

Original Article

Analysis of academic publishing in Trakya University journals

Received: 22 Dec 2022
Revised: 18 Jan 2023
Accepted: 11 Apr 2023
Published: 13 Jun 2023

Competing Interests

Cem Uzun was vice president of EASE (European Association of Science Editors) at the time of manuscript acceptance. Other authors have no competing interests to declare.

Funding

This study received no funding.

Author Contributions

Concept – C.U., K.K., E.D., H.A.G., M.A.; Formal analysis – K.K., E.D., H.A.G., M.A.; Investigation – K.K., E.D., H.A.G., M.A.; Methodology – C.U., K.K., E.D., H.A.G., M.A.; Project administration – C.U.; Writing original draft – E.D., K.K., H.A.G., M.A.; Critical review and editing – C.U., K.K.

Acknowledgements

This study was presented at the 14th EASE Conference, 8–10 June 2018, Bucharest, Romania.

Kadri Kiran¹✉, Erdem Demiröz², Hacı Ali Güleç³, Müge Atakan⁴, Cem Uzun⁵

¹Department of Biology, Trakya University School of Sciences, Edirne, Turkey

kadrikiran@trakya.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7983-0194>

²Department of Management and Informatics Systems, Trakya University School of Education, Edirne, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6486-4479>

³Department of Food Engineering, Trakya University School of Engineering, Edirne, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9525-6206>

⁴International Relations Office, Trakya University, Edirne, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5841-4703>

⁵Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Koç University School of Medicine, İstanbul, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3233-7049>

Citation

Kiran K, Demiröz E, Güleç HA, Atakan M, Uzun C. Analysis of academic publishing in Trakya University journals. *Eur Sci Ed.* 2023;49:e99151.

<https://doi.org/10.3897/ese.2023.e99151>



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0).

Abstract

Background: Although Turkey publishes more than 3000 peer-reviewed scientific journals, fewer than 5% of them are covered by major indexing databases, and only 1 of the 10 scientific journals published by Trakya University (Turkey) is among those quality journals. In November 2017, Trakya University organized a workshop titled ‘Increasing the quality of academic journals at Trakya University’, the ultimate goal of which was to bring together all stakeholders in the process of academic publishing, to review the criteria of publishing quality, and to recommend measures to enhance the quality of academic journals published from Turkey.

Objectives: To review the current status of academic journals published by Trakya University in terms of international publishing standards, to devise measures to enhance their quality, and also to help other journals do the same.

Methods: Information was collected from the websites of 10 academic journals published by Trakya University in the fields of natural, medical, and social sciences to assess the extent to which each journal met a set of criteria defining quality academic publishing. These journals were then compared in terms of their success in meeting those criteria.

Results: No single measure can improve the quality of all the ten journals published by Trakya University. *Balkan Medical Journal* topped the list in that it satisfied nearly all the criteria whereas the journals that met the fewest criteria were *Trakya University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty*, *Trakya University Journal of Faculty of Letters*, and *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*. Timeliness in ensuring ethical standards was the criterion most often met by the journals, but all 10 failed to meet the criteria related to data accessibility and good reporting guidelines. Of the 8 criteria related to fairness of the blind-review processes, all 10 met 6 but none met all 8. In terms of transparency and implementation of best practices, the highest compliance was in terms of the criteria related to the name of the journal, its governing body, and archiving, but no journal made any effort to market itself, that is, to expand its circulation.

Conclusions: The strengths and weaknesses of each journal with reference to the quality of academic publishing were highlighted. The method described in the paper can also be used for evaluating other journals.

Keywords:

Ethics in academic publishing, indicators of journal quality, journal quality, peer review, quality of academic publishing, transparency in peer review

Introduction

More than 45,000 scientific journals were published worldwide in 2020,¹ of which about 3000 were from Turkey, almost all of them open access. Most of them are published in Turkish and English generally by universities and not-for-profit foundations. Usually, no fees are charged for any transaction (Unpublished data from ISSN Turkey).

