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## Addressing equity, diversity and inclusion in academic publishing: Key initiatives from JMTE

Thorsten Scheiner  
*Australian Catholic University, Australia*

Karin Brodie  
*University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa*

Núria Planas  
*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain*

Lisa Darragh  
*University of Auckland, New Zealand*

Anjum Halai  
*Aga Khan University, anjum.halai@aku.edu*

*See next page for additional authors*

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### Recommended Citation

Scheiner, T., Brodie, K., Planas, N., Darragh, L., Halai, A., Potari, D., Santos-Trigo, M., Walkoe, J. (2024). Addressing equity, diversity and inclusion in academic publishing: Key initiatives from JMTE. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*.

Available at: [https://ecommons.aku.edu/provost\\_office/690](https://ecommons.aku.edu/provost_office/690)

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**Authors**

Thorsten Scheiner, Karin Brodie, Núria Planas, Lisa Darragh, Anjum Halai, Despina Potari, Manuel Santos-Trigo, and Janet Walkoe



# Addressing equity, diversity and inclusion in academic publishing: key initiatives from JMTE

Thorsten Scheiner<sup>1,2</sup> · Karin Brodie<sup>3</sup> · Núria Planas<sup>4</sup> · Lisa Darragh<sup>5</sup> · Anjum Halai<sup>6</sup> · Despina Potari<sup>7</sup> · Manuel Santos-Trigo<sup>8</sup> · Janet Walkoe<sup>9</sup>

Accepted: 15 April 2024  
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## Abstract

This paper addresses the pressing issues of equity, diversity and inclusion in academic publishing, with a focus on mathematics education research. It highlights systemic biases and barriers that marginalise under-represented voices in the academic discourse. Through an analysis of the *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education's* (JMTE) publication patterns, it reveals a significant geographical imbalance and a disparity between the Global North and the Global South, prompting critical reflection on whose voices are prioritised. The paper outlines key initiatives undertaken by JMTE, such as forming an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, broadening the aims and scope of the journal, developing inclusive reviewing guidelines, and fostering diversity among editors, reviewers and authors. These efforts aim to promote a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive field of mathematics education research by encouraging contributions from under-represented regions and communities and by addressing language barriers and institutional support issues.

**Keywords** Diversity in mathematics education · Equity in academic publishing · Inclusion in research practices · Global disparities in scholarly communication

Equity, diversity and inclusion have moved beyond their peripheral status in mathematics education research and are now recognised as important and indispensable considerations (for a recent review, see Vithal et al., 2024). These core principles have also gained prominence in academic publishing, where acknowledging systemic biases and barriers has become a focal point of discussion (Liu, 2016; Mesa & Wagner, 2019; Wagner, 2021). A number of academic journals and publishing houses have taken proactive steps to embrace diversity, promote inclusivity, and break down barriers to equity in academic publishing—working to ensure that marginalised and under-represented voices take their rightful place in the academic arena.

One notable initiative to address bias and barriers in publishing involves a collaborative effort by editors of mathematics education journals. In June 2021, these editors jointly published an online statement (<https://www.mathematicseducationjournals.com>) as a call to action for reviewers and (associate) editors. This statement urges us to be aware of both conscious and unconscious biases that may influence our reviews. Biases in reviewing and

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Extended author information available on the last page of the article

**Table 1** Origin of papers published in JMTE between 2018 and 2022 by country

Countries	Number of papers published
United States	180
Australia	19
Turkey	11
Israel, United Kingdom	10
Canada, Germany	8
Chile	7
Sweden	6
Denmark, Norway	5
China, Netherlands, Spain	4
Finland, Ireland, Italy	3
Cyprus, Japan	2
Austria, Greece, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Taiwan	1
No information available	6
Total	310

