Editing a Scientific Journal on Communication Disorders in South Africa: A Unique Challenge*

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to describe the challenge of editing a scientific journal in the field of communication disorders in the South African context. An overview of the development of the journal and the current editorial policy is described. The distinctiveness and uniqueness of the journal is highlighted. A discussion of the problems encountered and the challenges posed by the future is supplied. In conclusion the question is posed of whether a scientific publication of this nature is relevant and justifiable. It is concluded that such a publication is indeed important and has the right of existence.

Writing and publication are important in developing the scholarly base of speech-language therapy and audiology. Scholarly journals serve as archives of research data, contain literature reviews, and other types of materials that contribute to the scientific base of a discipline or that have broad and lasting clinical relevance. Because knowledge is ever-changing and advancing, the facts and findings published at any one point in time may become dated or proven incorrect. Nevertheless, the hallmark of a scholarly publication is that it represents the current state of art or science at the time of publication (ASHA, 1993).

The practice of the profession of speech-language therapy and audiology in South Africa has been reflected and supported by its own scholarly journal over the years. The editing of this scientific journal poses unique challenges to the editor. The aim of this article is to describe these challenges by supplying an overview of The South African Journal of Communication Disorders, describing the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the journal, identifying the problems encountered and providing possible solutions in meeting these problems.

The aim of The South African Journal of Communication Disorders is to publish papers or reports concerned with research, and critically evaluative theoretical and philosophical conceptual issues dealing with aspects of human communication and its disorders, service provision, training and policy. It serves as the scientific mouthpiece for local members of the profession and mirrors the professional and theoretical trends within the local context by publishing both research and review articles.

A historical overview indicates that the profession of speech-language-therapy and audiology has been practiced in South Africa since the late 1930's. Prof. Pierre De Villiers Pienaar initiated the training of speech-language-therapists and audiologists at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1937, and the course is currently taught at five universities in South Africa (Uys, 1993). The South African Journal of Communication Disorders was first published by the South African Speech, Language, Hearing Association (SASLHA) in 1953 and the fortieth volume appeared in 1993. The journal is published annually. Throughout the forty years of publication the journal has undergone three title changes, from "Journal of the Logopaedic Society" to "Journal of the South African Speech and Hearing Association" to the current title, reflecting changes within the

*This article is based on a paper of the same title presented at the International Conference on Biomedical Periodicals, Beijing, China, June 16-18, 1994.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kommunikasieafwykings, Vol. 41, 1994
the field and the association. The current title reflects
the underlying paradigmatic shift of the profession in
the South African context.

The editorial policy is published in every issue and
employs the peer review system (Strayhorn, McDermott
& Tanquay, 1993). Peer review has become an impor-
tant aspect of quality control in scientific publications.
Peer reviewers are experts in the topic of a submitted
manuscript who are considered "peers" of the author, and
who are selected by the editor to assess the quality
of the manuscript's scientific and technical content. The
editor remains responsible for decisions regarding re-
jection, revision, or acceptance of publication (Glass,
1994). This process of refereeing, or editorial peer re-
view, increases the credibility of a journal by asuring
that only scientifically sound research is published
(Woller, 1987).

Although The South African Journal of Communication Disorders is comparable to other journals in the field published in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America, it is distinctly different from these publications and has a unique character.

The distinctiveness and uniqueness of the journal is embedded in the fact that two distinct, yet integrated fields of speech-language pathology and audiolo-
gy in which training is done, are represented by the journal, leading to diverse topics and research method-
ologies reflecting the differing nature of the two fields. In addition articles are published in the two (up till 1993) current official languages of South Africa, Eng-
lish and Afrikaans, thus rendering the journal to be bi-

tilingual. South Africa represents a multilingual,

cultural society and articles increasingly reflect
the diversity of the communication disorders and un-
derlying issues encountered in this context.