Trakya University publishes 10 academic journals and keeps looking for innovative, reliable, and valid strategies to improve their quality. Although almost all of those journals maintain high quality and are indexed by several national and international indexing services, *Balkan Medical Journal*, the official journal of the Trakya University School of Medicine, is the only one indexed by the Web of Science (WoS) Citation Index Expanded.

However, being indexed by major databases such as WoS and Scopus is not the only indicator of quality. Other significant criteria are ethical practices, fair and transparent reviews, ease of access, archiving, and timely publication. In evaluating the quality of publishing, these and a few more criteria need to be considered.

Ethical publishing extends well beyond the contents of any given manuscript, and compliance with relevant ethical standards is essential to any effort to increase the quality of academic publishing. Uzun² also suggested that inexperienced editors follow ethical principles established by professional organizations in academic publishing such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), European Association of Science Editors (EASE), Council of Science Editors, and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) and attend meetings, training programmes, and workshops organized by those professional organizations.

Similarly, peer review is indispensable to academic publishing, the effectiveness of which depends a great deal on having a reliable and valid process for peer review. As Schöpfel and Boukacem-Zeghmouri^{3(p2)} emphasize, '[t]here seems to be no valuable or acceptable alternative to peer review. The question is rather how to increase its quality assurance function, how to improve the speed of workflow, how to adapt it to the new collaborative tools and practices (Web 2.0), and how also to find incentives that motivate scientists to contribute as peer reviewers.'

As of today, the double-blind review process – in which neither the authors nor the reviewers know each other's identities – is considered adequate although alternatives have been looked at for a long time. According to Vragov and Levine,⁴ a double-blind peer review cannot be considered perfect, and Rice,^{5(p2)} for example, questioned the effectiveness of peer review on quality control and stated that 'a growing body of research suggests that peer review is not effective for quality control' (However, the author provides no citation to support this contention). In addition, Schaffalitzky de Muckadell and Petersen⁶ brought an unusual perspective to peer review by suggesting that manuscripts be made available along with reviews before publication. According to them, 'the anonymous peer review system plays a key role in regulating access to publication opportunities within academic philosophy. Yet worries about the reliability and fairness of review processes continue to surface within the profession'.^{6(p255)} Padula⁷ emphasized the importance of peer review and suggested that editors should improve their blind-review processes and ensure that authors get valuable, constructive, and extensive feedback from reviewers.

The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) promotes open access

as a predominant model of scientific publishing worldwide by promoting information exchange, setting standards, drawing up appropriate declarations, etc. across all subjects and disciplines.⁸ The revised (third version) of one of these declarations, namely 'Principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing', first published in early 2018 by COPE,⁹ the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), OASPA, and WAME, was revised in 2022.¹⁰

The present study evaluates 10 academic journals published by Trakya University using a set of criteria. In November 2017, Trakya University organized a workshop titled 'Increasing the quality of academic journals at Trakya University', the ultimate goal of which was to bring together all stakeholders in the process of academic publishing, to review the criteria of publishing quality, and to recommend measures to enhance the quality of academic journals published from Turkey. The study also summarizes key recommendations from the workshop and shows how they can help to enhance the quality of academic journals and of their editors.

Methods

Before the workshop held in November 2017, information from the respective websites of 10 scientific journals (Table 1) published by Trakya University was analysed with reference to (a) ethical standards, (b) efficiency in reviewer selection and blind peer review, and (c) transparency and implementation of best practices. All the journals are open access and financed by the university.

Ensuring and following ethical standards

Stojanovski¹¹ mentions 13 important criteria or parameters for evaluating academic journals: originality of submitted work, transparency of the evaluation process, compliance with the

standards suggested by COPE, International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), EASE, WAME, and/or Helsinki declaration, attention to misconduct including falsification, duplication, data manipulation, plagiarism, etc., motivation for financial support and conflict of interest statements, article withdrawal process, timeliness, attribution of authorship, data accessibility, responsibilities of the editor, reviewer, publisher, and author, copyright, instruction to reviewers, and good reporting guidelines. We also scrutinized the instructions to authors related to common scientific ethics whether or not they were specifically mentioned. Compliance with guidelines or implementation of best practices was indicated only as (+) or (-) depending on whether the journal was compliant or not, respectively.