**Table 2** Published paper distribution by Global North and Global South

	Countries (and number of papers)	Total papers
Global North	United States (180), Australia (19), Turkey (11), Israel (10), United Kingdom (10), Canada (8), Germany (8), Sweden (6), Denmark (5), Norway (5), Netherlands (4), Spain (4), Finland (3), Ireland (3), Italy (3), Cyprus (2), Japan (2), Austria (1), Greece (1), New Zealand (1), Russia (1), Slovakia (1), Slovenia (1), Taiwan (1)	290
Global South	Chile (7), China (4), Kenya (1), Lebanon (1), Mexico (1)	14

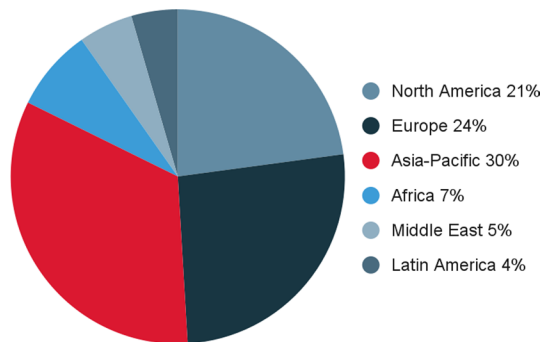
editing practices not only disadvantage the people and contexts they directly affect, but also limit the breadth and quality of research in the field, which in turn disadvantages us all (Initiative to Develop Anti-Racist Editorial Practices in Mathematics Education, 2021).<sup>1</sup>

## Equity, diversity and inclusion in academic publishing

The *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education* (JMTE) has identified a geographical imbalance in the origins of its published articles (see Table 1). Notably, 58% (180 of 310) of articles published between 2018 and 2022 came from the United States.

Table 2 shows a significant disparity between the Global North and the Global South in terms of publications. Notably, the Global North has published the vast majority of papers,

<sup>1</sup> In order to build support for this position, a form has been made available alongside the statement for interested individuals to demonstrate their support and commitment to non-discriminatory reviewing practices. The form can be accessed via the following link: <https://forms.gle/VfwWFGPPS4gLg3t5>.



**Fig. 1** Visits of JMTE articles by region in 2022. (With permission from Springer, we have the opportunity to disclose this figure, initially exclusive to the Editorial Board members of JMTE. The figure uses the term ‘Latin America’, a characterisation that we find problematic. This term tends to generalise a diverse range of cultures and identities, overshadowing the unique perspectives and identities of the numerous indigenous communities in Central and South America. Many indigenous people do not identify with the label ‘Latin’, as it implies a shared, primarily European, heritage and culture that do not resonate with their diverse experiences and ancestral backgrounds. We believe it is crucial to recognise the individuality and uniqueness of each culture and community in this region and to use a less problematic terminology, such as ‘Central and South America’, when referring to these diverse countries. Note that Mexico is included here as part of Latin America rather than North America)

accounting for around 94% (290 of 310) of the total number of papers published in JMTE between 2018 and 2022. The Global South contributes about 5% (14 of 310) of the total. This disparity remains even when excluding the contributions from the United States: with the Global North at approximately 85% (110 of 130 papers) and the Global South at around 11% (14 of 130 papers).

It is essential to contextualise the use of the terms ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’. These terms highlight geopolitical and socio-economic disparities rooted in colonialism and power dynamics. As described by Dados and Connell (2012), the ‘Global South’ is not just a metaphor for underdevelopment, but a reflection of a “history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social transformation that perpetuates large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources” (p. 13). This classification, largely based on Wikimedia’s regional country list ([https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_regional\\_classification](https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_regional_classification)), places countries from Africa, Central and South America, and parts of Asia and Australasia in the Global South, and regions such as Europe, North America, and other parts of Asia and Australasia in the Global North. However, this dichotomy is far from being unproblematic. Certain characteristics or features traditionally ascribed to the Global South can also be found in countries typically categorised as the Global North, and vice versa. Hence, our use of these terms is not meant to enforce an oversimplified binary categorisation but to highlight stark global contrasts and to critically analyse the intricacies and imbalances in our data.

