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Reviewer Essay: What Makes for a High Quality IJ- SoTL Research Article?

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Abstract

Excerpt:

The characteristics of a high quality research article for the IJ-SoTL do not differ markedly from research articles for other journals. Obviously the nature of a research article presented for review and publication must be a good fit with the terms of reference of the Journal being targeted. It follows therefore that any research article for IJ-SoTL must show that the authors understand the nature, the nuances and the complexities of the scholarship of teaching...

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What Makes for a High Quality IJ-SoTL Research Article?

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The characteristics of a high quality research article for the IJ-SoTL do not differ markedly from research articles for other journals. Obviously the nature of a research article presented for review and publication must be a good fit with the terms of reference of the Journal being targeted. It follows therefore that any research article for IJ-SoTL must show that the authors understand the nature, the nuances and the complexities of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

There are anecdotal comments that 'SoTL' is used as a catch all phrase used to define any activity or engagement with the processes of teaching and facilitating learning. This will not do for a publication in a prestigious journal!

A research article for IJ-SoTL should be foregrounded with an articulation of the authors' understanding of the concept of SoTL and how the research being disseminated contributes to scholarly practice.

The key parameters of a high quality research article include:

- An introduction to the nature of the study – this should be written in an easily accessible manner, it should be reasonably brief but with sufficient detail to interest the readers, particularly the target audience.
- A literature review – by its very nature, research perpetuates itself. There is no end point to research and therefore it will be the case that a research article builds on previous knowledge and understanding drawn from prior research. In the case of SoTL, there is a vast body of research steadily building. The authors of the research article need to show what research they are building on in their article. This does not mean that any and all SoTL literature should be quoted or cited – but the readers need to know the pedagogical underpinning of the research, the 'school of thought' that has influenced the direction of the research.
- The development of a hypotheses and the research plan – should be clear to the reader.
- The design of the study should be articulated well and the research should have been carried out in an ethical manner.
- Appropriate interpretation of the results – results should not be over interpreted and analyzed because all research has limitations and the authors need to recognize these limitations.
- Sufficient replication and duplication of the study – too many research articles are based on a one off study and this is problematic. Research outcomes should be capable of being replicated and duplicated. There is very often a temptation to write

[REDACTED]

up a one-off study, over-interpret and make sweeping generalizations.

- The research should be authentic.

There are some other points of importance in presenting an article for publication: the article should be well written, grammatically correct and accessible to the readers. Graphs and diagrams should be well labeled and in good alignment with the text.

It may seem superfluous to mention such apparently trivial points but it is surprising how many articles I review that are not well presented!

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