Reviews

"Editors Speak Out on Refereeing." Bruce M. Smith and Pauline B. Gough. *Phi Delta Kappan,* May 1984, pp. 637-639.

Smith and Gough compared methods editors used to select manuscripts for both refereed and nonrefereed education journals. Like Henson's survey of education journal editors, reported on in the same issue of the KAPPAN, their study may be viewed as a prototype for a similar study of scientific journals that publish agricultural research and writing.

The authors found that although publishing in refereed journals seems to carry more weight with promotion and tenure committees, manuscript-screening procedures for nonrefereed journals are sometimes just as rigorous. Likewise, criteria for acceptance in refereed journals are sometimes as variable as criteria used in nonrefereed journals.

Both refereed and nonrefereed journal editors said they solicit some of their manuscripts. More editors solicit for nonrefereed journals than for refereed, although about one-fourth of the editors of refereed journals said they solicit about half of their manuscripts. Solicitation serves some the same purposes as refereeing, the authors point out. In addition, most editors of nonrefereed journals send between 5 percent and 10 percent of the manuscripts they receive to outside readers. The number of readers per manuscript varied from 1 to 10.

Despite many similarities in manuscript selection procedures, the editors of both kinds of journals recognize the prestige the word "refereed" adds to a journal's reputation.

The authors report that one editor of a journal "not considered. . .of the very first rank" said some journals "attempt to gain respectability merely by having referees." The editor added that resentment of this practice "doesn't keep my journal from considering it."

Should we work to get our own and our clients' research in refereed journals because of the prestige attached? Or are there advantages to nonrefereed journals that should lead us to prefer the latter? Smith and Gough say that one advantage to publishing in nonrefereed journals is that they generally have larger circulations. Therefore, more readers benefit from what we have to say. A second advantage is that nonrefereed journals are more likely to publish "unusual or controversial ideas or methods," which "tend to elicit negative reactions from referees who are usually chosen because they are recognized experts within the mainstream."

The authors, both KAPPAN editors, admit their opinions in these matters "may well be suspect". . .if only because we edit a large-circulation, nonrefereed journal." But their arguments are nevertheless convincing and raise the question of scholarly and editorial integrity. "In the end," they conclude (quoting an editor of a refereed journal), "it's up to the conscientious editor to protect the reader's interest."

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"Another Kind of Evaluation." M. F. Smith and Yvonna S. Lincoln. *Journal of Extension,* Vol. 23, November/December, 1984, pp. 5-10.

"Qualitative methods have been used by faculty in counties since Extension began," say Smith and Lincoln. "What's needed is a more focused and systematic approach and a careful matching of method with evaluation purpose and users."

With the number of information thrusts, field days and other projects undertaken by ACE members each year, standard quantitative evaluation of even the more substantive efforts could usurp the time needed to do much of the journalism we're doing now. The qualitative approach outlined by Smith and Lincoln could alleviate some of that stress.

Smith, a program evaluation specialist at the University of Florida-Gainesville, and Lincoln, an associate professor of

higher education at the University of Kansas-Lawrence, offer a readable overview of qualitative research. They do that by presenting qualitative research as a refinement of the assessments already used in Extension and by comparing it to the quantitative research most of us see.

Then they compare the differences between the two. For example, in formulating questions, Smith and Lincoln pit the open-ended questions of qualitative research against such forced-response approaches as multiple choice questions. They also note that new questions frequently emerge from qualitative studies. But the difference in the underlying assumptions between the two is more substantive:

"[Qualitative research] relies on the belief that causality in human organizations is difficult, if not impossible, to determine; and that what human beings experience is largely a result of the values, beliefs, attitudes, and frameworks they *impose* [emphasis added] on situations to make sense of them."

Through their seven-step approach, the educational researchers attempt to make the casual techniques many of us already use more systematic and purposeful—to "better serve the ends of decision making." With little adaptation, ACE members could use qualitative research to feel the pulse of each of the publics they serve.

Statistics need not be involved. The only method cited by Smith and Lincoln that could imply statistical analysis was content analysis. Another method that combines qualitative concepts and statistics is Q methodology (Reviews section, ACE Quarterly, 66:3, July-September, 1983). If statistics are not involved, apparently results could be presented journalistically, through the composite interviews and the case study methods we already use.

Whatever the method of making sense of the results, the educational researchers stress the need to focus the evaluation on preliminary areas of concern and to systematically select those people who will be interviewed or the reports that will be examined. A careful, methodological, planned approach is emphasized throughout their article.

Smith and Lincoln say qualitative methods can be applied to needs assessment and to identifying the unique impacts of programs. For evaluators who only will respond to quantitative data, the educators tout qualitative methods as a strong sup-

plement that "grounds" the numerical data or its collection instrument in "users' words."

For those convinced enough to do qualitative evaluation, besides their seven steps, Smith and Lincoln present a current and strong bibliography. Because interviews take so much time, the researchers caution against using the qualitative approach when large numbers of people or sites must be studied.

Briefly, these are Smith's and Lincoln's seven steps:

1. Decide whether the audience to receive the data will better respond to personal accounts or to statistical numbers.
2. Focus the evaluation. "Make sure the information needs of all who will receive the report are considered."
3. Decide how to gather the data—from reports, interviews, or personal observation.
4. Plan a systematic procedure for gathering the information. Use appropriate sampling techniques in selecting who's to be interviewed.
5. Gather the data—carefully recording what people say or what's printed in documents.
6. Analyze and interpret. Smith and Lincoln note qualitative responses are not standardized; therefore they are more difficult to summarize. They offer eight more substeps:
   - Make copies of notes. Save originals.
   - Read through the notes several times for patterns and themes.
   - Write one-or two-word summaries in margins.
   - List topics—pre and emerging questions, separately—in logical order.
   - Cut and paste responses together. Or use a word processor. Make separate piles of paragraphs and pages for each question.
   - Determine what additional data are needed, together with the questions to elicit the information.
   - Write a summary for each question.
   - Select examples to represent the typical experiences of respondents.
7. Write the report, listing the original questions and the emerging ones. Include enough typical program experiences to "paint a total picture of the evaluated program."

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"Writing for Professional Publications: Ways To Increase Your Success."
Kenneth T. Henson. *Phi Delta Kappan,* May, 1984, pp. 636-637.

Henson surveyed professional journal editors to determine what ensures that a paper or research report will be accepted for publication. Henson's field of inquiry was education journals, but his questionnaire and procedures could be used as a model for similar surveys of scientific journals that publish agricultural scholarship.

Henson found that editors—universally—suggest getting acquainted with topics, formats, article length, style, and audiences of a journal *before* attempting to publish in it. "One way to increase the chances that your manuscript will be accepted is simply to avoid the common mistakes that writers make," Henson concluded.

Other musts are to read the journal's guidelines for contributors, avoid jargon, write with the readers in mind, use direct and conversational language, and spice up manuscripts with concrete examples wherever possible.

"The most deadly error a writer can make is trying to impress readers through the use of the inflated writing style and ornamental trappings of scholarship," Henson warns. Rewriting is the key to clear writing, he adds.

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