Fairness of blind-review processes

Trakya University journals were assessed for the transparency of their peer-review process by Wicherts¹² using his 14-item tool and the information on each item was also evaluated separately.

Transparency and implementation of best practices

*Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing*⁹ was used in arriving at an aggregate score based on 16 items as given in the third edition of the book. For each item, the journal was graded either as zero (0) or as one (1) and the cumulative score was calculated by adding up the scores for individual items, which led to a score ranging from 0 (minimum) to 16 (maximum).

Results

Ensuring and following ethical standards

All Trakya University journals require that all submissions be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and also use Ithenticate, a commercially available software, to check for

Table 1. Basic information on 10 journals selected for the study and published by Trakya University

Publisher, owner	First published	Coverage by indexing services	Editorial board: strength and gender balance ^a
School of Medicine, Dean	1979	<i>Balkan Medical Journal</i> SCI-E, PubMed MEDLINE, PubMed Central, Scopus, EMBASE, EBSCO, DOAJ, TR Dizin	9/33
Balkan Research Institute, Provost ^b	2012	<i>Journal of Balkan Research Institute</i> PROQUEST, TR Dizin	3/9
School of Education, Dean	2011	<i>Trakya University Journal of Education</i> TR Dizin	6/10
Balkan Libraries Union, Chancellor	2013	<i>Journal of Balkan Libraries Union</i> PROQUEST, ULRICH, DOAJ	6/14
Social Sciences Institute, Provost	2002	<i>Journal of Social Sciences</i> EBSCO, TR Dizin,	1/10
Science Institute, Provost	2000	<i>Trakya University Journal of Natural Sciences</i> DOAJ, TR Dizin	18/24
School of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Dean ^b	2012	<i>Trakya University e-Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences</i> EBSCO	2/5
Science Institute, Provost	2000	<i>Trakya University Journal of Engineering Sciences</i> DOAJ, EBSCO	6/18
School of Letters, Dean ^b	2011	<i>Trakya University Journal of Letters</i> TR Dizin	3/6
School of Medicine Dean	2014	<i>Turkish Medical Student Journal</i> Not applicable	24/11

All the journals are published in English and Turkish except the *Balkan Medical Journal* and the *Trakya University Journal of Natural Sciences*, which are published only in English.

All journals are published twice a year except the *Balkan Medical Journal* (six issues a year) and *Trakya University Journal of Education* (three issues a year).

^a(Women/man) in editorial board.

^bOwner and editor are the same.

similarities between the manuscript text and any relevant published text.

A majority of Turkish journals (2280 journals) use DergiPark, an open journal system designed by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey.¹³ Timeliness and originality were the criteria met most often, by eight and seven journals, respectively. On the other hand, none of the 10 met the criteria related to data accessibility and

good reporting guidelines. *Balkan Medical Journal* topped the list by meeting 12 of the 13 criteria related to ethical standards, followed by the *Journal of Balkan Research Institute* and the *Trakya University Journal of Engineering Sciences*, both of which met 6 of the 13 criteria. The *Trakya University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty* recorded the least compliance, meeting only 1 of the 13 criteria. The compliance of individual journals is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Performance of journals in meeting the 13 criteria listed by Stojanovski¹¹ for evaluating the quality of journals

Criterion	<i>Balkan Medical Journal</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Libraries Union</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Research Institute</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Education Faculty</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Engineering Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Faculty of Letters</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Natural Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Social Science</i>	<i>Turkish Medical Student Journal</i>	Total
Originality	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	7
Transparency	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	5
Adherence to standards specified by COPE, ICMJE, EASE, WAME, and/or the Helsinki declaration	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	4
Attention to falsification, duplication, data manipulation, plagiarism, etc.	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	5
Motivation for financial support and conflict of interest statements	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Article withdrawal	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Timeliness	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	8
Attribution of authorship	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	3
Data accessibility	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Responsibilities of editor, reviewer, publisher, author	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Copyright	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	4
Instructions to reviewers	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	2
Good reporting guidelines	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Total	12	4	6	1	2	6	2	5	4	3	-