Circulation figures of the journal are limited (ap-
proximately 800) which is ascribed to the fact that there were 990 speech-language therapists/audiologists reg-
istered with the South African Medical and Dental Council in 1993, of whom approximately 650 are mem-
bers of SASLHA and subscribe to the journal as part of
their membership. This differs greatly from, for exam-
pole, the membership figures of the American Speech-
Language Hearing Association (ASLHA), with an ap-
proximate membership of 70 000 (ASHA, 1994). Mem-
bers of ASLHA selectively subscribe to the various journ-
als published by their association.

Lastly, the uniqueness of the journal is related to
gographical and political factors, as South Africa has
been relatively isolated from international contact
(Aron, 1991). This has led to limited international con-
tributions and has characterized the journal with a
unique South African perspective.

It is therefore clear that the journal is distinct from
others published in the field internationally, and in or-
der to retain this uniqueness and to be truly representa-
tive of the context in which it appears, the editor is faced
with exciting challenges.

The challenges facing the editor of The South Afri-
can Journal of Communication Disorders are twofold,
those relating to the general problems of scholarly journ-
als and those stemming from the distinctiveness of the
journal.

According to Leslie (1989) scholarly journals have
numerous problems. Although many scientific journals
are published, only very few can be labelled as quality
journals due to various reasons, e.g., some lack central
focus, others are too focussed and reject submissions
if the content does not fit prescribed research agendas. A
central problem to scholarly journals is manuscript re-
view (Leslie, 1989). The need for peer review is gener-
ally conceded, but the operation of the system is fraught
with controversies e.g., conflicts of interest, importance
of articles, masking of identities during peer review, and
reviewer bias (Grassman, 1986; Siegelman & Whicker,
1987; Glass, 1994).

Leslie (1989) expressed the opinion that the time to
examine these problems, and to search for an imple-
ment solutions is at hand. He poses the following ques-
tion: Do we have the courage to begin this impor-
tant work? (Leslie, 1989, p. 128). The answer is yes,
as these problems are being addressed internationally
by conferences, task groups and public actions in order
to improve the quality of journals and to develop the
editing process of scholarly journals into a profession
(Glass, 1994).

When confronted by Leslie's (1989) question and in-
ternational developments, it is clear that the problems of The South African Journal of Communication Disor-
ders need to be identified and solutions proposed to en-
sure the continuation of the forty year old tradition of
the journal.

In response to these challenges and developments,
the author who is the current editor of the journal, con-
ducted a critical appraisal of the publication process of
the The South African Journal of Communication Dis-
orders and of literature relating to editorial and publi-
cation issues. The following eight problems were iden-
tified and addressed. Many of the problems relate to
the distinctive nature of the journal, as discussed ear-
ier.

Firstly the language in which articles are written
poses a problem. For example, articles written in
Afrikaans are not accessible to all subscribers. To write
a scientific manuscript in a second language is prob-
lematic and professional translation is costly and does
not usually convey the exact meaning of the author.
Imminent political changes, however, may designate
English as one of the official languages which could
necessitate changes in editorial policy.

The number of speech-language therapists and au-
diologists from different linguistic and cultural back-
grounds is increasing and will hopefully lead to an in-
creased research on communication disorders in the
various cultural and linguistic groups as well as in
intercultural research, which is urgently needed in the
field. Designating the publication of all articles in one
language, namely English, will make information rea-
sonably accessible to most professionals in the field, as
opposed to publishing articles in the author's first lan-
guage. Abstracts may then be published in the author's
first language or in a chosen second language. This im-
plies that the editor would need to make use of addi-
tional resources in editing the second language ab-
stracts, but would emphasize the distinctive nature of
the journal.

Secondly, although South Africa represents a mul-
tilingual, multicultural society and poses unique chal-
lenge to service delivery, The South African Journal of
Communication Disorders has not adequately developed

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a distinct local character. The journal has been modelled on journals published by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association. A possible solution could be to increase the journal's scholarly impact by specifically developing the multilingual, multicultural aspects (as mentioned above) and developing the perspective of the profession contextualized in an intersectoral, transdisciplinary context of an integrated health care system. Such an approach would provide a truly distinctive character to the journal. It could also contribute to the procuring of funding if the journal took on a new, strongly developed unique character, with a definite transformative human rights perspective.