This publication imbalance between the Global North and the Global South is not unique to JMTE (see Liu, 2016). Other mathematics education journals, such as *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, demonstrate a similar trend (see Mesa & Wagner, 2019). Such disparities prompt critical reflection on which research is gaining prominence and whose voices and perspectives are being prioritised.

While representation in published works is highly unequal, Fig. 1 further nuances our understanding by examining the demographics of the readership of JMTE. It

allows us to juxtapose the inequalities in publication with the geographical distribution of the journal's readership, suggesting potential imbalances in the impact and dissemination of research knowledge. Figure 1 shows that the Global North accounts for about half of the journal's readership, with Australia contributing 7% of the 30% from the Asia–Pacific region. JMTE aims at publishing research that is of interest to the global readership, but this 'global' may only account for the 'Global North'.

Considering the evidence presented in Table 2 and Fig. 1, it becomes clear that the publication imbalance cannot be attributed to a lack of interest from the Global South. Instead, it seems that the Global South is considerably exposed to research from the Global North, while the opposite is not true. This raises questions about imbalances in the dissemination of knowledge, reminiscent of colonial dynamics. Recognising this trend provides an opportunity for the journal to develop this readership and actively encourage the submission and publication of work from diverse geographical locations. This theme will be explored further in this commentary paper.

The skewed representation in our journals exacerbates an emphasis on the research concerns and priorities of the Global North, and the United States in particular, including which problems warrant attention and which theories and methodologies are most appropriate to address these problems. In addition, reviewers tend to come from countries that are well represented, so that research from other countries is mediated through their concerns.

Mesa and Wagner (2019) noted:

As a whole, this emphasis supports the thesis that published research amplifies and privileges the concerns of scholars in the well-represented countries. Insofar as the journal aims to represent the scholarship in the field, this disproportional representation may suggest that what is being published is a non-representative picture of what are the concerns of all scholars in mathematics education. (p. 308)

One possible explanation for this disproportionate representation may be the pre-dominance of mathematics education research published in English (Andrade-Molina et al., 2020). This bias disproportionately disadvantages authors from non-English speaking countries and creates barriers to entry for scholars whose first language is not English (Meaney, 2013). As a result, there is a growing impetus to support these authors and enable them to contribute to the international discourse through English-language mathematics education journals (Geiger et al., 2022).

Our research (Darragh et al., forthcoming) highlights challenges faced by the mathematics education community in publishing in journals such as JMTE. These challenges include reviewer/editor bias or misunderstanding, language and contextual differences, lack of institutional support and access to resources, and particularly in this case, access to JMTE itself. However, these are not the only obstacles; many other interrelated challenges exist that need to be addressed and overcome.

Publishing often involves communication across different languages, but also across diverse research cultures. The field of mathematics education research is culturally diverse across the world and even within regions and countries. Some of these research cultures might be changing or declining due to the struggles faced by authors and institutions in the Global South with open-access funding and publishing modalities.

## Response from JMTE

In order to promote equity, diversity and inclusion in the publishing process of JMTE, several initiatives are being implemented, which we will briefly highlight in this commentary paper. In doing so, JMTE aims to create a platform that embraces diverse voices and experiences, contributing to a more equitable, diverse and inclusive field of mathematics education research.

### Forming an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

JMTE established an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in 2022.<sup>2</sup> This Committee, consisting of volunteers from the Editorial Board, meets regularly online to discuss actions for the promotion of equity, diversity and inclusion in the research published in JMTE. Recognising the importance of global perspectives, the Committee is composed of scholars from diverse regions, including Africa, Asia–Pacific, Europe, North America, and South Asia, with experience as authors publishing in mathematics education research journals and with past and current reviewing and editorial experience.

The Committee has identified three key priorities to guide its efforts:

- (1) To increase the representation of under-represented geographical regions/countries in research published in JMTE;
- (2) To increase representation from under-represented communities in well-represented regions/countries in research published in JMTE;
- (3) To increase the publication of marginalised research, from wherever it is published, where the marginalisation may be in relation to the research problems, theories and/or methodologies in the research.

