

A Word to the Wise:

Tips for Publishing in International Journals

Dudzile Zwane

“How the mighty are fallen”. That phrase came to mind after I received an e-mail that rejected yet another of my research articles.

As a new PhD graduate, I had underestimated the process of publishing, particularly in an international journal. The intoxicating feeling of obtaining a doctorate had duped me into believing that it would be child’s play. If one’s 80 000 word thesis could impress a panel of professors with superior expertise, surely one’s 6000 word article could do the same? How narcissistic and naïve I was. After 15 months of harrowing rejections, many shed tears and sessions with my exhausted therapist, I finally published in a high impact, international journal. Below I recount my experience. Hopefully, the younger academics can derive valuable lessons from my tale of woe and bypass my pitfalls.

As aforesaid, I grossly overestimated myself. As a lover of language and words, I was convinced that a few ornate anecdotes about my research findings could enthrall any journal editor. Therefore, I was aghast at the lengthy

critique that my first article garnered. I had selected an international journal that was favoured by a professor whose work I admired. Based on the quality of their feedback, all three reviewers had read my article painstakingly. Therefore, I knew that there was no foul play. Consequently, I decided to incorporate their suggestions into a new article.

Surprisingly, it got rejected again. The feedback was constructive, yet I remained bewildered by the rebuff. My third, fourth, fifth and sixth article submission attempts were also rejected. I then decided to attend a publishing workshop that was facilitated by a distinguished professor. Two days later, I applied his power-point presentation to the abandoned drafts of various articles. Lo and behold, this seventh submission was accepted with minor revisions. Three months later, it was finally published. This mortifying affair taught me the following:

Firstly, one needs to familiarise oneself with the core objectives of their intended journal. Figure out what they are trying to convey through the articles that they publish. In this way, you can ensure that your writing voice is congruent with their target audience. Some journals permit



moderate artistic flair from authors. Others, are partial to a crisp and concise tone. Therefore, conform to their house-style. Also, try to adhere to the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) guidelines.

Secondly, never be disheartened by the reviewers’ evaluation of your article. Bear in mind that the review process is anonymous. Therefore, their criticism is not a personal attack on you, nor is it a metric that measures your intellectual ability. They are merely appraising a single submission, which can usually be improved by integrating their observations. On the rare occasion when the commentary feels harsh, ignore it, remembering every field has its eccentrics.

Lastly, ask for help. Most scholars self-isolate and flounder by themselves. However, wise counsel from experienced colleagues can cushion the blow of the most scathing article review.

The Chairman’s Corner

Facing challenges and forging ahead

By Professor Sihawukele Ngubane, ANFASA Chairman

Dear ANFASA authors and friends, A warm welcome to all of you in the new year. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a human, health, and economic crisis that has deeply affected our lives and for many people around the globe, including our association. My heartfelt condolences go out to all those who have lost loved ones during this difficult time and a special condolence to the family of our very own Rev Sonti who also passed away due to COVID19.

The new year is proving to be worse than the previous, but it is exciting to let you know that ANFASA is on the move, as you can see that our magazine is launching its first issue for 2021. Despite the circumstances and challenges affecting the world we are ready to see our authors becoming more productive than before. As we are learning more about this virus and covid one fact remains that people are dying. During this difficult time, it is important to continue looking after our physical and mental health. By observing lockdown protocols, we will survive and by keeping a safe distance we will find space to read and write more books.

The ANFASA magazine is a platform for academic and non-fiction authors to express their views and share their creative pursuit based on their originality of thought and perceptions. We

welcome any content that contribute to the upliftment of society, country and the continent. We are happy to announce that 15 authors were selected for the award of ANFASA’s grant scheme 2020 and I wish to congratulate them and wish them successful writing. This annual award is made possible through the help of Royal Norwegian Embassy as well as SAMRO Foundation who supports two music projects each year, we are grateful to their continued partnership. We encourage more potential authors to apply again this year once the call is out who knows you might be lucky to become one of the recipients in 2021.

This year we look forward to achieving our key priorities including AGMs that did not take place last year and this year we will host both on the date to be announced shortly. We will also be hosting the Power of Authors International Symposium in the later part of the first term. We continue to empower authors through scheduled workshops and also strive to protect their rights where and when we can. On behalf of the leadership in ANFASA I wish to thank you for keeping your membership up to date all the time. Thank you to colleagues in the office for keeping our organization alive and strong. I extend my warm wishes to all authors to continue this journey on the road of excellence.

“If you don’t like someone’s story, write your own” (Chinua Achebe)