This is consistent with the theoretical paradigm underlining the discipline, namely that the communication of an individual is always viewed in the context of social systems.

Thirdly, few professionals are willing to serve on the editorial board. Professionals appear to be willing to act as reviewers, but not to become involved on any other level of management of the journal. This may be attributed to the "burn-out" phenomena within the profession (Swidler & Ross, 1993). According to Weller (1987) journal quality is affected by the editorial staff. The implications of a limited editorial board are an increase in the editor's responsibilities regarding the peer review process, placement decisions, and the lack of a support mechanism on both a technical and emotional level. A proposed solution to this pressing problem is that the editor actively recruits members for an extended editorial board by clearly stating the advantages of being involved in the publication process of a scholarly journal. Master degree level students could be motivated to serve as editorial staff members by expanding the benefits of being actively involved in the development of the database of the field of speech-language pathology and audiology. Lastly, the editor can approach employers to recognize the importance of and benefits of employees participating in the editorial process of the journal, by crediting the individuals for promotion purposes, research grant or subsidy applications.

Fourthly, as mentioned previously, the circulation figures of the journal are limited, implying small financial gain and reader audience. Increasing circulation figures may serve as a solution to both financial problems and the reader audience. This can be affected by recruiting student members and an active public relations drive of the SASLHA and the journal itself. Increased international contact may encourage new contributors, but the relevance of such contributions and the unique local character of the journal must not be compromised.

Fifthly, given the limited circulation figures, it follows that the source of contributors to the journal is also very limited. Five universities offer undergraduate training in the field, thus contributors from the academia are a small group. Relatively few professionals in clinical practice contribute to the journal, mainly due to two reasons. The workload created by the imbalance that exists between professional and communicatively disordered in the South African context (Uys, 1993), allows for little time allocated to conducting scientific research and the writing of articles. Secondly, only a small corps of professionals in the field actively conduct research, and even fewer are prepared to devote time to writing articles on conceptual issues related to the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology. A viable solution is to publish articles based on outstanding student research reports.

Sixthly, the peer review process employed by the journal poses many problems. According to Yoder Wise (1992) publication in a peer-reviewed journal should be a mark of distinction. This system is, however, fraught with problems (Siegelman & Wicker, 1987; Oxman, 1991; Abdellah, 1990). Two striking aspects of peer review are that it is based almost entirely on uncompensated voluntary work, and that the peer review system itself has only recently come under scientific scrutiny. Although peer review is viewed as a major facet of the evaluation of science, it is subject to human error. This pillar of science merits scientific research to refine the process and to develop a stricter application of scientific standard (Glass, 1984). The editorial board thus needs to keep abreast with recent international trends of article reviewing and select peer reviewers with care to ensure that the peer review system is practiced optimally (Leslie, 1989; Strayhorn, McDermott & Tanquay, 1993; Lightdale, 1992; Grassmann, 1986).

In addition to the problems of peer review as identified in the literature, the context in which this journal is published, leads to additional problems such as the limited corps of reviewers available and the fact that not all reviewers are able to effectively review a scientific article in a second language. Certain criteria are, however, used as an aid to the peer review process in an attempt to increase the cred-
Sibor productivity of the journal by assuring that only scientifically sound research and review articles of scientific quality are published (Otman, 1991; Weller, 1987).

Seventhly, funding for the journal is problematic due to the current financial climate in South Africa and the limited sources of SASLHA. The journal receives a grant from The Foundation for Education, Science and Technology with SASLHA having to bear the brunt of the costs. Funding determines the continuation of a publication to a large extent and alternatives will need to be found if the tradition of the journal is to be continued. Recruiting an increased number of advertisements could increase the journal's income to assist in publication costs. The financial challenge is partially met by desk top publishing, which necessitates disk copies of the submitted articles and ensuring that the articles which are accepted for publication, are print ready. Printing from "print ready" software reduces the printing costs dramatically and shortens the printing process.

