

## Editorial

### Frontline research in an accessible and flexible way

**Erno Lehtinen**

An increasing number of new scientific journals have been founded in the last few years. A big part of these new publishing forums are open-access electronic-only journals. When starting a new journal it is important to carefully think about why this new journal is needed and which kind of journal it should be. The two previously founded journals of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) have been very successful. *Learning and Instruction* has established its role as one of the leading journals in education and educational psychology. It publishes theoretically and methodologically strong original articles. *Educational Research Review* has opened new opportunities for publishing review articles, meta-analyses and theoretical papers, and the quickly increased impact factor indicates that it is also well trusted by the research community. Then why the need to start the third EARLI journal *Frontline Learning Research (FLR)*?

During the almost three decades of European scientific collaboration within EARLI the number of researchers and the quality of research in the field of learning and instruction have rapidly increased. Also, the two previously founded EARLI journals have extended their influence far beyond the European countries and receive high-level submissions from all over the world. Because of these developments there is a much larger number of excellent manuscripts out there in the EARLI community than the two existing journals are able to publish. We believe that many of these research papers are worth publishing.

Yet, it was not only the increase of the publication pressure that led EARLI to the decision to supplement the existing journals by founding *Frontline Learning Research*. The main aim was to develop a journal which would explicitly support innovative theoretical and methodological thinking and increase dynamics in the field. Accordingly, the emphasis of the journal will be on promoting educational and learning sciences as a multidisciplinary domain, drawing from cognitive, philosophical, sociological, psychological and pedagogical theoretical paradigms. While emphasising innovative and risk-taking approaches this new Journal will follow the successful policy of the other EARLI journals by making sure that all manuscripts go through a serious and rigorous review process. It will be a big challenge for the editors and reviewers to combine these principles, however, we believe that it is feasible. Authors submitting manuscripts are the key players in creating a novel publication culture for the Journal. Innovative ideas and risk-taking studies have a stronger impact if they are presented in a rigorous way that enables careful evaluation of theoretical arguments, methodological details, and conclusions.



There are deep-going changes in scientific publication policies and it was the right time for EARLI to take these changes into account. Although libraries of big and wealthy universities provide researchers with wide on-line access to scientific journals, the journal packages available in many universities are limited. In addition, many readers of scientific publications belong to universities or research institutions providing access to scientific journals. In order to increase the impact of scientific publishing in educational and learning sciences it is important to develop open-access forums, which are available for readers independently of the organisation in which they are working. *Frontline Learning Research* is for this reason an open-access journal. It means that anyone using the Internet can read it for free. Researchers are guaranteed more flexible access to the Journals articles and the open-access format also enables them to use the articles as teaching material in face-to-face and on-line courses. Furthermore, it also means that the journal is easily accessible for practitioners.

*Frontline Learning Research* is an electronic-only journal. In daily research work on-line versions of scientific publications are used more and more frequently and researchers seldom go to libraries to read traditional hard copies of the journals. However, we still tend to think that the existence of a traditional paper version is a prerequisite for a high reputation scientific publication. In many traditional scientific fields (e.g. physics), however, the situation is rapidly changing and electronic-only journals can be found among the most highly ranked publishing forums. In planning FLR we emphasised that the electronic-only format does not only mean that there are no hard copies available, but also that it opens up new opportunities that go beyond the possibilities of traditional printed journals. The electronic delivery form provides authors with a large variety of options for dynamic presentations, such as videos, simulations, hyperlinks and animations. In other words, this electronic journal makes it possible to demonstrate novel data collection processes and alternative analysis methods in a flexible way. The electronic-only format also allows more freedom for using varying types of articles. In FLR we welcome short, regular and extended manuscripts. This allows very quick communication about new findings, while also enabling in-depth description of complex empirical data.

Slow review processes and a long publication lag are frustrating for researchers. In FLR much attention is paid to the fast review process. As an electronic journal FLR is also flexible in terms of articles published in individual issues and there is no need for publication lag. A fast review and publication schedule makes it possible to have intensive scientific discussions within the Journal.

The papers published in this first issue of the Journal demonstrate some of the ideas we have about innovative and risk-taking research. The editorial team of the *Frontline Learning Research* invites EARLI members and researchers elsewhere to participate in this collaborative enterprise to create a new innovative publishing culture for learning research.

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