

## IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF RELIEVE

*[Mejora de la calidad, la gestión y la difusión de RELIEVE]*

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### Abstract

This article deals with the principal processes and projects that RELIEVE developed to improve the publishing quality of the journal in its new stage following the restructuring of the management team. Among the most notable challenges are the automation of the journal management, the increase of international distribution with the bilingual edition of the articles, and peer editing through *Section Editors* experts in diverse areas of journal content.

### Keywords

Publication; Academic journals; Internationality; Academic publication; Edition; Scientific communication; Impact; Quality; Citations; Audience.

### Resumen

Se plantean los principales procesos y proyectos de RELIEVE planteados para la mejora de la calidad editorial de la revista en la nueva etapa, tras la reestructuración del equipo gestor. Entre los retos más relevantes destacan la automatización de la gestión de la revista, la ampliación de su difusión internacional con la edición bilingüe de los artículos y la edición colegiada mediante *Editores de Sección* expertos en los diversos ámbitos de contenido de la revista.

### Descriptores

Publicación; Revistas académicas; Internacionalidad; Publicación académica; Edición; Comunicación científica; Impacto; Calidad; Citas; Audiencia.

## Introduction

In the last General Assembly of the Inter-university Association of Pedagogical Research, held in the University of Huelva (Spain) in June of 2009, it was decided to update the direction of RELIEVE. Professor Jesús Suárez-Rodríguez, at his own request, stepped down as editor in chief following eight years of fruitful work at the head of the team that has been able to maintain this publication at the highest levels of quality and influence, as has been displayed in the scien-

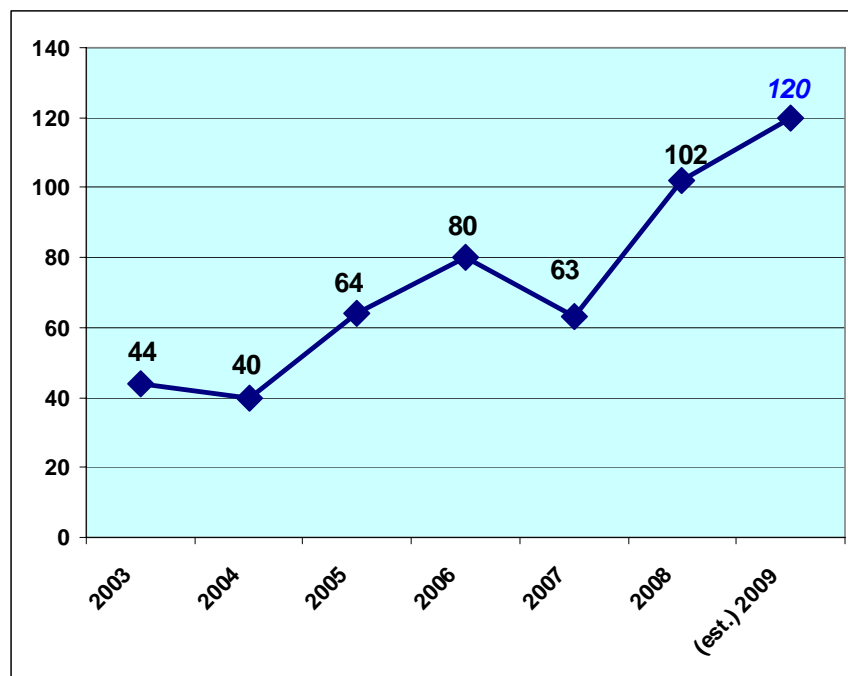
tific studies of the journal's impact (Aliaga & Suárez, 2008). His post as director is now occupied by the former Executive Editor, Francisco Aliaga, which guarantees the necessary continuity with the previous work of the journal. Ana Delia Correa, who has been working as a reviewer and member of the Advisory Council, will take over as executive director<sup>[1]</sup>.

RELIEVE has achieved fifteen years of existence since its pioneering and therefore complicated beginning (Rodríguez Gómez,

2005). In this period of time it has been managed by two different management teams, so this new (partial) change is not a test for the journal's well-established stability. It's better considered as an opportunity to give a new energy to the publication, its processes, distribution, and quality. With this goal, we are outlining various projects, with the fundamental goal of continuing to improve RELIEVE as an instrument of communication at the service of education. The experience gained by the early management teams allows us to focus our attention on the most important challenges. In a similar way, in the Journal of Education Research, which

is also published by AIDIPE, Marín (2009) offers a combination of suggestions for future action based on the accumulated experience of 26 years publishing said journal.