The Committee recognises that efforts to increase representation require careful attention to ethical considerations that ensure respectful practices when engaging with diverse communities. It is crucial to develop our skills in actively listening to each other in relation to how people from diverse communities formulate research challenges and approaches, and experience the publishing process (Meaney et al., 2022).

### Key initiatives of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

#### Broadening the aims and scope of JMTE

We are actively integrating the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion into the scope of the journal, with a focus on recognising, representing and valuing the diversity of lived

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<sup>2</sup> Here, the order of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is preferred to other permutations such as diversity, equity and inclusion or inclusion, diversity and equity, because we believe that equity (a) precedes diversity and inclusion because it seeks to address the root causes of inequality and create equitable opportunities for under-represented and marginalised communities, and (b) is the foundation upon which diversity and inclusion can thrive. (It recognises and addresses systemic barriers and imbalances that exist in scholarly publishing.)

experiences and backgrounds. We have been more specific and explicit about the influence of social and institutional contexts on research in mathematics teacher education:

The *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education* (JMTE) is an international journal dedicated to advancing global research on the education and professional development of mathematics teachers, as well as on the broader context of mathematics teaching. Its international focus emphasises the importance of cultural, social and institutional contexts in shaping the learning of mathematics teachers and, by extension, the mathematics learning of their students. This emphasis acknowledges that these diverse contexts also influence researchers and their research into mathematics teacher education. JMTE focuses on the continuum of professional development of mathematics teachers and mathematics teacher educators. The journal welcomes critical analyses of particular programs, development initiatives, assessment methods and policy matters related to mathematics teaching in a variety of settings. It encourages submissions that use a wide range of research paradigms, particularly those that extend beyond the traditionally dominant approaches in the field. All contributions to JMTE should address issues and questions of international significance and concern. It is essential that papers submitted to JMTE are accessible and understandable to an international audience, ensuring relevance and engagement across diverse cultural and educational landscapes.

### **Developing reviewing guidelines for JMTE**

Building on the editors' statement discussed above, we have developed a set of guidelines for the editorial team and reviewers regarding language, the selection of reviewers from different parts of the world and different perspectives, and mechanisms to avoid bias in the review process. This reflects an intersectional approach where each member of the publishing process has a key role to play in creating equity, diversity and inclusion in academic publishing—and in addressing the effects of compounding discrimination. The guidelines are available on the JMTE website: <https://www.springer.com/journal/10857/updates/25931948>

### **Systematic data collection to identify needs, inform initiatives and align goals**

To better understand the needs of our community and inform our initiatives and actions, the Committee has implemented a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. This enables the identification of potential barriers to publication and the development of targeted strategies to address them, promoting a more equitable, diverse and inclusive publishing landscape.

We created a questionnaire and sent it out through our networks in the mathematics education community (see Darragh et al., forthcoming). We received 416 responses from academics in 72 different countries. Only 74 had previously published in JMTE, while 132 had submitted but been rejected and 229 expressed an interest in publishing in JMTE in the future. This suggests that we may have reached some of the under-represented groups in our community. The responses to the open question 'What challenges or barriers do you face in getting your work published?' allow us to explore in some depth the issues faced within our wider community, so that we can tailor our future efforts. For example, some responses gave us specific comments about the publishing process:



I've learned a lot working with colleagues from 'developed' countries. It's been a school for me writing with them. I also think that journals should offer language support for those whose first language is not English. Some journals offer this service, but you have to pay for it. Another thing that could help is having a more diverse pool of editorial board members who can 'see' the articles and their quality beyond issues of language. Unprejudiced editorial members who are also knowledgeable and sensible about the epistemic positions of researchers from non-dominant groups. (Associate Professor, Chile)

