

Standards for Research Impact and Productivity within the Field of Education

Expectation for our merit reviews includes 1-2 articles per year with considerations made for peer review book chapters. Of course, if a faculty member has a book or other major academic accomplishments during the period it will be weighed against our general standard and acknowledged accordingly. In all our reviews we consider the impact of the work on the field both in terms of research and practice.

Researchers in the field of education pursue their areas of inquiry through a variety of disciplinary and theoretical lenses. Although different sub-fields within education have their own standards, there is a set of basic principles of high-quality research that most educational researchers agree upon. They include the development of a logical chain of reasoning, methods appropriate to the question posed, data and analysis adequate to support findings, and explication of procedures and results in detail, among others. It is important to underscore that quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are all valued within the field. Findings are expected to contribute to improving theory, practice, and/or policy in the field. These principles are embodied in the standards of research published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the primary international scholarly organization in the field of education, involving over 25,000 members.

Collaborative work is common in the field of education. Working in teams allows researchers to tackle a broader set of questions in the complex organizational settings that comprise the field of education. Authorship is listed in terms of order of contribution, not alphabetically, unless otherwise noted.

In general, articles in peer-reviewed journals are the most highly regarded publications. Books are also highly valued, both those that aim towards an academic audience and those aimed towards a broader audience including practitioners and policymakers. Most book publishers rely on peer reviewers and/or an editorial board to review and approve the book prospectus before a contract is granted. Book chapters, while very important, are seen as having slightly less impact than the above two in most education subfields. However, if the book chapters are in high profile volumes, such as research review handbooks (in which chapters themselves are peer reviewed), they are held on par with – and sometimes seen as even more important than -- articles.

There are many peer-reviewed journals within the field of education, some more selective in terms of acceptance than others. In general, journals sponsored by AERA and other professional organizations within the field and in closely related fields are highly selective. In addition, there are several other top-tier independent journals that serve the various subfields within the larger domain of education research. Education faculty typically publish more of their work in specialized journals than in those that serve the larger field of education. This is reflective of the interdisciplinary nature of the field of education, with many scholars of education having roots in other disciplines. While useful in other fields, impact factors are not a reliable indicator of journal quality in the field of education. Thus, we are now focusing on assessing the reputation of the journal and review the acceptance rates. Journals with acceptance rates of 20% or less are typically highly selective.

Conference proceedings at annual meetings of professional associations for researchers such as AERA are peer reviewed and often have high rejection rates (in the case of AERA only 30% of the paper submissions are invited). Given the highly selective nature of these conferences, they are valued as a measure of academic productivity and impact. The expectation is that these conference papers will subsequently be turned into journal articles.

Research in education, as in other disciplines, is also concerned with the bridging of research into practice. Therefore, faculty in education, while primarily focusing on publishing work in scholarly journals, may also often dedicate time to writing articles for more practitioner-focused journals, research/technical reports, policy briefs, and handbooks as a way to move knowledge into use. Oral presentations of findings to practitioner audiences in the form of keynote addresses, conferences for teachers, etc. is another way that faculty accomplish this goal.

Seeking external funding for research from either governmental or private sources is an expectation within the field of education, more for particular subfields than others. For example, it is easier to obtain funding for research that has policy significance and more difficult for smaller classroom-based or single-school studies.