

Rules of Publication in Arab Educational Journals

Second Version (2019)

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With the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and in collaboration with the Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Arab Children (KSAAC), Shamaa (The Arab Educational Information Network) team drafted these rules in 2017, during a workshop held in Amman, at the Association of Arab Universities (AARU) headquarters (October 23-24, 2017). The final version of the 2017 version was issued based on a seminar held in Beirut and supported by Ford Foundation (December 1-2, 2017). Thirty-one representatives of educational journals participated in the workshop and seminar.

On April 11, 2019, Shamaa team held an additional seminar in Beirut, with the participation of 9 Arab educational journals. A month later Shamaa team met to deliberate about all comments and approved this version of 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the following standards, based on international practices, is a result of a series of studies conducted by the Shamaa team over several stages. These studies highlighted the existence of serious problems in the quality of articles published in Arab educational journals. The studies covered three axes; in the first axis, articles published in Arab journals and dealing with specific topics (science education; teaching history; educational management; early childhood education; equity and education) were reviewed in comparison with research trends in international journals. In the second axis, commonly utilized reference and citation styles in articles were investigated. In the third axis, a comparison of research methods was drawn between published articles in the educational field and in sociology.

In parallel, the Shamaa team tracked specialized education journals (given that there are periodicals in humanities that publish educational articles) in search of their types and extent of their circulation as well as regarding the publication standards used by these journals in terms of policies and procedures and publication. In a subsequent phase, a survey was conducted on 32 periodicals about their publication review processes and mechanisms, research topics and methodologies; quality issues; rules of integrity; human resources; financial resources; circulation; impact, and internationalization. The results of these studies were published in a special issue of the journal *Idhafat* (No 45, Winter 2019).

The Shamaa team studies have provided clear evidence regarding the weaknesses in the management of the review and publishing process (the rules applied by the journals) and in the quality of the articles and their scientific and international value. At this stage, it is difficult to be certain about the historical cause of the weakness inherent in the published research: Is it due to the quality of the articles or the quality of management of the journals? In any case, there is ample evidence to suggest that improvement must be initiated at the level of the journals' management to improve the rules of review and publication, with the hope that this would positively impact the quality of published articles.

The project has undergone several consultative phases with the involvement a wide number of Arab educational researchers working in or outside the Arab region and a relatively large number of representatives of Arab educational journals.

The project was planned and implemented as a collaborative, group effort, and the rules that have been developed must be continuously reviewed in the same manner. Managing and coordinating these efforts is one of the roles undertaken by Shamaa for the purpose of making a difference in the quality of Arab educational research and moving it up to an international level.

These rules have been established to guide the Arab educational journals (which may adopt them) and to help writers to improve their manuscripts.

And the work continues.

Adnan ElAmine,

Project Director

Beirut, May 31, 2019

Section One: Standards Posted for Writers

I. Ethics of Publishing

1. Integrity - The authors shall abide by the ethics of scholarly publishing and the manuscripts will be subject to a plagiarism detection review. Any article that does not comply with the ethics of publishing shall be rejected. Furthermore, any manuscript that is subsequently submitted by an author who did not comply previously with the ethics of publishing shall be rejected.
2. Copyright - Upon acceptance of his/her article, the author shall sign an agreement allowing the journal to publish it while reserving his/her right to self-archive the article and deposit it in digital repository.

OR

- The author shall sign an agreement to open access publishing with the journal that uses this system.
3. Conflict of Interest - The principle of "no-conflict of interest", shall be adopted in the review process, particularly in the form of a blind review along with the selection of reviewers not affiliated with the institution in which the author works and/or from outside the country.

II. Procedures and Stages

4. Submission of the Manuscript
 - Manuscripts along with annexes thereto are sent to the journal via electronic mail.
 - OR
 - The manuscript is uploaded electronically to the website of the journal and the author is provided with a code allowing him to track the status of the manuscript in the system.
 - The author shall be notified of the receipt of the article.
 - The manuscript shall be accompanied, in a separate file, with a brief profile of the author, his/her place of work and email address.
5. The Review
 - 1) Preliminary Examination
 - Every manuscript shall be subject to a preliminary examination in terms of its format and topic, on the basis of which a decision is made whether to include it in the peer review process or not.
 - The author shall be informed of the preliminary examination results (rejection; needed amendments; eligibility for peer review).