In addition, our questionnaire specifically asked for feedback on the review process from those who have submitted to JMTE or would like to do so. These responses also give us direction on how to improve the process. There were many responses commenting on the time taken for review and editorial decisions:

It takes very long to receive feedback after an article has been submitted. (Post Doctoral Fellow, Malawi)

Another large category of responses related to the quality of review and editors' comments:

I have had mixed experiences submitting to JMTE, with one editor who my co-authors and I did not feel really engage with our manuscript or with the reviews we received and another editor who made much more effort to understand what we were trying to accomplish and to synthesize/referee the reviews. (Lecturer/Assistant Professor, United States)

JMTE should seek reviewers, who are sensitive to other cultures and knowledgeable in the area. (Associate Professor, United Arab Emirates)

The usual result is critical criticism aimed to discourage publishing – it is like how do you dare publish with us. (Associate Professor, South Africa)

Finally, we noted comments about whether or not the content fit with the aims and scope of the journal, the need for mentoring or peer support, financial issues, and some details about the submission and review process. We were heartened to see so many comments pointing us in the direction of actions the Committee has already begun to take.

## **Increasing the diversity and inclusion of the editorial board, reviewers, and authors**

The Committee has initiated a strategic approach to promote diverse and inclusive representation of authors, reviewers and editorial board members. The Committee's first action was to reach out to elected members and representatives of the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction (ICMI) from regions currently under-represented in the JMTE system and ask them to recommend potential contributors from their regions. As a second measure, the Committee conducted a search and review of proceedings from relevant international conferences. These actions have enabled the Committee to identify under-represented scholars who may be considered for future appointments to the Editorial Board and invited to serve as reviewers for JMTE. In addition, this approach helps to identify and encourage scholars from under-represented regions or research areas to submit papers to JMTE, thereby increasing the diversity of published research. Through these concerted efforts, the Committee aims to elevate JMTE as an international journal in mathematics education that not only embodies, but actively champions diverse perspectives, realities,

and research cultures, while amplifying the voices of marginalised individuals, groups and communities within our field.

**Invitation to contribute:** We invite scholars from under-represented communities or regions to contribute to JMTE as authors. We encourage experienced scholars from under-represented communities or regions to express their interest in serving as reviewers for JMTE. Your unique perspectives will greatly enrich our collective insight and understanding of the lived experiences of scholars from regions and communities traditionally excluded from our field. If you are interested in serving as a reviewer, please email the Editor-in-Chief of JMTE with the subject line ‘Reviewing for JMTE’.

### **Supporting under-represented authors in the publication process through regional advisor mentoring**

In an effort to reduce systemic barriers and intentionally cultivate accessible pathways to publication, the EDI committee has initiated a mentoring scheme to support emerging scholars from under-represented regions or communities who aim to publish their research in JMTE. In pursuit of this goal, the committee has actively sought experienced scholars from under-represented regions who are willing to act as regional advisors to less experienced scholars from their regions.

The mentorship scheme aims to reduce barriers to publication by providing one-to-one advice to authors from under-represented communities and regions. This expert advice can be sought at any stage—before, during and after manuscript submission—with the primary aim of improving the quality of authors’ work and supporting their success in the publication process.

**Invitation to contribute:** We invite experienced scholars from diverse communities and under-represented regions to make a meaningful difference by volunteering to serve as regional advisors for JMTE. We cordially invite those interested to express their intention by emailing either Thorsten Scheiner ([thorsten.scheiner@acu.edu.au](mailto:thorsten.scheiner@acu.edu.au)) or Janet Walkoe ([jwalkoe@umd.edu](mailto:jwalkoe@umd.edu)) with the subject line ‘Mentorship for JMTE’. Your contribution as a regional advisor will support the perspectives and voices of emerging researchers from under-represented regions.