One of our immediate objectives is to speed up the management of the journal. The continued and accelerated growth that RELIEVE is enjoying (and suffering from) necessitates a change in the old original management system in favour of a more effective and efficient system. As we can see in Graph 1, the originals received for editing have doubled in just two years.



Graph 1—Articles submitted to RELIEVE by year.  
The data for 2009 is an estimation made using the data available as of November 1.

For this update we will make the most of the advantages derived from the journal's inclusion in the platform RECyT (Spanish Repository of Science and Technology). This inclusion is possible due to the fact that RELIEVE has been one of the journals that has successfully passed the *First evaluation of the Quality of Spanish Scientific Journals* conducted by FECYT (Spanish Foundation

of Science and Technology), which is responsible for the repository following the open call in October 2007. The open code program Open Journal Systems (OJS)<sup>[2]</sup>, a powerful tool in scientific publishing, is integrated into this repository. RECyT has a newspaper library, which contains a certain number of journals, and a module of Journal Publishing, which allows one to manage dif-

ferent matters including the sending of originals, communication with authors, the process of peer revision, style corrections, layout, etc. We hope that this system, which we are still in the phase of adapting and testing, will allow us to shorten the time necessary to produce articles, with the additional benefits for the authors and for the publication of the journal. In any case, this will only affect the management of the journal at the beginning, as the numbers will continue to be published in the usual Web of RELIEVE. Even though the use of the platform is rather simple and intuitive, we wish to facilitate its use by preparing a short instruction manual that will be accessible from the section of instructions for authors.

Extending our reach to a wider reading public is another one of our aims. Up to this moment, RELIEVE has had an impact over (although not exclusively) in Spanish-speaking countries, as has been shown in the study of the journal's internationality carried out by Aliaga & Suárez (2007). Without ceasing to expand our already considerable presence in Latin America, we would like to also expand our reach to other audiences. One of the objectives we want to reach is the increase of published articles in English. On some occasions, we have published work in this language and a good example of this is the presence of many short articles in this last issue of 2009. Also, we are translating to English those articles that obtain the best diffusion. The intention is to edit in both languages all published articles in RELIEVE. This means a little more effort from our authors, as much Spanish speakers as English speakers, but we understand the potential increase of the impact and diffusion that their work would have and it will greatly compensate them. To amplify the visibility of our journal, facilitating the access to its contents to a larger audience, (more than the concise information that a Title or Abstract contributes) will increase the reading, and therefore, citation of the works that are published in it. The authors that have recently

consulted our publication will have found the recommendation –newly added—of bringing us to the English version of the works that have already been accepted for their publication.

Another plan of action directed in favor of the international expansion of RELIEVE is that of continuing to administer its inclusion in more databases and newspaper libraries, key elements in the diffusion which the previous team would have already obtained great success. They have assumed that RELIEVE is presently indexed in a large number of databases, as can be confirmed in Aliaga & Suárez (2008). In this last year we have continued intensifying this process of inclusion in more databases, as much as a medium of diffusion of our authors work as a sticker of quality to exceed the demanded requirements for admission. In this sense, the last achieved incorporation until now was produced in the first semester of 2009, and it was nothing less than the acceptance of RELIEVE in the prestigious SCOPUS. This database is defined as "*the largest abstract and citation database of research literature and quality web sources*". It includes thirty-eight million references from 18,000 academic journals with a quality filter (revision for stops). Sponsored by the Elsevier group, it intends to become the leading competitor of databases known as ISI-Thompson (Web of Science).

An increase in this type of distribution could lead, paradoxically, to an apparent slowdown in the number of direct queries to the journal, as our articles are available on more and more sites independent from our servers (EBSCO, Redalyc, Novadors, etc.). The actual queries to one of our articles found in these places would not be covered, obviously, in our statistics. The wide diffusion provided by the internet is counterbalanced by dispersion, though in our case we don't consider it as a drawback since it helps to give greater publicity to the journal.

