



Publishing Engineering Education Research

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I. Introduction

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) commissioned a short report from the Manufacturing Industry Education Research Group (MIERG) at the University of Cambridge to (1) support researchers in Engineering Education (EE) to target appropriate journals for publication and (2) inform the process for raising the profile and impact of EE journals. The rationale being that researchers in EE want to be able to publish their research in journals that reach the appropriate audience, reflect the quality of their research work, support their individual and institutional aspirations and influence the practitioner community.

For EE researchers attempting to disseminate their research, trade-off decisions are inevitable. There are multiple publishing options available from specific EE journals, to journals focused on specific Engineering disciplines, to those related to wider-related communities such as STEM, higher education (HE) and professional development/learning in the workplace. Unfortunately, many of the journals have both low impact factors and a low profile, particularly among the large community of practising Engineering Educators.

Engineering Education (EE) is the term used in practice to describe the education related to engineering programmes either at a higher education institution (HEI) or a further education institution (FEI). The UK EE community predominantly uses Engineering Science concepts and research methods while the much smaller Engineering Education Research (EER) community uses expertise in education and social science research methods. This can reduce the accessibility of EER to the EE community.

EER is an emerging academic discipline in the UK. The largest and most established community is in the US where there are a number of dedicated EE departments (schools) based in US universities. The US is also home to the world's oldest and largest Engineering Education Society, the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE)¹, founded in 1893 with over 12,000 individual members. There are many other active EE communities, the most significant of which are in Australia and Europe with Asia and Latin America now becoming more engaged.

Although growing, EER is a fragmented field, with some of the more significant segments being defined by:

- engineering discipline;
- country/continent;
- institution;
- type of research, including more fundamental research, practice and policy.

The objective of this report is to provide a reference document of journals that are relevant to the Engineering Education Research Community in the UK that will assist researchers to target their publications and also to inform the process for raising the profile and impact of EE journals. To that end, journals that publish EER have been investigated and a survey of researchers who have sought to publish EER in the last three years has been undertaken to provide a picture of publishing practice. The survey also asked the researchers how things might be improved.

2. Journals that publish Engineering Education Research

There are many options available for those seeking to publish EER including many engineering subject or discipline journals, HE journals, Teaching and Learning journals as well EE journals. To give a sense of the numbers of journals involved a key-word search of the titles of journal publications was undertaken using Scopus which, due to its inter-disciplinary nature, provides good coverage of all the fields of interest. The results are given in Table I.

¹ <http://www.asee.org/>

Table 1: Numbers of journals listed in a key word Scopus database search on 28 June 2013

Key word	Number of journals
Engineering	1011
Education	523
Learning	99
Higher education	31
Engineering Education	14

The focus of this report has been on those journals that are specific to EE.

The Scopus search identified 14 EE journals. It was immediately apparent that this was not a comprehensive list since it had notable exclusions such as the UK HEA Journal 'Engineering Education' and the *Australasian Journal of Engineering Education*. In addition, three of the listed journals were now discontinued as they had updated and changed their titles so, in practice, this search only identified 11 journals.

It was then decided to focus on determining a listing of current EE journals available for the publication of peer-reviewed research. A number of different sources were used to compile the listing of journals including citation databases², academy and society listings³, Engineering Education school resource lists⁴, journal publishers⁵ and the first ten pages of Google hits on EE Journals. Each journal was then double checked via an internet search to ensure relevance to EER. There is a wide range of journals some of which are well established and in the last few years there has been a marked increase in new online journals. Based upon this filtering, 26 journals were identified for further analysis.

The journal's current title, URL and 2012 ISI impact factor was captured where available. Journal information such as scope, aims, special editions, editorial policy can change so it was considered important that a listing should act as a signpost to latest information. While some researchers will want to target the most prestigious and highly rated journals others may want to target those that are more pertinent or accessible to their target audience. The information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Listing of Engineering Education Journals as of June 2013

	Current journal title	Current web link	ISI Impact Factor 2012
1	<i>Advances in Engineering Education</i>	http://advances.asee.org/	
2	<i>American Journal of Engineering Education</i>	http://journals.cluteonline.com/index.php/AJEE	
3	<i>ASEAN Journal of Engineering Education</i>	http://tree.utm.my/ajee/	
4	<i>Australasian Journal of Engineering Education</i>	https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/australasian-association-engineering-education/australasian-journal-engineering-education	
5	<i>Chemical Engineering Education</i>	http://cee.che.ufl.edu/	

² Scopus and Web of Knowledge.