### **Special issue on under-represented research**

We are pleased to announce the upcoming Special Issue ‘Decentring research on mathematics teacher education, or deliberately situating the margins at the centre’, dedicated to showcasing under-represented research. JMTE announced this Special Issue in 2022 as an initiative aimed at amplifying marginalised voices and groups of people who are differently engaged in mathematics teaching and teacher education research, thereby promoting their important contributions to the field. By providing a platform for their work, we hope to inspire meaningful dialogue and encourage greater representation in academic discourse. All papers in this publication will be open access to ensure wider dissemination and accessibility.

The call for abstracts attracted twenty-eight proposals from forty-nine authors from different countries and regions, in both the Global North and the Global South. At the time of writing, eight of the ten invited papers are close to publication after two or three rounds of

review, with a diverse range of authors from Africa, Asia–Pacific, Europe, North America, and South America. A range of groups that have been historically marginalised and disadvantaged in mathematics teacher education and teaching practice and research is well represented in the papers submitted, and this representation will hopefully be maintained in the set of papers that will ultimately be published. This forthcoming special issue will demonstrate that there is a rich diversity of high-quality studies and findings from mathematics teacher education research that consider, learn from, and develop with marginalised voices and groups. These studies and findings can inform and influence the current and future directions of our field.

## Concluding remarks

We hope that the Committee’s initiatives will contribute to the collective effort to embrace more fully equity, diversity and inclusion in our field. In addition to our current initiatives, we foresee additional challenges that will require sustained action. One key challenge is to ensure that researchers from non-English speaking backgrounds are adequately represented, regardless of their geographical location. It is essential to ensure that every member of our diverse communities is represented, respected and valued. While the initiatives highlighted here may provide some inspiration for other journals in the field, they can only represent the beginning of our collective journey. We sincerely seek dialogue and insight from the wider community and encourage everyone to share their unique experiences, perspectives and expertise—to foster an ever-evolving approach to equity, diversity and inclusion in scholarly publishing. So far, this journey has been supported by the 416 respondents to our survey, by the groups of authors who have submitted their proposals for the forthcoming Special Issue, by all those who have mentored authors from under-represented regions or communities and those who have expressed an interest in doing so, and by the Associate Editors, the Editorial Board of JMTE, and Springer for their support of the Committee’s initiatives.

Communication, cooperation and collaboration are the cornerstones for ushering in a more equitable, diverse and inclusive field. We cordially invite you to join and contribute to the upcoming discussion group, ‘Promoting Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Publishing Mathematics Education Research’ (Brodie et al., 2024), at the 15th International Congress on Mathematical Education in Sydney, Australia, 7–14 July 2024. Let us come together and shape the present and future of publishing practices in mathematics education.

**Funding** Open Access funding enabled and organized by CAUL and its Member Institutions.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

## Authors and Affiliations

Thorsten Scheiner<sup>1,2</sup>  · Karin Brodie<sup>3</sup>  · Núria Planas<sup>4</sup>  · Lisa Darragh<sup>5</sup>  · Anjum Halai<sup>6</sup>  · Despina Potari<sup>7</sup>  · Manuel Santos-Trigo<sup>8</sup>  · Janet Walkoe<sup>9</sup> 

✉ Thorsten Scheiner  
thorsten.scheiner@acu.edu.au

Karin Brodie  
karin.brodie@wits.ac.za

Núria Planas  
Nuria.Planas@uab.cat

Lisa Darragh  
l.darragh@auckland.ac.nz

Anjum Halai  
anjum.halai@aku.edu

Despina Potari  
potari@math.uoa.gr

Manuel Santos-Trigo  
msantos@cinvestav.mx

Janet Walkoe  
jwalkoe@umd.edu

- <sup>1</sup> Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, Australia
- <sup>2</sup> Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
- <sup>3</sup> University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- <sup>4</sup> Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Cerdanyola del Vallès, Catalonia, Spain
- <sup>5</sup> The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
- <sup>6</sup> The Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan
- <sup>7</sup> National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece
- <sup>8</sup> Centre for Research and Advanced Studies, Mexico City, Mexico
- <sup>9</sup> University of Maryland, College Park, USA