Fairness of blind-review processes

All the Trakya University journals follow the double-blind peer review and assign at least one reviewer outside of Trakya University although none of the journals directly gives any objective guarantee of fair evaluation. The measure of fairness comprises six criteria (aim and scope, types of submissions, whether all submissions are sent out for review, status of submissions under review, publication

ethics, and names of members of the editorial board). As could be ascertained from the information available at their respective websites, all 10 journals were compliant for all 6. However, none supplied any information with reference to any of the following eight criteria: identity of the associate/action editor, yearly number of submissions, yearly number of publications, yearly number of rejections, rating of papers, post-publication

commentaries, publication of reviewers' comments, and publication of editorial correspondence (Table 3).

Transparency and implementation of best practices

On average, the 10 journals secured a score of 48% on indicators related to transparency and implementation of best practices (Table 4), and the scores ranged from 26% to 85%. The items that showed maximum compliance (90%) were journal name, governing body, and archiving whereas marketing showed the least compliance (0%). Compliance with the sub-criteria related to publication ethics was only 13%.

Discussion

In recent years, Trakya University has been emphasizing academic publishing and striving for higher quality of manuscripts and of entire academic journals it publishes. Among the many efforts made to achieve the objective, the one that made a great impact was a workshop held on 16–17 November 2017. All stakeholders in academic publishing including editors of the 10 journals and members of their editorial board, experts in academic publishing, and librarians came together to discuss the current status of journals published by Trakya University, to identify shortcomings, and to recommend measures to overcome the shortcomings to enhance quality. The current status of each journal was discussed in general meetings, and tailor-made strategies and remediation measures for each journal were identified in smaller groups. This study also covers the recommendations of the workshop and the status of the 10 journals.

As mentioned earlier, the journal that showed maximum compliance with all three categories – ethics, peer review, and transparency and best practices – was *Balkan Medical Journal*, which is probably why it is covered

by major indexing services such as SCI-Expanded and PubMed: non-compliant journals are unlikely to be covered.

It is easy enough to explain why most of the journals were able to meet such criteria as adequate information on the website about aim and scope, type of submissions, and the status of submissions under review: most of these fields are mandatory in the DergiPark submission system used by all the 10 journals.

On the other hand, the journals were found lacking in providing adequate information about many other aspects including the following: data accessibility, good reporting guidelines, identity of the associate/action editor, yearly numbers of submissions, publications, and rejections, rating of papers, post-publication commentaries, publication of reviewers' comments and editorial correspondence, data sharing and reproducibility, intellectual property, and marketing. None of the 10 journals provided any information about these aspects. However, this is a shortcoming that can be easily remedied, because the required information is already available or can be easily collected. Marketing, however, is a category that is simply irrelevant, given that all journals published by Trakya University are not-for-profit, open access scientific journals with no publication charges payable by authors. This feature also means that marketing is unlikely to be a concern for the editors or editorial boards of these journals.

The present study also identified some of the deficiencies in the quality of Trakya University journals: some were shared by all the 10 journals, whereas others were unique to each. On the other hand, the major strengths of the journals were conformance to ethical standards and a fair blind-peer review system. In terms of ethics, although each journal followed ethical standards, these standards did

Table 3. Awareness of the fairness of blind review processes in Trakya University journals