³ Higher Education Academy (UK), National Academy of Engineering (US), <http://engineeringeducationlist.pbworks.com/w/page/27614165/Engineering%20Education%20Research%20Publication%20Venues>

⁴ Georgia Tech.

⁵ Taylor, Francis and Wiley.

Table 2: Listing of Engineering Education Journals as of June 2013 continued

	Current journal title	Current web link	ISI Impact Factor 2012
6	<i>Computer Applications in Engineering Education</i>	http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1099-0542	0.333
7	<i>Education for Chemical Engineers</i>	http://www.journals.elsevier.com/education-for-chemical-engineers/	
8	<i>Engineering Education - The Journal of the Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Group (Predecessor - British Journal of Engineering Education)</i>	http://journals.heacademy.ac.uk/journal/ened	
9	<i>Engineering Studies</i>	http://www.tandfonline.com/action/aboutThisJournal?journalCode=test20#.UdacS_k71RY	
10	<i>European Journal of Engineering Education (EJEE)</i>	http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ceee20/current#.UjlbzsY72WYY	0.581
11	<i>Global Journal Engineering Education</i>	http://www.wiete.com.au/journals/GJEE/Publish/index.html	
12	<i>IEEE Transactions on Education (Previously Engineering Science and Education Journal)</i>	http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/xpl/RecentIssue.jsp?punumber=13	0.950
13	<i>IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies</i>	http://www.computer.org/portal/web/tlt	
14	<i>International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education and Life-Long Learning</i>	http://www.inderscience.com/jhome.php?jcode=IJCEELL	
15	<i>International Journal of Electrical Engineering Education</i>	http://www.ijee.ie/	0.041
16	<i>International Journal of Engineering Education (NB. Previously International Journal of Applied Engineering Education)</i>	http://www.ijee.ie/	0.290
17	<i>International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy</i>	http://online-journals.org/index.php/i-jep/	
18	<i>International Journal of Mechanical Engineering Education</i>	http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/subscribe/showinfo=ip017	
19	<i>Journal of Applications and Practices in Engineering Education</i>	http://ijietap.utep.edu/ojs-2.3.3-3/index.php/JAPEE	
20	<i>Journal of Engineering Education (JEE)</i>	http://www.asee.org/papers-and-publications/publications/jee	1.925
21	<i>Journal of Online Engineering Education</i>	http://www.onlineengineeringeducation.com/	
22	<i>Journal of pre-college Engineering Education Research</i>	http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jpeer/	
23	<i>Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education and Practice</i>	http://ascelibrary.org/journal/jpepe3	0.439
24	<i>Journal of STEM Education: Innovation and Research</i>	http://ojs.jstem.org/index.php?journal=JSTEM	
25	<i>Latin American and Caribbean Journal of Engineering Education</i>	http://journal.laccei.org/index.php/lacjee/index	
26	<i>World Transactions on Engineering and Technology Education</i>	http://wiete.com.au/journals/WTE&TE/Pages/	

Having completed this limited analysis, a recent and more in-depth study entitled ‘Beyond JEE: Finding publication venues to get your message to the ‘right’ audience’ by Professor Amy Van Epps from Purdue University, which was published following the ASEE Annual Conference in late June 2013⁶, was reviewed. The analysis covers a broader set of 82 peer-reviewed journals specifically for the Engineering Education Community including those in HE and Learning and Teaching. It is highly recommended reading and includes a number of listings including open access journals, top 15 titles by impact factor (2011 data) and

⁶ Van Epps, Amy, S. (2013) Beyond JEE: Finding publication venues to get your message to the ‘right’ audience, 120th ASEE Annual Conference June 2013, Paper 5859.

top 15 by h-index (Google Scholar), as well as discussing some of the challenges of supporting an emerging discipline in terms of publications.

Comparing the 26 journals listed in Table 2 with the 82 journals analysed by Van Epps there are five titles not included in her analysis: numbers 6, 13, 21, 23 and 25. Given that a comprehensive listing of available journals (as well as conferences) would be of value to the community as a whole it would make sense to have a single and maintained comprehensive listing rather than the multiple incomplete listings available.