2) The Peer Review

- Every manuscript shall be subject to a dual blind review performed by peers,
- The editorial board shall inform the author of its decision, a summary of its remarks, and required amendments if needed. This is accompanied by the reviewers' reports or summaries thereof.
- The reviewers shall remain anonymous in the report sent to the author.

3) Introducing Modifications

- The author shall make the necessary modifications to the manuscript based on the results of the review process and shall resend it to the journal showing the modifications in "track changes".
- The author shall indicate in a separate file that accompanies the modified manuscript his/her responses to all the points raised in the editorial board's letter and the reports submitted by the reviewers.

4) Acceptance and Rejection

- The journal shall reserve the right to accept or reject the manuscript based on the author's adherence to the journal standards and the requirements of the journal's editorial board.

III. Formal Standards

6. Topic Relevance

- The topic of the manuscript shall fall within the academic scope of the journal (as reported by the journal)

7. The Text

- The title and the author's full name shall be in both Arabic and a foreign language (the family name comes first).
- The manuscript shall include:
 - An abstract in a single paragraph (150 to 200 words). The abstract describes the topic, methodology, the main findings, and the conclusion.
 - Three to six key words.
- The abstract and key words shall be stated in Arabic and a foreign language.
- The text shall be fluent and linguistically correct.

- There shall be no reference made to the name of the author in the manuscript, the title, body, footnotes or endnotes.

8. References

- The text shall comply with the standards stated by the journal regarding citation and bibliography.
- The author shall write the names of authors, journals and institutions correctly.

9. Tables and Charts

- The tables, figures and charts shall be presented in a clear and appropriate manner.

10. Size

- The text shall comply with the minimum and maximum limits in terms of the number of words required by the journal.

IV. Content Standards

11. The scholarly (theoretical) Framework

- There is a research problem worthy of investigation. It shows that one or more aspects of the issue under study are not known by the scholarly community (as revealed in a review of the literature) and that they need to be uncovered.

12. The Methodology

- The literature review shall cover most relevant Arabic and international works in such a manner that justifies investigating the research topic and research questions. The review shall be presented in the form of an academic/ intellectual argumentation (and not as a consecutive list of summaries), that reflects the author's intellectual position and serves to situate the research in a suitable scientific framework.
- The research questions shall be academic/intellectual in nature, logically derived from the theoretical framework and the literature review and aimed at investigating unclear aspects worthy of investigation.
- The research method shall be suitable to the problem under investigation.
- The research method is rigorous, accurate and logical.

- Data analysis procedures shall be logical and should provide opportunities to answer the questions and extrapolate the results to new situations.
- The manuscript shall provide information and ideas that constitute an added value in its field or in the approach to the research problem.

1) In quantitative research

- The hypotheses are presented as preliminary responses to the research questions and are logically derived from the literature review and contextual information.
- The samples shall be justified and/or representative and the used tools reliable, valid, and appropriate for answering the research questions.
- The data shall be presented in a precise manner. representative
- There is alignment between the topic as it appears in the title and literature review, from one side and data collection and analysis from the other side, thus avoiding veering from the study topic to the public's "point of view" thereof.

2) In Qualitative Research

- "Materials" under study (documents, texts, observations, statements, responses, etc.) should be significant and credible and the selection of such materials shall be justified.
- The research approach (ethnographic, philosophical, historical...) should be clear, and the methodology should be defined (i.e., based on content analysis, case study, observation, or seeking to reach a grounded theory).
- The author shall describe his/her background and position regarding the topic in question in order to assist others to understand their choice of the topic under investigation, the choice of research methods, and the interpretation of results.

13. The Results

- Clearly respond to the research questions and provide added knowledge to the field of research.

