




# **Management Learning: The journal for critical, reflexive scholarship on organization and learning**

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In our previous editorials, we have sought to position *Management Learning* in the field, clarify the form of scholarship we publish, and critique the quantification of research quality along with the burgeoning cottage industry of “publication practices” research. In this 2015 Editorial, we take the opportunity to consider our strategy for the future in light of the current pressures around journal metrics. We also offer some further qualitative views on the nature of *Management Learning* scholarship.

The journal’s 2-year impact factor currently stands at 1.25 and the 5-year impact factor at 1.89 in the *Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports* (2014). In terms of 5-year trends, the journal’s mean 2-year impact factor stands at a healthy 1.37. As far as journal quality lists go, we await with interest the outcome of the revision to the United Kingdom’s Association of Business School (ABS) journal quality list to see how things stand. Further afield, the Australian Business Dean’s Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List (2013) rated *Management Learning* as an ‘A’ journal. However, the ABDC is right to remind us that journal lists should be only a starting point for assessing quality, and that there is no substitute for assessing the scholarship of a piece of work on a case-by-case basis. In this latter regard, the outcome of the United Kingdom’s Research Excellence Framework (unknown at the time of writing this Editorial) may also shed light on the quality, impact, and relevance of *Management Learning* scholarship.

*Management Learning* has a long and respected history, the first issue being published in 1970 under the name of *Management Education and Development*. In 1994, the journal title changed to *Management Learning*, and in 2009, we celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We entered our fifth decade with the conviction and optimism that the type of scholarship the journal publishes “continues to be different” from the scholarship to be found in the mainstream management journals or that of the journals we consider our closest “relatives.” Perhaps better known in the UK, Australasia and Europe, we continually seek to expand our reach to North America and Asia to provide a forum for scholars wishing to challenge mainstream work. But we still struggle against the perception that we are a pedagogic teaching and learning journal—which clearly we are not. Rather, we publish innovative critical and reflexive scholarly work around learning, managing, and organizing—a philosophy that can be traced back to Mark Easterby-Smith and Mike Pedler’s 1986 Editorial, when in

addition to recognizing the growth in submissions, they called for papers that engage in critique. We also encourage submissions that take a broader view on the societal impact of management education and make critical contributions to theory through research in a critical management education (CME) context.

There is no better place to see this than in the collection of articles by distinguished management learning scholars in our celebration of *Management Learning's* 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Volume 40: Issue 4). For present purposes, we focus attention on two contributions by our eminent predecessors Elena Antonacopoulou and Christopher Grey. Grey (2009) makes many salient points (and, incidentally, highlights the importance of being brave and willing to “confront the proliferation ranking systems for journals,” p. 353). In so far as management learning scholarship is concerned, Grey singles out the “licence to think” that *Management Learning* affords the research community, and more particularly the kind of writing that sits at the heart of intellectual life and which allows “provocative ideas to be aired, speculations to be made, big issues to be engaged with and, sometimes, daring thoughts to be communicated” (p. 354). Antonacopoulou (2009) waxed reflexively on learning itself, and highlighted the importance for the *Management Learning* community of our own “unlearning”: reframing and extending both “the way we ask questions and well as the kind of questions we ask” (p. 424) and thereby delivering meaningful impact via a distinctive “brand” of scholarship and inquiry.

Our own belief is that a perusal of the articles published in Volume 45 is an indication of the courage, diversity, and quality of *Management Learning* scholarship, with papers addressing spatial and temporal orderings, boundaries and difference, smartphone photography, unlearning, and identity work. Our authors push the boundaries of thinking and challenge us to engage with our roles and responsibilities as educators, researchers, writers, and thinkers in new, critical, and socially relevant ways. This we see as the main aim of the journal.

The distinctiveness of *Management Learning* is an evolving project, but is far from “anything goes.” The essence of our strategy remains unchanged: problematizing current knowledge and practice, reflexively questioning our own “in-house assumptions” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011: 254) by recognizing what is not said as much as what is said, and exploring new possibilities. This can be seen in

- The recent Special Issue on “Wisdom and Learning” edited by Ikujiro Nonaka, Robert Chia, Robin Holt, and Vesa Peltokorpi;
- The three Virtual Special Issues (VSIs) published on the journal’s website in 2014: on “Leadership,” “Emotion,” and most recently on “Reflexivity.” Each VSI offers between five and eight articles from the journal that address important themes from different perspectives;
- The upcoming Special Issues on “Sensemaking and Learning for Interesting Times” and “The Social Relevance and Social Impact of Knowledge and Knowing”;
- The Best Paper of the Year Award, which for 2013 (awarded in 2014) was James McDonald’s “Coming out in the field: A queer reflexive account of shifting researcher identity.”

In furthering this distinctiveness, the Editors and Associate Editors are pleased to announce the introduction, in Volume 46, of what will be a new form of article which we hope will prompt the type of critical and thoughtful debate that the *Management Learning* community of scholars cherishes so dearly—“Provocations to Debate.” These will be short, initially invited, articles by key scholars on a topic close to their heart that will stimulate debate. They will be written in the tone and manner of *Management Learning* inquiry so eloquently captured not only by Grey and Antonacopoulou but by all of the distinguished contributions to 40(4). However, we do not see the “licence to think” and opportunity to “unlearn” that a “provocation” will afford as an end in itself;

rather, we very much hope that “provocations” will stimulate new research and rejoinders, catalyze critique and unlearning, and realize reflection and reflexivity with the “intellectual courage” (Grey, 2009: 356) that is the hallmark of *Management Learning*.

In closing this Editorial, we once again thank, and with greatest sincerity, the authors and reviewers who have sustained the high quality of scholarship associated with *Management Learning*. Finally, we are very pleased to announce that the Management Learning Reviewer of the Year for 2014 is awarded to Dr Caroline Ramsey of the University of Liverpool Management School.

## References

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