Another factor in the same sense is the distinction attained by RELIEVE upon being designated as '*Source Journal*' in In-RECS, the organization charged with measuring the rate of impact Spanish journals have on Social Sciences. This means that, after a rigorous analysis, it has been considered inside of the "core of scientific Spanish journals of the most influential Social Sciences", as indicated in the procedure for conducting its database<sup>[3]</sup>. All of this in spite of the fact that in our particular area of specialty citation habits are not generous. This affects, no doubt, the projection capabilities of the journals specializing in educational research and evaluation, which already is a much smaller area (number of researchers involved) than others. Within the parameters of scientific excellence, the level of impact of the journals is a basic requirement and the citation is the most accepted indicator assesses the scientific community, which is operationalized with a count of the references to the magazine included at the end of an article. Apart from other quality criteria, the rate of impact is the most relevant factor in establishing a ranking of the importance of the publications. It should be noted that the indices used, especially in limited areas, are extremely sensitive (or volatile, depending on the point of view) very small variations in the number of citations can cause significant changes in ranking. It has been considered that they count, mainly, the hits realized on articles published in the last two or three years (according to different databases<sup>9</sup> on known journals, for example, those that are in ISI or are '*Source Journal*' in In-RECS (they can consult <http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/listado/Educacion-fuente.htm>).

The citation, therefore, is a useful tool within reach of everyone to boost the recognition of the journals of our fields and will contribute to our following of readers established all too well in other very consolidated scientific fields, whose "*publication culture*" manages to position and maintain their journals as the most cited. We make an appeal to

the reflection of the academic community, but also, of course, to the action.

In this sense, we are making a database of information received from published articles in our journal that can benefit enormously from the collaboration of our readers, those which can inform us of the citations in published articles in RELIEVE, or when they see information cited in the articles they consult.

Finally, a third initiative that is already underway has been to start to negotiate in collegiate form the edition of RELIEVE those tasks that, until now, came as the sole responsibility of the Executive Director (or Editor). There are two reasons that this operating system was advised. One is the increasing number of originals that come to us for consideration, such as manifested in Graph 1. The volume of work starts to become difficult for only one Editor to possibly handle. The relentless processes and the irregular rhythm of publication would provoke, apart from a certain point, a negative repercussion in the quality of the publication. The second reason also responds to a better quality effort in a more substantive sense and looks for specialized support that permits a process that is more suitable, and more expert decision making essential for the thematic variety of the articles we receive. For it we are organizing a limited group of Section Editors that will work in tight collaboration with us in the processing of articles that, because of their content, affect their fields of knowledge. The participation of the Section Editors, related as much to their exchange with the director of the journal as with the authors and the revisers, is a predicted element in OJS program routines. In this sense, a RELIEVE directive team has already been put together as *Section Editors* Maria Teresa Aguado (UNED), J. Francisco Lukas (Universidad del País Vasco), Javier Gil (Universidad de Sevilla) and Mari Paz Sandín (Universidad de Barcelona).

In other order of things, from the technical point of view, a purge of the hit counter has been created for some articles. Because of a problem with the programming of some of the meters, they had been shooting off unreasonable codes. Fortunately, we count with a second account independent of the hits, by which we have been able to identify and correct the problem. With this, we receive more reliable data, as much an indicator for the readers (that can find the most successful articles) as for the authors and editors that can realize (and accredit) their circulation.

Other tasks for the near future have to do with the improvement in the use of keywords, as other publications are raising (Sánchez Valle, 2005, 2007) which explored the characteristics of indexation of some journals with the objective of making proposals in order to optimize it. This is a key question since the rate of visibility and impact of the publications relate to the form in which the data bases are fed, along with the data storage, recuperation, and diffusion of the information.

There is a lot left to do, but thanks to all the work of the editorial teams from before, we can see the path that is left to cover until we reach a comfortable position. We trust in the new boost that we are prepared to accept keeps allowing us to reach the best level of quality, diffusion, and impact. For the good of education, that is the common task of all of us.

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## Notes

- [1] From here I would like to thank the Association for the appointment, which is taken with concern for the great responsibility implied by the objective of maintaining the journal at the heights achieved, but with the confidence and security provided by continuing with Cisco's demonstrated experience—in many senses the soul of RELIEVE—with his wise and generous support in the early moments of operation and learning and with the help of everyone that works at RELIEVE: the Advisory Board, the Editorial Board, reviewers, collaborators and trainees. (A.D. Correa).
- [2] Open Journal System is a research and development initiative of the Public Knowledge Project at University of British Columbia. <http://pkp.sfu.ca>.
- [3] See <http://ec3.ugr.es/inrecs/informacion/como1.htm#3>

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