14. The Conclusion and Discussion

- The author summarizes the main results and provides proof that these results add to the knowledge base of the research topic as compared with previous literature and in relation to educational

theories and discusses differences and areas of consensus within the research context.

15. The Recommendations

- Recommendations should refer to issues that need further research.

16. Coherence

- There is a logical and clear link between the research problem, the literature review, the data collection and analysis, and the discussion.

17. The context

- The research should be related to a specific social and culture context in terms of the investigated problem and the results and their interpretation.

Section Two: Editing and Publishing Rules

I. Ethics of Publishing

1. Integrity

- The journal commits to ensuring the integrity of the manuscript by adopting clear procedures that ban plagiarism.

2. Copyright

- The journal shall state whether it requires acquiring copyright from the authors for publication or it adopts a policy of free access and it thus defines the type and conditions of such access.
- The editorial board shall comply with applying all the publishing standards stated to authors regarding copyright rules.

3. Conflict of Interest

- No-conflict of interest shall be applied through:
 - Blind review,
 - Selection of peer reviewers who have no relationship or interest with the author (s),
 - Avoid publishing articles whose authors are members or chairs of the editorial board.

4. Transparency

- The journal shall post its publication standards somewhere in the body of the journal and it shall also list all related details on its website.
- The journal shall declare the scope and field (or fields) of its publication's topics.
- The journal shall post the types of articles it publishes as well as any other publication materials (book reviews, conference papers, position papers, etc....)

II. Procedures and Stages

5. Submission of the Manuscript

- The journal shall make available to author an email address assigned to the submission of manuscripts and annexes and to interact with the authors.

OR

- The journal shall make available to authors a mechanism to upload their manuscripts and annexes and provide them the opportunity to track their manuscripts from the time of submission to the final decision.
- The journal shall send a confirmation receipt to the author.

6. The Review

1) Preliminary Examination

- The editorial board shall examine the manuscript to determine whether it is in compliance with the formal publishing standards and whether it is eligible for the review process.
- In the preliminary examination, the editorial board applies criteria such as: suitability of the subject for the journal; type of paper (research paper or otherwise); language accuracy; documentation relevance (according to rules approved by the journal); observance of the ethics of scholarly publishing; absence of any reference in the manuscript to the name of the author in the title, body of the manuscript and bibliography/reference list and any other formal publishing rules posted by the journal.
- The author shall be notified upon receipt of the manuscript and the result of the preliminary examination.
- The journal may add a phase labeled "Completing and Improving the Research" in the event that the journal decides that the manuscript is

promising but, it is in need of improvement prior to entering the review process. In such a phase, the journal shall provide the author with guidance and recommendations that would lead him onto the path of such improvement, in such a way that the manuscript becomes eligible for the review process.

2) The Peer Review Process

- The editorial board shall provide the reviewers the list of standards, related to form and content.
- There shall be two review reports submitted about the manuscript regarding its appropriateness for publication and the requested amendments. If the two reports differ in their evaluation, it is the prerogative of the chair of the editorial board to support one of the decisions or seek the opinion of a third reviewer.
- The journal shall maintain an updated list of peer reviewers. New reviewers can be chosen from the list of authors who publish in the journal.
- The reviewers shall be specialized in the subject of the manuscript and shall have published quality research in the specialty field in refereed journals.
- The journal shall provide reviewers with an evaluation form to guide them in the review process and in preparing review reports. The evaluation form should help reviewers judge the appropriateness of the manuscript for publication along with justifications for acceptance, rejection or making modifications.
- The reviewer shall refer to the journal standards of publication.
- The journal may arrange a training session to guide the peer reviewers. This review session could be posted in YouTube and on the journal's website.
- The editorial board shall review the reviewer' reports, prepare a summary of the results of the review process in particular in terms of the modifications that must be made and transmit them to the author.
- The editorial board shall transmit along with the abovementioned summary a copy of the reports submitted by the reviewers.