Desk top printing, however, creates another editorial problem. In the South African context, papers tend to be submitted in grossly unedited forms. Due to the limited source, mentioned earlier, competition is minimal and papers are accepted and then have to go through a long editorial process before being "print ready". A possible solution to this problem may be the expansion of the information for contributors which is contained in each issue of the journal and strict adherence to these guidelines by the authors. The editor should also retain the right to refuse publication of an accepted article if the set requirements of editorial care are not met.

Eighthly, the post of editor of The South African Journal of Communication Disorders is a voluntary one and financially uncompensated, which implies that the editor practices this portfolio in a part-time capacity, while usually employed in another full-time post. The demands of editing are great and according to Weller (1987) the quality of a journal is affected by the continuity of good editors. In order to meet these challenges scholarly journals must provide editors with sufficient resources to do their jobs. According to Leslie (1989, p. 126) the solution is to have the journal sponsor, whether a professional, academic, research organization or university (or a combination of these) provide editors with time, money, personnel, and equipment. If the publication of scholarly work is important, it deserves this kind of commitment (Leslie, 1989). The editor must actively campaign for these benefits in order to function appropriately. Effective editorial management can make an important contribution to the continuity and quality of the journal.

Maintaining quality and standards of the journal in the given circumstances requires a concentrated effort to continue the international recognition the journal currently enjoys and to diligently carry out administration adequately so as to maintain international listing and abstracting of the journal. According to Weller (1987) the quality of a journal is determined by the following factors: the editorial staff, contributors, and refereeing process, the visual aspects of the journal and the continuity of good editors and authors (Weller, 1987). By being aware of and addressing these contributing factors, the journal editor can function in an accountable fashion and ensure a quality product.

Despite the wide range of problems identified in publishing The South African Journal of Communication Disorders, it appears that many solutions can be implemented to minimize, and even overcome these deterrents to a successful publication.

CONCLUSION:

The ultimate challenge posed to the editor of The South African Journal of Communication Disorders is whether a scientific publication in the fields of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology is at all relevant in the South African situation? The alternative to a scientific publication is a more informal dissemination of clinical information. According to Silverman (1989) this can be done by means of newsletters, study groups and informal communication between clinicians. Another possible solution could be to abandon the discipline of specific journals that tend to lead to fragmentation in the South African context. Instead, other disciplines such as e.g., occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychology, general medical practice, could be involved to promote the concept of a transdisciplinary approach in meeting the needs of the people in an integrated health care system.

Based on the following argument it is concluded that the publication of The South African Journal of Communication Disorders is indeed important and needs to be continued in the future. Publishing articles in a peer-reviewed journal is a mark of distinction. The time and effort invested in the publication process by the author, the reviewers and the editor is justified to help create an important body of knowledge in the field (Yoder Wise, 1992). This is specifically true of the South African situation in which a dichotomy of knowledge still exists between consideration of communication disorders and service delivery in the local context. Research on the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse population of South Africa is needed in order to make clinical applications and to increase the effectiveness and accountability of service delivery. By publishing articles in specific journals the scientific journal supports the profession of speech-language pathology and audiology in taking responsibility for shaping its own future (Cole, 1986; Uys, 1993).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Glen Jager, previous editor of The South African Journal of Communication Disorders, and Prof. René Hugo for their valuable contribution in peer-reviewing this article.

The financial assistance received from the Centre for Science Development, HSRC and the University of Pretoria is acknowledged with appreciation.

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INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The South African Journal of Communication Disorders publishes reports and papers concerned with research and critically evaluates theoretical and philosophical conceptual issues dealing with aspects of human communication and its disorders, service provision, training and policy.

The South African Journal of Communication Disorders will not accept material which has been published elsewhere or that is currently under review by other publications.

MANUSCRIPT STYLE AND REQUIREMENTS

Manuscripts should be accompanied by a covering letter providing the author’s address and telephone numbers. All contributions are required to follow strictly, the style specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Assoc. (3rd ed., 1983) with complete internal consistency. Four copies of triple-spaced high quality typewritten manuscripts with numbered pages, and wide margins should be submitted. They should be accompanied by ONE identical disc copy of the paper, (1) in Wordperfect 5.1 with an extension .wp5. Filenames should include the first author’s initials and a clearly identifiable keyword or abbreviation thereof and should be typewritten on the last line of the last page of the Reference List (for retrieval purposes only).

