

# Re-imagining ‘openness’ in *Review of Education*: Methodological standards, open science, and nurturing the next generation of researchers

It is an exciting time to take up the baton to lead one of the flagship journals of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). After a decade of publication, *Review of Education (RoE)* has received its inaugural Impact Factor of 2.4, published a growing number of special issues that focus on a range of educational topics, and been led and supported by a team of experienced and dedicated editors, international editorial board members and peer reviewers.

*RoE* publishes high-quality primary studies and reviews that have substantial national and international impact. Building on the wonderful work of the previous editorial team, we are dedicated to continuing to uphold this commitment of large-scale and impactful studies in educational research. In this editorial, we set out our three-fold vision and ambitions for the journal: (1) to solidify the journal's status as a premier platform for disseminating methodologically rigorous and innovative evidence syntheses in educational research in all fields of study; (2) to strengthen its position as a leading advocate for open science practices; and (3) to enhance support for the involvement and development of early career researchers (ECRs) from all parts of the world, including the provision of active mentoring opportunities.

## METHODOLOGICAL STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE SYNTHESSES

While the remit of *RoE* is not limited to evidence syntheses, such as systematic reviews, meta-research is an important component of the journal, especially given the journal's very generous word limit (8000–20,000 words). The journal is now home to many high-quality evidence syntheses in educational research. We aim to further develop the *RoE* into a premier educational research journal that publishes methodologically rigorous and innovative types of evidence syntheses (see, e.g., Sutton et al., 2019) by introducing further guidance for researchers to ensure transparent and robust methodological practices. We will produce more detailed methodological and best practice recommendations, to complement and expand upon existing guidance (e.g., Khalil et al., 2024) and research into reporting quality within educational research (Bond et al., 2024; Buntins et al., 2023), together with examples of how to conduct various types of evidence syntheses for authors. These guidelines will be based upon established methodological practices that are recognised internationally (e.g., Page et al., 2021).

One such suggestion to authors of any type of evidence synthesis is the importance of making a protocol openly accessible in a research repository such as the Open Science

Framework, the International Database of Education Systematic Reviews, or Mendeley Data. The protocol should provide a rationale for conducting the review, as well as a detailed explanation of the search strategy and methodology being followed (see Moher et al., 2015). Moreover, we would like to encourage submissions of different types of evidence synthesis, in addition to the more traditional types such as systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Relatively innovative types of evidence synthesis include qualitative evidence synthesis, meta-ethnography, evidence and gap maps, and reviews that synthesise non-research information (e.g., a review of practice, see Chong et al., 2024). We also welcome reviews that showcase methodological innovations, for example, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in increasing efficiency of the systematic review process. From a methodological perspective, the notion of 'openness', as suggested in the editorial title, refers to being both transparent when reporting the methodologies and methods of evidence syntheses (and primary studies) published in *Review of Education*, aligning with international reporting standards and tools, and our willingness to consider publishing evidence syntheses that employ innovative and emergent methodologies to make a substantial difference in education in general.

## OPEN SCIENCE PRACTICES

It is our hope that the journal can become an advocate of open science practices including protocol (pre-)registration, open materials (e.g., providing questionnaires or interview questions used), and open data (e.g., full transparency of coding in reviews; see Bond et al., 2024 for an example). We are currently considering displaying Open Science Badges (Centre for Open Science, 2024) on the journal's website and award badges to submissions that follow these practices. The importance of encouraging these open science practices lies in the contribution to increased methodological rigour, transparency and reproducibility; at the same time, it encourages replication studies of major research work published in the journal. Another aspect of open science concerns the dissemination of findings to a non-academic audience. The journal has already done a great job of this by including the 'context and implications' statement. We expand this by appointing Dr Melissa Bond, one of the editors, to be the journal's Impact Lead, who oversees the [Twitter/X](#) and [LinkedIn](#) accounts of the journal, and coordinates with colleagues at BERA to identify potential collaborative opportunities in BERA's other non-academic publication avenues such as podcasts and blogs. To maximise impact and reach of our publications, we are also considering providing an option for authors to provide author names, abstract, and the 'context and implications' statement in an additional language other than English, and we encourage authors to share their social media details to further facilitate wider engagement.

## SUPPORT FOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

'Openness' in educational research is encapsulated in creating an inclusive and sustainable academic publishing platform, in particular when it comes to involving and supporting the next generation of educational researchers. Supporting ECRs in the journal peer review process is not only crucial in addressing structural and institutional inequities in academia, but we also consider this an integral part of ethical research practice (Chong, 2022). Echoing the British Educational Research Association's commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is our aspiration that *Review of Education* becomes an ECR-friendly journal, one that encourages the active participation of ECRs to take on various roles in the peer review process, including serving as Associate Editors, editorial board members, and peer

reviewers. Alongside this, we would also offer mentoring opportunities to ECRs who take on these roles. This journal will be utilising externally created resources such as the [ECR Peer Reviewer Repository](#) (Chong, 2023) to actively identify and involve ECRs. To better support ECRs, one of the editors, Professor Sin Wang Chong, will take on the role of ECR Lead. The ECR Lead will mentor ECR members of the editorial team including associate editors and editorial board members. Support will include irregular meetings with them about peer-review queries, allowing ECRs to shadow editors to learn more about the strategies for inviting peer reviewers, making editorial decisions, and reviewing papers.

We also want to recognise outstanding research by ECRs. In addition to the journal's 'Editor's Choice Award', we plan to establish an 'ECR Best Paper' award that could motivate young scholars to submit their work to the journal, thus fostering a pipeline of fresh and innovative research. This award may be accompanied by a cash prize, a certificate of recognition, a presentation at the BERA ECR Conference or ECR lunchtime session at the BERA Conference, and perhaps an invitation to join the journal's editorial board for a duration.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*Review of Education* has a lot to offer to the educational research community. It fills an important gap in academic publishing as an outlet for major studies and reviews in Education. As one of the flagship journals of BERA, we extend a call to our editorial board, peer reviewers, authors and readers to help further develop the journal into a supportive and constructive space where diverse voices can be represented, in particular those that are under-represented (e.g., ECRs and researchers in the Global South). In addition to the ECR-focused support mentioned above, we will soon be issuing a call for special issues, which will have a particular focus on topics and geographical locations that are marginalised. At the same time, we will continue to uphold rigorous peer review, adhere to the publisher's AI policy and COPE's position statement on AI tools, and implement the Contribution Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to identify and recognise specific author contributions. Ultimately, our aspiration is for *Review of Education* to flourish as an outlet that prioritises impact and engagement, both in research and practice. We plan to achieve this by implementing a series of open science strategies, strengthening our social media presence, and collaborating more closely with non-academic forms of publication of BERA.

We welcome you to embark on this journey with us.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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