

Scientific journals in Colombia: quality versus quantity?

The significant increase in scientific publications in Colombia during the last few years (reaching 372 indexed journals to date in the national bibliographical index, Publindex) has led to questioning their true quality. This could have been worse, compared to the number of journals from countries having greater trajectory and research capacity. Such unusual increase has been attributed to (amongst other factors) the financial recognition paid for publications in universities, institutional accreditation or the result of the market competition model (Delgado, 2011).

Experts on the topic have warned against the scope of such situation and posed the following questions. What will happen when all the faculties in the country belonging to the same discipline having their own journals? Who will publish in them when greater exogamy is demanded and not enough investigation is going on? Who will read them when there is worldwide growth in publications having high editorial quality and scientific content within a framework of recycling knowledge which will make them become obsolete in less than 10 years? (Delgado, 2011). A recent international forum for scientific journals has approached this controversy, highlighting Colombian journals' most outstanding cross-sectional features: little international visibility, publication preferably in Spanish, being located on web-sites which are not bilingual, failure to comply with stated periodicity, poor peer-review quality, an excess of journals in the same scientific field and a sensation of responding more to the publishing institution than to the community which they are supposed to be addressing (Bustos-González, 2011).

What can thus be done for indexed journals to remain within the system? Without pretending to be an expert on the topic, I would suggest some strategies which could maintain the ground already covered. Firstly, each institution should consider maintaining a minimum of journals, seeking to keep those having the best quality, those which would be submitted to maximum requirements at the beginning. Editorial tasks must be improved, highlighting the editor's role, as such recognition continues being marginal at institutional level.

Aspects regarding evaluation must be strengthened and improved, seeking to promote a culture aimed at complying with the limits fixed by editors, ensuring constant interaction with evaluators (peer reviewers), at the same time striving to avoid endogamy. Academic administrative processes must be made more flexible to enable periodicity to be complied with as the obstacles which editors must overcome to have the financial resources available for ensuring that the "next issue" comes out on time have been immense to date. It is also indispensable that journals' web-sites be published in at least two languages; as well as Spanish, English would be ideal, since it is recognised as the official language in more than 75 countries (Agudelo, 2010) thereby helping to raise international visibility. It would be interesting to explore collaborative efforts between institutions leading to creating journals in the same scientific field.

I also think that editors have a great responsibility in overcoming the aforementioned limitations and maintaining the highest levels of quality regarding our journals, without forgetting that research represents the community's wellbeing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agudelo JH. Publicar en Ingles. Rev Colom CiencPec. 2010: 24, 1.

Bustos-González A. Comunicación Científica y Gestión de la calidad un romance prometedor. Memorias Foro Internacional de Revistas Científicas. La labor del editor y las estrategias de Indexación. Mayo 12 de 2011. Bogotá, Colombia.

Delgado JE. Las revistas científicas en Colombia: logros, oportunidades y riesgos. Asociación de editoriales Universitarias de Colombia-ASEUC. 2011; 18:90-92.

Agustín Góngora Orjuela

MV. MSc. Dr. Sci, Editor Orinoquia.