As a rule, contributions should not exceed much more than 30 pages, although longer papers will be accepted if the additional length is warranted. The first page of TWO copies should contain the title of the article, name of author(s), and institutional affiliation (or address). In accordance with the APA Pub. Manual style (1983, p.23) authors are NOT required to provide qualifications. In the remaining two copies, the first page should contain only the title. The second page of all copies, should contain only an abstract (100 words), written in English and Afrikaans. Afrikaans abstracts will be provided for overseas contributors. Major headings where applicable should be in the order of METHOD, RESULTS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, REFERENCES. All paragraphs should be indented.

TABLES AND FIGURES which should be prepared on separate sheets (one per page), should be copied for review purposes and only the copies sent initially. Figures, graphs, and line drawings that are used for publication, however, must be originals, in black ink on good quality white paper, but these will not be required until after the author has been notified of the acceptance of the article. Lettering appearing on these should be uniform and professionally done, allowing for a 50% reduction in printing. On no account should lettering be typewritten on the illustration. Any explanation or legend should appear below it and should not be included in the illustration. The titles of tables, which appear above, and figures, which appear below, should be concise but explanatory. Both should be numbered in Arabic numerals in order of appearance. The number of illustrative materials allowed, will be at the discretion of the Editor (usually about 6).

REFERENCES

References should be cited in the text by surname of the author and the date, e.g., Van Riper (1971). Where there are more than two authors, after the first occurrence, et al. after the first author will suffice, except for six or more when et al. may be used from the start. The names of all authors should appear in the Reference List, which should be listed in strict alphabetical order in triple spacing at the end of the article. All references should be included in the list, including secondary sources, (APA Pub. Man. 1983, p.13). Only acceptable abbreviations of journals may be used, (see DSH ABSTRACTS, October, or The World List of Scientific Periodicals). The number of references should not exceed much more than 30, unless specifically warranted.

EXAMPLES


EDITING

Acceptable manuscripts may be returned to the author for revision. Additional minor changes may also be made at this stage, but a note on the manuscript acknowledging each alteration made by the author, is required. The paper is then returned to the editorial committee for final editing for style, clarity and consistency.

REPRINTS: 10 reprints without covers will be provided free of charge.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: the preferred date is the 31st May each year, but papers will be accepted until 30th June by arrangement.

QUERIES, CORRESPONDENCE & MANUSCRIPTS: should be addressed to The Editor, South African Journal of Communication Disorders, South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association, P.O. Box 600, Wits, 2050, South Africa.

INLIGTING VIR BYDRAERS

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kommunikasieafwykings publiseer verslae en artikels wat geneesdeel is met navorsing, of handel oor krities evaluerende, teoretiese en filosofiese konsepuele kwessies wat oor menslike kommunikasie en kommunikasieafwykings, diensverskaffing, opleiding en beleid gaan.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kommunikasieafwykings sal nie artikel as aangenaam wat reeds gepubliseer is, of wat tans deur ander publikasies oorweg word nie.

**MANUSKRIP STYL EN VEREISTE:**

Manuskripte behoort deur 'n dekkingsbrief verpys te word wat die skrywer se adres en telefoonnommers bevat. Daar word van alle bydraers verwag om die styl, soos gepesiferiseer is in die "Publication Manual of the American Psychological Assoc. (3rd ed., 1983) (APA Pub. Man.)", nageset te volg met volledige interne ooreenstemming. Manuskripte moet getik, van hoë gehalte en in drievoud spaasitring met wye kanlyne wees. Vier kopieë van die manuskrip moet verskaf word. EEN hiervan moet 'n identieke skryfop die van die artikel wees in Wordperfect b.1 (met 'n uitbreiding wgd). Leermaak behoort die eerste bladyn se voorletters en 'n duidelike identifiseerbare sletuwwoord of afkorting daarvan in te sluit en moet op die laaste lyn van die bladyn van die verwysingslys getik word (slegs vir nasluiting).