	Information available on the journal's website	<i>Balkan Medical Journal</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Libraries Union</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Research Institute</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Education Faculty</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Engineering Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Faculty of Letters</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Natural Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Social Science</i>	<i>Turkish Medical Student Journal</i>	Total
1	Aim and scope	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
	Expected readership	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	5
2	Reviewer's criteria to rate submissions	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
	Types of submissions	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
3	Whether all submissions are sent out for review	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
	Final decisions maker	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	7
4	Targeted duration of review process	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	5
	Status of submissions under review	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
5	Yearly number of publications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Yearly number of rejections	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Publication ethics	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
6	Names of members of editorial board	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10
	Affiliations of members of editorial board	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	7
7	Allowed to indicate (non) desired reviewers	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	1
8	Identity of the associate/ action editor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Yearly number of submissions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
9	Copyright release	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	8
	Conflict of interest	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	4
	Publication fees	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	5
10	Submission and acceptance dates	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	8
11	Rating of papers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Post-publication commentaries	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
12	Publication of reviewers' comments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Publication of editorial correspondence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
13	Role of members of editorial board	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	6
14	Sharing and availability of research data	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Total	17	15	13	9	11	12	8	14	10	13	—

Table 4. Compliance of journals with 16 items related to transparency and implementation of best practices in scholarly publishing⁹

Criteria and subcriteria		<i>Balkan Medical Journal</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Research Institute</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Social Science</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Natural Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Engineering Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Education Faculty</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Faculty of Letters</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Libraries Union</i>	<i>Turkish Medical Student Journal</i>	Total	%	Average (%)
1 Website	Aim and scope	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	8	80%	85%
	ISSN	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	9	90%	
2 Name of journal	Not misleading	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	6	60%	80%
	Unique name	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10	100%	
3 Peer review process	Peer review marked	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	8	80%	80%
	Peer review process description	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	6	60%	
	No guarantee of acceptance or short peer-review times	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	10	100%	
4 Ownership and management		+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	6	60%	
5 Governing body		+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	9	90%	
6 Editorial team info		+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	8	80%	
7 Copyright and licensing	Statement on website	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	5	50%	30%
	Statement in published articles	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10%	
8 Author fees		+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	7	70%	
9 Allegations of misconduct		+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	30%	
10 Publication ethics	Authorship	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	13%
	Complaints	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	
	Conflicts of interest	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10%	
	Data sharing and reproducibility	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%	
	Ethical oversight	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	
	Intellectual property	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%	
	Post-publication corrections	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	

(Continued)

Table 4. Compliance of journals with 16 items related to transparency and implementation of best practices in scholarly publishing (Continued)

Criteria and subcriteria	<i>Balkan Medical Journal</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Research Institute</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Social Science</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Natural Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Engineering Sciences</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Education Faculty</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Faculty of Letters</i>	<i>Trakya University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences Faculty</i>	<i>Journal of Balkan Libraries Union</i>	<i>Turkish Medical Student Journal</i>	Total	%	Average (%)
11 Schedule	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	6	60%	
12 Access	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	
13 Archiving	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	9	90%	
14 Revenue sources	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	6	60%	
15 Advertising	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20%	
16 Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0%	
Total	23	10	12	21	12	13	7	10	14	8			
%	85%	37%	44%	78%	44%	48%	26%	37%	52%	30%		48%	

not necessarily map onto those set by professional publishing organizations such as EASE, WAME, or COPE.¹⁴ This is one of the primary concerns that almost all the journals need to address except *Balkan Medical Journal* (which is indexed in WoS and Scopus), *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*, and *Journal of Balkan Research Institute*. As to reviewing, the criteria for the review process and guidelines for reviewers are two barriers to increasing quality. Double-blind review processes based on ill-structured criteria that do not comprise a submitted manuscript as a whole will not support the quality of academic publishing. More specifically, reviewers need to be formally thanked for their contributions, and authors should be kept informed about upcoming issues. Journals should also find ways to help authors to disseminate the findings of their research and provide them with a truly satisfying and rewarding experience of the editorial process. Only one journal, *Balkan Medical Journal*, has a formal agreement between the owner and the editor, and half of the other journals have

policies available online. However, these policies also need to be revised, and each stage of the evaluation and publication process, from submission to publication, should be clearly defined in these policies. Policies and guides should be developed not only for authors but also for reviewers and made accessible to both. Journal authorities need to join professional organizations and participate in training programmes, workshops, meetings, and other events for professional development. One major strength of a journal is its editorial team, and to offer an effective editorial process and quality experience to authors, all members of the editorial team should work in harmony. A system that supports effective collaboration, cooperation, and fair sharing of responsibilities between editorial members should be established. The editorial board should be strengthened by inviting leading scholars from the relevant fields to be its members to reflect the professionalism and high quality of a journal. This measure also helps journals to attract international

attention, which has eluded Trakya University journals so far. In terms of timeliness, many journals have been punctual, and the university must ensure that they continue to be so. Although turnaround time does depend on the reviewers being prompt in sending in the reviews, reducing decision time in other matters will certainly help the journal being seen in positive terms by authors. Other matters that need immediate attention are those related to the statement of any conflict of interest, support, and commitment. Citation analyses are another important matter.