3) Making Modifications

The editorial board shall prepare a set of rules for making modifications and acceptance thereof that include a time frame, the minimum level of modifications that the author must commit to, and appoints someone to verify that such modifications have been introduced and

propose the necessary steps to be taken regarding the status of the manuscript.

4) Acceptance or Rejection

The journal shall inform the author of the final decision (acceptance or rejection) and shall also inform him/her when publication takes place.

III. Formal Standards

7. Relevance of the Topic

- The compatibility of the topic of the manuscript with the focus of the journal and the subjects published therein shall be ascertained.

8. The Text

- The editorial board shall prepare and publish the publication standards in one of the journal's pages in a brief manner and refer the readers to the details and samples that are available on its website.
- The editorial board of the journal shall carry out an additional edit of the manuscript once it has been accepted in line with the journal's suitable style for publishing and in consultation with the author.

9. Sources and References

- The journal shall post the system that it observes in terms of citation and references in the body of the text and in the bibliography/reference list. It is advisable to use an international one (such as the APA, which has been Arabized by SHAMAA)¹. Further, the journal shall publish on its website detailed instructions on how to apply the adopted system.
- The editor shall audit the list of references and sources for their formats as well as the names of authors and journals titles.

10. Tables and Charts

- The journal may require the authors to provide extra tables and charts in a separate file to facilitate the layout process. Alternatively, the journal may adopt a specific system such as the APA for inclusion of extra tables and charts.

¹ <http://www.shamaa.org/page/guides>

11. Size

- The journal shall specify the minimum and maximum number of words in a manuscript.

IV. Content Standards

12. Quality

- The editorial board seeks to provide high quality articles in line with international standards and attract varied research methodologies, through peer review commissioned to specialized and capable peers, and through the editor-in-chief.
- The journal shall publish the standards in all its issues and shall detail them on its website.
- The editorial board shall commit to apply the posted standards.

V. Managerial Rules

13. The Editorial Board

Structure:

- The journal shall have an editorial board whose members shall be academics.
- The editorial board shall include an editor-in-chief who is responsible for the scholarly aspects of the journal and who communicates with the academics.
- The editorial board shall include an assistant editor to assist the editor-in-chief with his/her tasks.
- The editorial board shall include in its membership consultants who participate in making decisions regarding the acceptance and rejection of manuscripts in addition to nominating potential reviewers.
- The editor-in-chief and his/her assistant shall dedicate time for their work at the journal. If they are college professors, they should be granted partial release from their academic duties in return for carrying out the tasks required for running the journal based on the frequency and size of its publications.
- The journal shall have a secretary who performs archiving tasks, drafting the minutes of meetings and undertaking electronic correspondence.
- The journal shall post the names of all editorial board members or consultants and their titles in addition to providing detailed

information about these individuals on its website, electronic or print version.

- The journal shall have editors who edit the manuscripts, supervise the production of the journal, and ensure compliance with all publication requirements prior to submitting the journal for print.

Tasks of the editorial board:

- Establish the annual plan of the journal, as well as the plan and the content of each issue.
- Commission those who will conduct preliminary examination for every manuscript, and decide whether it is eligible or not for review,
- Develop a reviewers list, based on the past experience with them regarding their commitment and their quality work,
- Assign reviewers, receive their reports and deliberate about their evaluation,
- The editor-in-chief and his/her assistant shall make the final decision regarding the acceptance or rejection of the manuscript based on the reviewers' reports and upon consultation with the members of the editorial board.

14. Publishing

- The journal shall post its name in both Arabic and a foreign language.
- The journal shall state the frequency of its publication, property rights or creative commons license for open access, the international publishing serial number, the name of the publisher, country of origin for publishing, and indexing databases.
- Each article shall have a Digital Object Identifier (DOI).
- A short biography of the author and his/her email shall be presented in the footnote of the first page of the article.
- The journal strictly commits to abide by the conditions and standards that it posts and shall abide by the publishing dates of its issues.

15. Website

- The journal shall have a website or web page, to serve the readers and the authors.
- The journal shall post on its electronic site the details of the standards, and related material, especially regarding past and future issues.