journal by ensuring the participation of members of reputed communities in the events organized periodically.</p>
<p>Actions for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the strategies to publicize events. • Find alternatives to the dynamics of launching events.
<p>Expected benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater familiarity of professional, academic, and scientific communities with the publication. • Early circulation of accepted articles. • Keep the journal coverage active within databases and index systems.

Table 6. Improvement Area No. 4: Ahead-of-Print Publication or Change in Publication Frequency

<p>Problem description</p> <p>While the journal has a semiannual publication frequency, current trends in early publication of accepted articles lead to other options that may secure prompt circulation. One possibility is the ahead-of-print publication approach (e.g., the electronic publication of accepted articles prior to the complete printed or online edition). Another option would be to increase the publication frequency, from semiannual to three issues per year.</p>
<p>Causes of the problem</p> <p>As the journal gains visibility, especially within reputed communities and databases and index systems, the number of manuscripts submitted for evaluation rises. At the same time, there is greater expectation with regard to the publication of upcoming editions. Usually, such expectation is the result of pressure on the authors to display their academic output (e.g., for promotion within their institutions or as a requirement to be granted a master's or doctoral degree). Regarding the evaluation process, manuscripts are approved in a sequential manner, which can be used to publish them in less time.</p>
<p>Objective</p> <p>To promote an earlier dissemination of the contents of each journal issue in reputed communities.</p>

Actions for improvement

- Evaluate the relevance of resorting to ahead-of-print publication.
 - Evaluate the relevance of changing the publication frequency from semiannual to three issues per year.
-

Expected benefits

- Exploit the advantages of online publication.
 - Meet the need of providing current contents (although this may not be as urgent given the characteristics of the disciplinary area of the journal).
 - Greater familiarity of professional, academic, and scientific communities with the publication.
 - Less time for the authors to be able to incorporate their articles to their academic output.
-

Concluding Remarks

We can see that the elements included in the improvement plan demand great efforts to respond to the needs of national and international communities. Publishing in peer reviewed journals allows members of a community to establish academic contact, to keep abreast of the latest development in their area of expertise, to evaluate the quality and relevance of the work they perform, and, ultimately, to establish collaborative relationships with peers. Therefore, the job done by the editorial staff of scientific journals, as venues where communities emerge and grow, is of paramount importance, and special attention should be paid to permanently monitor specific editorial processes to identify areas of improvement and implement the necessary actions.

The improvement plan described in this paper gathers some core issues that may allow us to move forward with the sustained publication of the journal, according to current editorial practices and the results of the study done with novice writers and reviewers (Cárdenas, 2021). We can see that the areas of improvement are not just the result of the need to respond to the external metrics of journal evaluation systems. Such areas are already an integral part of good practices in academic publications. Above all, our interest is to foresee actions aligned with the journal's socio-critical vision, which is fundamental in guiding the mission of the journal as a forum that facilitates the

incorporation of English language teachers' academic writing into professional, academic, and scientific communities; thus, contribute to the field of English language teaching and learning. In that regard, "our aim of enriching the professional knowledge of our authors and readers and thus, create and strengthen an international academic community around the teaching and learning of English as a foreign/second language," remains constant (Cárdenas et al., 2020, pp. 9–10).

The demanding editorial management of a journal includes complex processes that usually revolve around universal or particular publication norms. Overwhelmed by the dynamics of the manuscript evaluation process, we usually forget that communication with authors and reviewers may offer a glimpse into circumstances worthy of study. In our case, interpreting the voices and experiences of the participants allowed us to have a closer look at the reconstruction of meanings derived from their beliefs and to unveil the personal and professional circumstances attributable to publishing in a scientific journal; circumstances that are somehow connected to the scientific and professional communities in the writers' local or international contexts. We expect that the actions included in the improvement plan may also be a reference for studies on academic writing, the editorial processes of academic journals, and alternatives in supporting educators from different educational levels and geographical contexts interested in divulging their work through journal publishing.

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