Regarding visibility and accessibility of the journals, each has its online repository, but their web pages need to be updated, all the policies designed should be shared over these web pages, and files of each paper or article, whether in PDF, HTML, or XML, should be uploaded separately rather than as a single file that includes all the manuscripts published in a given issue. Getting covered in major databases such as Scopus or WoS is the most effective way of increasing visibility and accessibility, which is why journals should make concerted efforts to comply with the requirements and meet the criteria for being covered in those databases.

When these themes are considered and the appropriate criteria are satisfied, it would be possible to say that Trakya University journals have good standing in following ethical standards and ensuring the fairness of the blind review process. However, the journals need to improve in other matters as well. Indeed, immediately after the workshop, some journals began making the necessary effort to enhance quality. *Trakya University Journal of Education*, for example, changed its name to *Trakya Journal of Education*, updated its editorial board, and improved its relationships with readers and authors through effective and timely communications. Some journals immediately remedied their deficiencies, and

two of them, *Journal of Natural Sciences* and *Journal of Social Sciences*, applied for coverage by the *Emerging Sciences Citation Index*. In addition to these efforts, journal editors also initiated actions to enhance quality and drew up plans for each journal. Many of the journals shared such plans so that the journals could attempt to attract quality papers, expand internationally, and increase their visibility and access. Among the more specific measures to increase visibility and access were the following: getting covered in different indexing services and databases, setting up email announcements, using social media more actively, updating web pages, designing new cover pages, sending thank-you letters to authors and reviewers, improving online access, and sending printed copies to libraries and other academic institutions. Efforts to make the journals more international included increasing cooperation and collaboration with Balkan universities, participating in joint projects of the European Union, organizing workshops and seminars to inform stakeholders about current development and trends, and establishing the Association of Balkan Editors.

Enhancing the quality of academic publishing is not an easy *task*: it is a *process*, and different key elements that strengthen the entire process need to be considered when it comes to quality. Although there is no commonly accepted definition of quality in academic publishing, arguably the most common measure is the impact factor of a journal because journals with higher impact factors attract quality submissions more often. However, raising the impact factor is not easy either: various dynamics are involved in this process and include stipulating and following ethical standards, ensuring fairness of the blind review process, refining policies, obtaining help from professional publishing organizations, putting together an impressive editorial

board, instituting efficient editorial processes and effective communication, and increasing the accessibility and visibility of the journal. More important, this is not a task that any single editor can complete single handed: enhancing the quality of academic journals needs commitment, being devoted to this process, and above everything else, teamwork. All academic publishing stakeholders should support these efforts that focus on enhancing the quality of academic publishing.

Trakya University should be considered as a model publisher that takes quality in scholarly publishing seriously. It supports every single endeavour directed at enhancing the quality of its academic journals with the help of members of the academic publication board, librarians, and journal editors – all passionate about enhancing quality. It was this passion that brought them together at the 2-day workshop, which culminated in grouping the measures required to enhance quality into five broad themes and recommended that academic journals published by universities pay greater and immediate attention to the following actions by the stakeholders to increase the quality of the journals.

- a. Understand the role of ethical standards, the efficiency of review processes, and interaction of the two. Ethical standards must be followed and help sought from technology if necessary.
- b. Ensure a double-blind review process, define the criteria on which all aspects of submitted manuscripts will be assessed, and offer clear instructions to reviewers and authors.
- c. Understand the importance of policies and realize the role of professional academic publishing organizations such as COPE and EASE and the support available from such global organizations.
- d. Emphasize the importance of editorial boards comprising internationally

recognized members who are prominent researchers and scholars in their fields.