EE conferences would appear to be a good source of papers that review journals, research methods and pedagogy in the field. The European Society of Engineering Education (SEFI) conference in September 2013 included three such papers, with one being a key note lecture by Phil Winkat⁷. This paper compares the *JEE* and *EJEE* (journals number 10 and 20 in Table 2) over the last 40 years.

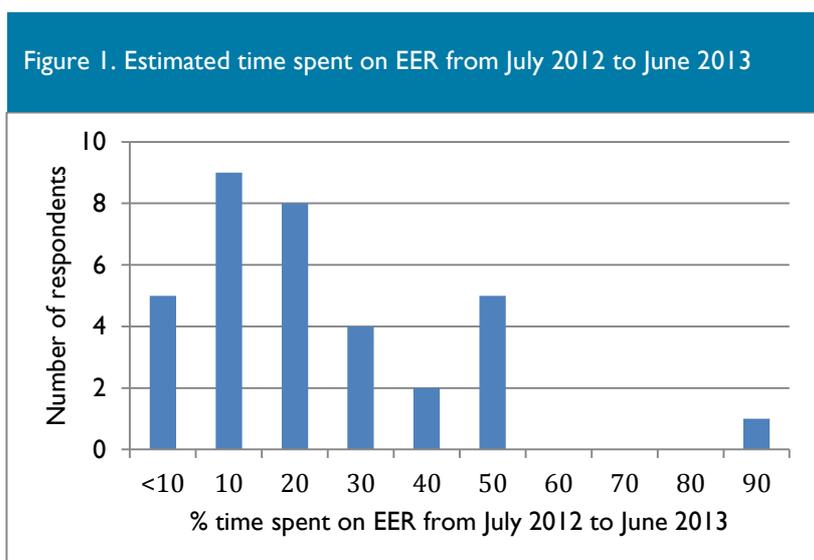
3. Survey of Engineering Education Researchers in UK

The survey was made available on 28 June 2013 using Survey Monkey and closed on 16 July 2013. The target recipients were those who had attempted to publish Engineering Education research in the three-year period from July 2010 to June 2012. The link to the survey was distributed to the UK EER SIG via email, to the HEA Engineering community via their newsletter and, to UK academics who had published in *Engineering Education* (HEA Journal) in Volumes 6 and 7. All recipients were asked to forward it to others they knew in the EER community. The results of the survey are presented and discussed below.

3.1 Profile of the survey respondents?

There were 34 responses to this survey from 21 different UK academic institutions including one from Northern Ireland and one from Scotland. Ninety-one per cent (31) of respondents were based in Engineering departments and 9% (3) in an academic support/education centre. Seventy-four per cent (25) held lecturer, senior lecturer, reader or professor positions, 15% (5) had Teaching Fellowships or other teaching and learning positions, 9%(3) were research students and 3% (1) had a research assistant position.

Each of these respondents provided an estimate on what percentage of their time was spent on EER during the one-year period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. The profile is given in Figure 1.



⁷ Wankat, P., Williams, B. and Pedro, N. (2013) Past, Present and Future of Engineering Education, 41st SEFI Annual Conference, Leuven.

If this is a representative sample of the total community it would suggest that EER is most typically carried out by academics and teaching and learning staff with very little undertaken by dedicated research staff or students. It also shows that 65% of those undertaking EER estimate they spend 20% or less of their time on this activity.

Eight of the respondents only completed this first section of the survey. The numbers of responses given to each of the subsequent questions in the survey is described in each section below.

3.2 Responses to: “How many papers have you submitted for journal publication in the last three years and to what journals?”

Twenty-six respondents answered this question, 18 of which had successfully submitted EER journal papers with only one paper not accepted and one still under review. There was a problem with this question as ‘papers’ and not ‘EER papers’ were specified and a number of researchers publish in other areas. So each journal mentioned was investigated to see if they publish EER-related papers. Any papers and journals that were not EER were removed from the results shown in Table 3.