As 'n regel moet bydraes nie 30 bladsye oorsky nie, maar langer artikels sal aanvaar word indien die additionele lengte dit regverdig. Op die eerste bladyn van TWEE van die afkripte moet die titel van die artikel, naam van die skrywer(s), en instansie (of adres) versky. In ooreenstemming met die "APA Pub. Man." se styl word daar NIE van skrywers verwag om enige afkripte te versky nie. Op die eerste bladyn van die twee oorblywende afkripte moet slegs die titel van die artikel versky word. Die tweede bladyn van alle afkripte moet slegs 'n opsomming (100 woorde) en tweede bladyn van die artikel bevat. Afrikaanse opsommings sal vereis aan die tussenligte vanEngels en Afrikaans bevat. Afrikaanse opsommings sal vir buitelandse bydraers voorsoek. Hoofopsomming moet, waar van toepassing, in dié volgorde versky word: METODE, RESULTATE, BESPREKINGS, GEVOLGTREKKINGS, ERKENNINGE en VERWYSINGS. Alle paragrawe moet ingekeep word.

**TABELLE EN FIGURE**

Wat op afsonderlike bladsye (een bladyn per tabel/illustrasie) moet verskyn, moet die referentie duidelik gekopieer word en slegs die kopie moet as instams versky. Figure, grafieke en lyntekeninge moet die titel van die artikel, naam van die skrywer(s) en (of adres) versky. In ooreenstemming met die "APA Pub. Man." se styl word daar NIE van skrywers verwag om enige afkripte te versky nie. Tydskrif vir Kommunikasieafwykings, Diensverskaffing, Opleiding en Beleid moet egter oorspronklike weergawes wees en moet in swart ink verskyn in Wits vir finale redigering van styl, duidelikheid en konsekwentheid teruggestuur.

**VERWYSINGS**

Verwysings in die tekst moet voorsoek word van die skrywer se aan en die datum, b.v., Van Riper (1971). Wanneer daar egter meer as twee skrywers is, moet daar na die eerste verskaffing van al die auteurs, van et al. gebruik gemaak word. In die geval waar daar egter een of meer auteurs ter sprake is moet et al. van die begin gebruik word. Al die name van die skrywers moet in die verwysingslys versky wat aan die einde van die artikel voorkom. Verwysings moet alfabeties in trippel spaasitring genesteel word. Al die verwysings moet in die verwysingslys versky, insluitende sekondêre bronne, ("APA Pub. Man." 1983, p.13). Slegs aanvaarbare afkripte van skrywers se titels mag gebruik word, (sien "DSH ABSTRACTS, October"; of The World List of Scientific Periodicals"). Die aantal verwysings moet nie meer as 30 oorsky nie, teny dit geregeeheidig is.

**LET OP DIE VOLGENDE VOORBEELDE:**


**REDIGERING**

Manuskripte wat aanvaar word, mag na die skrywer teruggestuur word van skrywers oorweeg word nie. Addisionele kleiner veranderinge mag ook op hierdie stadium aangebring word, maar 'n nota ter aanduiding van alle veranderinge wat op die manuskrip voorkom, moet versky word. Die artikel word dan aan die redaksionele komitee vir finale redigering van styl, duidelikheid en konsekwentheid teruggestuur.

**HERDRUKKEN**

10 herdrukke sonder omslae sal gratis aan die auteurs verskaf word.

**SLUITINGSDATUM VIR BYDRAERS**

Bydraes word verskyn in twee dae van elke seisoen. Artikel se verskynsdatum moet 31 Mei elke jaar verwag, maar artikels sal nog tot 30 Junie vir aanvaarding oorgeneem word.

**NAVRAE, KORRESPONDENSIE EN MANUSKRIPTE:**

Moet geadresseer word aan Die Redakteur, Die Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kommunikasieafwykings, Die Suid-Afrikaanse Spraak-Taal-Gehoor Vereeniging, Postbus 609, Wits 2050, Suid-Afrika.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Kommunikasieafwykings, Vol. 41, 1994

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