- e. Sustain effective communications, understand the key role time management plays in the editorial process, and keep authors posted of the status of their manuscripts.
- f. Pay more attention to the visibility and accessibility of the journals. Publishing papers in journals continues to be the major channel of disseminating the results of research, a channel that is not only credible, accessible, and familiar to all researchers but also offers lasting storage of all information that flows through it. Therefore, focus on distributing the journals as widely as possible in both printed and electronic form.

We believe that the quality of Trakya University journals will be enhanced substantially and quickly if the abovementioned recommendations are implemented. Quality is not something that improves with a single attempt but is determined by several components, each requiring special attention – and that attention involves a significant workload and responsibility. The effort requires teamwork so that the workload and responsibilities are shared and distributed among motivated and dedicated team members.

We have embarked on a journey, and it will be worthwhile to assess our progress through a longitudinal study to compare the status of the journals as described in this paper with that attained in the near future.

References

1. STM. *STM Global Brief 2021-Economics & Market Size*. Geneva, Switzerland: STM; 2021.
2. Uzun C. Increasing the impact factor in the ethical way. *Balk Med J*. 2017;34(6):482-484. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Schöpfel J, Boukacem-Zeghmouri C. 'Quality and Publishing': a report on the 'Academic Publishing in

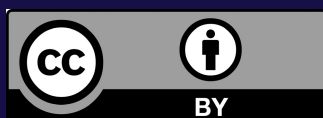
- Europe' conference held in Berlin, 22-23 January 2008. *Interlending Doc Supply*. 2008;36(2).
4. Vragov R, Levine I. Reviewing and revamping the double-blind peer review process? *J Electron Publ*. 2007;10(1):336-346. [CrossRef]
5. Rice C. *New approaches to quality control in publishing*. Available at: <http://curt-rice.com/2011/12/06/new-approaches-to-quality-control-in-publishing/>. Accessed: January 18, 2018.
6. Schaffalitzky de Muckadell C, Petersen EN. Why not open the black box of journal editing in philosophy? Make peer reviews of published papers available. *Metaphilosophy*. 2017;48(3):245-257. [CrossRef]
7. Padula D. 3 steps to attract more quality submissions to your scholarly journal. Available at: <https://blog.scholasticahq.com/post/3-steps-to-attract-more-quality-submissions-to-your-scholarly-journal/>. Accessed: January 10, 2018.
8. OASPA. *Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association*. Available at: <https://oaspa.org/>. Accessed: August 22, 2014.
9. Redhead C. *Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing*. 3rd edn. Available at: <https://oaspa.org/principles-of-transparency-and-best-practice-in-scholarly-publishing-3/>. Accessed: June 2, 2018.
10. Folan B. *Principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing*. 4rd edn. Available at: <https://oaspa.org/principles-of-transparency-and-best-practice-in-scholarly-publishing-4/>. Accessed: January 31, 2022.
11. Stojanovski J. Do Croatian open access journals support ethical research? Content analysis of instructions to authors. *Biochem Med*. 2015;25(1):12-21. [CrossRef]
12. Wicherts JM. Peer review quality and transparency of the peer-review process in open access and subscription journals. *PLOS ONE*. 2016;11(1):e0147913. [CrossRef]
13. DergiPark; 2023. Available at: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/>. Accessed: January 26, 2023.
14. Hamel C, Méthot J, Mallet L. Compliance with best practice guidelines on publication ethics: where does Pharmactuel stand? A case study. *Eur Sci Edit*. 2021;47:e71728. [CrossRef]

ease / publications

ese / European Science Editing

European Science Editing is an official publication of EASE. It is an open access peer-reviewed journal that publishes original research, review and commentary on all aspects of scientific, scholarly editing and publishing.

<https://ese.arphahub.com/>
<https://www.ease.org.uk>
https://twitter.com/Eur_Sci_Ed
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/easeeditors/>



© 2023 the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.