Journal title	Abbreviation	No. of papers
<i>Advances in Education Research</i>		1
<i>American Journal of Economics and Business Administration</i>	AJEB	1
<i>Engineering Education - A Journal of the Higher Education Academy</i>		14
<i>European Journal Engineering Education</i>	EJEE	7**
<i>Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning</i>		1
<i>Innovation in Education and Teaching International</i>		1
<i>International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education and Life Long Learning</i>		1
<i>International Journal of Electrical Engineering Education</i>	IJEEE	3
<i>International Journal of Engineering Education</i>	IJEE	1
<i>International Journal of Higher Education</i>	IJHE	1
<i>Journal of Engineering Education</i>	JEE	1*
<i>Journal of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning</i>	WPPL	2
<i>Practice and Evidence of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education</i>	PESTLHE	2
<i>Student Engagement and Experience Journal</i>		1
<i>Studies in Higher Education</i>		1
Total		38

* Not accepted

** of which was under review at the time of the survey

The most highly used journal is the UK-based *Engineering Education: Journal of the Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Centre* with the *European Journal Engineering Education* a clear second. There is likely to be bias in the results towards the HEA journal as those who had published there were specifically targeted. However this does suggest a regional focus to publications with no one submitting papers to the Australian-based journal and only one submitted to the US-based journal (JEE) and then not successfully.

3.3 Responses to: “How many EER papers have you submitted to conference in the last three years and which conferences did you target?”

Twenty-three participants entered the number of conference papers submitted and 20 gave details on the conferences targeted. There were only spaces to insert five different conferences and, with six participants publishing over five conference papers in the last three years, not all conferences targeted will have been recorded. However as some authors present multiple papers per conference it is assumed that the main EER conferences attended will have been identified.

A total of 113 conference papers were submitted with only two not accepted. This gives a ratio of three conference papers to one journal paper for this set of survey participants.

Thirty-nine different conferences were targeted, ranging from one-day symposiums, e.g. UK EER SIG Symposium, to large multi-day international conferences, such as the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) conference. Three of these conferences were technical conferences with an education theme. Those conferences where more than one paper was submitted have been listed in Table 4. It can be seen that Bi-Annual Engineering Education conference in the UK is by far the most popular followed by SEFI. It would appear as a community, UK EE researchers do not travel far afield with only person attending the American Society for Engineering Education Conference, one person attending the South African Society for Engineering Education Conference and no one attending the Australian Engineering Education Conference.

Table 4: Number of EER papers submitted to conference

No. of papers	Conference abbreviation	Conference
20	EE	Engineering Education (Bi-annual UK conference)
8	SEFI	European Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference
3	ICEE	The International Conference on Electrical Engineering
3	REES	Research in Engineering Education Symposium
3	SRHE	Society for Research in Higher Education Annual Conference
3	HEA STEM	Higher Education Academy Annual STEM Conference
2	EER SIG Symposium	Engineering Education Research Special Interest Group Symposium
2	ISSOTL	International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Annual Conference
2	HEA	Higher Education Academy Annual Conference

3.4 Responses to: “What criteria do you currently use to select journals for your EER work?”

Survey participants were invited to enter up to five responses in rank order. Eighteen people responded to this question providing a total of 49 responses. The open responses were coded into 12 broad areas and then all responses and those ranked No. 1 were summarised by criteria code.

The results are summarised by criteria code in Table 5. Where the criteria code is not self-explanatory or there are a number of dimensions related to this aspect then further explanation is given.

The data show that the most significant criteria for choosing a journal are - relevance of subject to journal, impact, reputation and audience. However it could be argued that there is a broad category related to working with a journal combining criteria such as speed of processing papers, supportive

editor and peer reviewers, ease of submission, journal website and paper structure. This would account for eight of the total responses and so would rank in the top five criteria for selecting a journal.

Table 5: Criteria for selecting journals for EER			
Criteria code	Criteria explanation	No. of responses	No. ranked 1
Relevance of subject to journal		12	5
Impact	This included more specific answers such as impact factor, REF and good ranking	10	4
Reputation	Prestige, excellence, credibility, profile	7	3
Audience	Two-thirds of responses were related to having an appropriate audience and one-third to having a particular geographic audience, e.g. international versus national	6	4
Discipline	This related to being able to publish EER in discipline/subject specific journals	3	1
Speed of processing papers	This contained responses relating to time to publication and getting timely feedback on papers	3	
Acceptance rate		2	1
Supportive editor and peer reviewers	Constructive and supportive policy	2	
Ease of submission		1	
Invitation	Invited to submit for special edition	1	
Journal website	Clear and easy to navigate	1	
Paper structure		1	
	Total	49	18

3.5 Responses to: “What information would help you to target journals for your EER?”

Twenty-two participants responded to this open question with 20 responses making specific suggestions. These have been collated into groups and are listed below.

