

Georgios TSAPARLIS
University of Ioannina, Department of Chemistry

THE QUALITY OF *CERAPIE*: AIMING TO STRIKE A BALANCE

Issue 2 of *CERAPIE* contains another *eleven* articles from the *5th European Conference on Research in Chemical Education* (5th ECRICE), of which *one* is an invited contribution, and *ten* have undergone the review process. Of these *ten* articles, *seven* deal with chemistry education research, while *three* are on the practice of chemistry education; this time, two articles on education practice belong to the new category of *reports*. Issue 3 is in preparation, but publication time cannot yet be fixed – most likely it will be October 2000. The summary statistics of processed manuscripts so far is as follows:

Manuscripts received by 15 March 2000: <i>51</i>	Accepted conditionally (pending revision): <i>2</i>
Invited contributions: <i>5</i>	Still under review: <i>5</i>
For review: <i>46</i>	Rejected: <i>13</i>
Accepted after review: <i>26</i>	Acceptance rate: <i>68.3%</i> (<i>28/41</i>)

At the outset, we find it useful to report the acceptance/rejection rate because we think that it gives a feeling and a measure of the quality of *CERAPIE*. According to the January 2000 Editorial of *Science Education* (Duschl, 2000)

“... a figure in the range of 30% is generally considered to be an appropriate acceptance rate. I have heard arguments that the lower the acceptance rate (e.g. 10%) the more prestigious the journal... an extremely low acceptance rate would no more accurately reflect a combative and competitive process between authors and referees rather than one that, I will argue, can be a nurturing and facilitating process.

While some individuals may benefit from such competitive formats, in the long run the adoption of these exclusionary policies will negatively affect the diverse and increasingly expanding community of scholars working in science education and science education-related domains. *A balance needs to be struck* (my italics) between, on the one hand, maintaining standards, and, on the other hand, providing individuals opportunities to be part of the community and to participate in the review process.”

Note that the acceptance rate for *Science Education* for the period March 1997 - December 1998 was 35% (91/255) (Duschl, 2000).

Another indicator of the quality of the review process is the percentage of articles revised to those published. For *CERAPIE* (Issues 1 and 2), 73% of the published articles were revised.

From an earlier (1993) work (Viglietta, 1996), the acceptance rate of 30 surveyed journals from various countries that focus on physics education and general science education varied from

25% to 95%, while the percentage of revised to published articles varied from 5% to 100%. Examples: *ASTER* (France) acceptance rate 75% / percentage revised 90%; *European Journal of Physics* (UK) 25% / 50%; *International Journal of Science Education* 45% / 25%; *Journal of College Science Teaching* (USA) 50% / 80%; *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 30% / 80%; *La Chimica nella Scuola* (Italy) 80% / 95%; *La Fisica nella Scuola* (Italy) 64% / 70%; *Math. Naturwissenschaften Unterricht* (Germany) 50% / 10%; *Naturwissenschaften in Unterrichtphys.* (Germany) 70% / 90%; *Primary Science Review* (UK) 75% / 50%; *Research in Science and Technological Education* (UK) 59% / 70%; *Science Education* (USA) 50% / (not available); *Science Education International* (UK) 60% / 90%; *The Physics Teacher* (USA) 40% / not available. Note, however, that recent figures may differ substantially.

Eventually, “what is published is the product of the review process”, that is, the quality of a journal is determined by the expertise, the work, and the responsibility of its reviewers. As a new publication, *CERAPIE* is based on the quality of its reviews. It is a happy situation that reviewers have reviewed manuscripts both in a professional and efficient way. In addition, we had a turnaround time between receipt of a manuscript and return of review between 1-2 months. In this way, we were able to achieve our estimated publication dates almost exactly.

We repeat that the decision about accepting or rejecting a paper for *CERAPIE* is based on the reviewers’ recommendations. To make, however, the process more effective, we are introducing a policy of a first home examination of all new submissions (before sending them to reviewers); this means that if a paper is judged as problematic (especially as far as its suitability for *CERAPIE* and its language are concerned) it will be returned to its author(s).

In the final analysis, however, the quality of a journal is determined by the quality of papers submitted to it. The call for papers, whether or not presented in the 5th ECRICE, is now open. For maintaining both *CERAPIE*, and its good quality, we are relying on you.

NOTE: It is well known that various indices are used for the evaluation of the quality of scientific journals. One widely used index is the *Impact Factor*, which is the average number of times recent articles in a specific journal were cited in the *Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) Journal Citation Report* cover year. It was very pleasing to see that, according to the recent SSCI report (1997), out of 102 journals in the category ‘Education and Educational Research’, two science-education journals feature among the top twenty-five: *Science Education* (7th) and *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* (10th).

REFERENCES

- Duschl, R.A. (2000). Building community while raising standards (Editorial). *Science Education*, 84, 1-4.
- Viglietta, L. (1996). Science Education Journals: From theory to practice. *Science Education*, 80, 367-394.