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Surviving Peer Review: A Difficult but Worthwhile Experience

RIZAGUL SYZDYKBAYEVA

As a master's student, I wanted to experience publishing in a scholarly journal. Research is an integral part of any graduate program, and publication is essential. However, professional, international academic journals are very rigorous and perhaps out of reach for a novice researcher. Luckily, our own NUGSE recently established its own student-led peer-reviewed academic journal, providing the student community a compelling opportunity to experience and understand the process of scholarly publication. Since the journal's slogan is "learning to research; researching to learn," I thought it was a perfect place for graduate students and emerging scholars to develop our knowledge of both the concepts being researched and the process of publication. As one of the authors in the inaugural issue of the journal, I would like to share my impressions and experience on publishing an article for the first time in a peer-reviewed journal. For me this experience was not only *difficult* but *worthwhile*. Hopefully, my successful experience, including the lessons I learned, will be useful for someone who is thinking about submitting their papers for review or already in the middle of this process.

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After getting familiarized with the journal's guidelines for the authors, I edited my course paper to fit the format of the journal and then submitted it for review. I was excited as I waited for what came next. One month later, I received my reviewed paper with the decision to revise. I was shocked and overwhelmed by the amount of comments and corrections about the paper. For a few moments, I sat stock-still. However, it was not a despair, but rather a challenge. The thought that it was my first peer-reviewed paper for the academic journal ameliorated the situation. Only then did I realize the *very rigorous* nature of the peer-review process. All comments, suggestions and corrections were absolutely accurate and appropriate. At that stage, I was doubtful whether I could manage to revise the paper in time. However, I was encouraged by the comment that the paper was significant to the field of education. In addition, I was convinced that it would help me *boost* my writing skills. In fact, the comments were not only about the content but about organization, structure, style, flow, and language of the paper. This personalized feedback was the most *rewarding* and *beneficial* part for me. It highlighted the areas where improvements were needed; moreover, it suggested their ways to improve it. All I needed to do was to address them.

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What is more, when I am working on a new paper, I sometimes revisit those comments to make sure I am not making similar mistakes. In addition, I got firsthand knowledge on how to review somebody else's work. It is important to know because at some stage you will be asked to be a reviewer too. Although revising my paper was quite a tedious process, we need to remember that for the reviewer it was a tedious work too. So, with these thoughts and beliefs in mind I succeeded to the final stage—*publication*.

The common factors that hinder writers from resubmitting their articles and thus from getting it published include lack of time, discouraging feedback, and reluctance to review the paper if it requires a lot of work. To overcome these hindrances, I want to leave you with some *tips* to survive peer-review:

- be positive about the process. Positive attitude will help you see more advantages of this process. Indeed, it is advantageous;
- do not take reviewer's remarks personally; take them to the paper;
- start revising from the minor parts, leaving major revisions at the end because they can seem insuperable and block you;
- engage in dialogue with the reviewers to improve your paper;
- allocate time slots to revise your paper every day;
- keep in mind that rejection and resubmission is a normal practice. In fact, very few authors manage to get their papers accepted the first time.

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Publication is beneficial, worthwhile, and real. Just imagine how pleased with yourself you will be afterwards.