In terms of ‘what’ participants wanted:

- clearly stated journal subject priorities;
- forward notification of special issues;
- clarity on the type of research published, e.g. practice versus research, specificity to EE vs HE;
- clarity on research methods that can be/or are typically used;
- clear criteria for acceptance of papers;
- easily accessible information on impact, including impact factor;
- ratio of submissions to publications;
- typical audience;
- how the journal is promoted/distributed;
- a list of colleagues' experiences;
- a better understanding of how discipline-specific work may be accepted in generic education journals.

In terms of 'where' participants wanted this information – in addition to this being on the journal websites – there were several requests for an easily accessible listing of all relevant EER journals and their key data. A further request was being able to check the appropriateness of a paper prior to submission.

3.6 Responses to: “Who do you consider to be the most influential researchers in EE?”

Participants were asked to list up to ten people. Twelve participants answered. Seventy-two names were collected of which 55 were different and 12 had more than one mention. Of these 12 influential researchers, five currently work in the US, four work in Australia and three in the UK.

Although these twelve represent the opinions of only a few UK researchers, they were felt to provide a useful basis for comparing publication profiles of researchers in three different countries.

The method used was to carry out a search on Google Scholar using – 'first name', 'second name' and 'Engineering Education'. The first ten hits within the first ten pages of the Google return were then taken and divided into the categories – book, journal, conference and working paper. Two of the above researchers did not achieve ten hits. The journal and conference papers were then further sub-divided into Engineering Education, subject discipline and general higher education. The specific journals, conferences and number of citations for each article were noted.

3.6.1 Citation analysis

In spite of many well-documented arguments about the difficulty of relating citations to research quality it persists as a measure of academic achievement. There was a clear difference between the countries in which the researchers worked. The five researchers working in the US had an average of 204 citations per paper, the four researchers working in Australia averaged 24 citations per paper and the three UK researchers averaged 2.5 citations per paper.

These figures would suggest that there is a lack of UK researchers in Engineering Education with an international reputation measured by citation, and that the UK significantly lags behind Australia and the US in this field.

3.6.2 Channels

Of the total of 109 Google hits analysed, six related to working papers, seven to books/ebooks/book sections, 54 to journals and 42 to conferences. There was a significant variation between the researchers: of the four Australian researchers two were predominantly disseminating through conferences and two through journals. The UK researchers tended to focus on conferences but with more books/ebooks and HEA resource material. The US researchers were predominantly using journals for dissemination.

Out of the 54 journal hits the JEE is the clear leader with 25 (plus two in the ASEE non-reviewed magazine Prism) with EJEE in a distinct second place with 12, the remaining 17 were spread over 16 journals that included specialist Engineering Education journals such as the International Journal of Problem Based Learning to specific discipline journals such as Design Studies. There were no publications in broad category of higher education teaching journals.

Conferences had a different bias with the AAEE having ten hits followed by ASEE seven, HEA five and SEFI three. This seems to follow the national preferences of the researchers with the US preferring journal dissemination, and UK and Australia preferring conferences. Eleven of the conference papers were related to specialist or discipline-based conferences.

3.6.3 Discussion

The first item of interest is the nature of the names on the list and that there is no one from continental Europe. This is surprising as there have been specific streams of EER developed in European universities over several years (e.g. research on problem-based learning (PBL) at Alborg). This may be because the respondents only recognised the other Anglophone countries or possibly that while there is a lot of work in Europe, no ‘big names’ have emerged yet.

The results would seem to reflect how well the EER community is established. The US has a few ‘gurus’, career researchers and a preference for peer-reviewed journal publication, all of which enhances academic credibility using conventional measures. Australia has a mixture of a single ‘guru’ and a small number of researchers with a good citation record but tending to publish in EJEE and at conferences rather than the JEE. The UK is a more difficult picture, where no-one was identified who could be said to have an international reputation in the field and a lot of the publication activities were supported by the HEA either in book or conference form. This highlights the important role the HEA has played in the publication of UK EER outputs to date.

3.7 Responses to: “What do you see as the key issues related to publishing in EER and what suggestions do you have to tackle this?”

Eighteen participants responded to this question. The issues from each response have been separated out and grouped into eight headings. These are listed in order of significance as determined by the number of mentions and shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Issues related to publishing in EE		
Number	Key issues	Number of respondents
1	Lack of acceptance and recognition of EER in the UK EE community	8
2	Lack of support/resources for EER in the UK	5
3	Lack of information about EE journals and conferences	3
4	Difficulty of choice between different types of journals – eg EE vs HE vs discipline	2
5	Use of technology to support learning	2
6	Fragmented structure of engineering profession	1
7	Lack of access to subscription EER journals – may be too specialist for support by some university libraries	1
8	Nature of field – largely closed in US and to some degree in UK	1

With issues 3 and 4 in Table 6 being closely related it can be seen that three main issues emerge and the more detailed responses relating these issues are captured below.

Lack of acceptance and recognition of EER

EER was seen as a weak discipline with low status and low impact journals. Some more specific answers include:

- “recognition of EER within engineering departments, e.g. REF status and the need for a UK-based journal of high standing”;
- “acceptability: tie in sponsorship with accreditation bodies, e.g. IET, IMECHE, JMB, IChemE”;
- “lack of prominence - I think this is a crucial field but it is perhaps viewed as career limiting for existing engineering academics. This is understandable but yet without it, their discipline (engineering) may flounder in the future. It would be great if all those with a responsibility for Engineering Education needed to do some publishable research in this area (although this goes against the grains of academic freedom!)”.

Lack of support/resources for EER

- “More support for carrying out EER - at present there is more emphasis on ‘proper’ science and engineering research and there is very little funding /support available for Engineering Education Research.”
- “That the education and training of engineers does not equip them to be educational researchers. The need to form partnerships between engineers and educationalists.”
- “Lack of ‘hard’ data.” (This is assumed to relate to the above point.)
- “Lack of research funding.”
- “Getting time to write the papers.”

Lack of information about EE journals and conferences

- “I have only recently started doing EE research and am unsure which conferences and journals are appropriate for showcasing my work. In technical disciplines there are established "gold standard" journals but this doesn't seem to be the case in EER. If such information/knowledge does exist then I would like a pointer to it.”
- “I am not aware of many UK-based EE journals apart from the HEA one (*Engineering Education*). It would be good to have one with a national perspective as well as international ones.”
- “Understanding the differences between the journals - which ones are 'good' and by what measures.”

The majority of the issues raised are related to the emergence of EER in the UK and the need for greater support, information and co-ordination. It would seem to be of great value to the community to develop a national strategy in support of this emergent discipline that would, in turn, support the case for more resources. This is of particular importance given the rise of performance measurement activities in many HEIs that typically use research citation metrics as key indicators. Such indicators favour established rather than emerging academic fields. In addition there are the issues associated with the adoption of the recommendations of the Finch Report⁸, i.e. ‘Gold Access’, which favours established academic disciplines regularly supported by research councils rather than emerging disciplines seeking to establish funding.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

EE is a growing academic discipline that requires nurture and support in the UK to facilitate recognition and growth.

There are a large number of journals available for publishing EER outputs, and determining the most appropriate journal can be difficult.

A comprehensive listing of EE journals and conferences does not appear to be available.

EE conferences can be a good source of research papers on EE journals and the research methods used in their papers.

EER in the UK is largely undertaken by academics and teaching staff with very little undertaken by dedicated research staff or research students, and it is very much a part-time activity.

UK EER researchers publish in a range of journals including those focused on the broad areas of engineering, higher education, teaching and learning, as well as EE.

⁸ <http://www.researchinforonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Finch-Group-report-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

UK EE researchers seem to prefer to publish via conferences rather than in journals, with a ratio of 3:1 for conference papers to journal papers for our sample.

Relevance, impact, reputation and audience were the most important criteria used when selection journals for publishing EER.

The three main problems relating to publishing EER are a lack of (1) acceptance and recognition of EER in the UK EE community, (2) support/resources for EER in the UK and (3) information about EE journals and conferences.

4.1 Recommendations

It is recommended that the following would help serve the UK and wider EE community:

- the provision of a comprehensive single listing of available EE journals (as well as EE conferences);
- the indexing of all EE journal (and conference papers) on widely-used citation databases to facilitate the finding of relevant papers for EE researchers;
- improved access to subscription EE journals for the EER community in the UK;
- the development of a UK strategy to promote and support the emerging field of EER. This could include supporting research collaborations between different communities, for example those in UK and US, to increase recognition and impact of research work;
- the development of high impact factor EE Journals (including one from UK) that are suitable for inclusion into UK research evaluation process;
- improvement of the differentiation within EER-related journals of research type e.g. policy, practice and theory.

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