

Editorial

Call to action: shape the future of JVRP

Dr. Karen Castle

University of Staffordshire

Kieron Chadwick

University of Staffordshire

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Abstract

As we bring our editorial issue towards a gentle close, this article invites readers to actively shape the journal through meaningful engagement beyond authorship. We emphasise the value of becoming a peer reviewer and highlight how dialogue and diverse perspectives enhance academic and practice-based contributions alike. The piece outlines accessible submission pathways including research articles, accounts of practice / reflections, poster presentations, and hackathon-inspired special issues designed to encourage participation from a broad community of work-based learners and practitioners. Particularly through the latter, JVRP aims to serve as a dynamic, collaborative platform that supports professional growth and sector-wide innovation. With storytelling, emotional reflection, and narrative clarity at its core, this article offers practical guidance for prospective contributors. It sets the stage for the two example submissions that follow - one written and one visual - intended to inspire readers to find their voice and contribute to this evolving, inclusive community.

Keywords

Vocational research, practice-based inquiry, educational policy, workforce development, interdisciplinary collaboration.

Join the JVRP community

A common assumption is that if you are not ready to contribute to a journal via authorship, then it is not for you. This is far from the truth. Academic journals have, for some time, made a conscious effort to engage with and involve its readership beyond just authorship - an example of this being involvement as a peer reviewer analysing the submitted works of others (Staniszewska et al., 2018). Our aim, and what JVRP is all about, is as Trueger (2018) describes: to create an online "club" and facilitate discussions. We may be keeping things simple right now, but in the future we see no reason why we cannot engage in some of the innovative practices deployed by some

journals to facilitate interaction with content, whether that be encouraging debate via social media or video abstracts (Franzak et al., 2021).

We cannot stress enough the importance and impact you could have by engaging in peer review for JVRP. Ultimately, the quality and success of this journal hinges on you, your effort, and supportive scrutiny of works (Nelson, 2011). When we talk about facilitating interaction, this is what peer review is all about: as Patriotta (2017) describes - engaging in scholarly conversation about content to significantly influence manuscript development. Being a peer reviewer is not about being "academic" either. This is a role requiring a diverse mix of academics and practitioners (Schlogl and Stock, 2008). Our subsequent editorial process is designed to address spelling, grammar, and formatting errors and ensure the submission is nicely digestible for the readership; your role as peer reviewer is to scrutinise the underlying message - the core content.

The benefits of engaging with this journal are frankly endless. Some universities have student-led peer reviewed journals, and in some ways, ours can be compared to that; but with one fundamental difference, it is geared towards a wider audience of work-based learners. These types of journals have historically been linked with improvements in student engagement with academia and their subsequent study and writing skills (Uigin et al., 2015), and this is certainly a benefit we aim to achieve and expect to occur. There is also something to be said about what Perkmann et al. (2020) describe as informal collaborative research ties. In other words, as a member of our readership, at some point you are going to come across others writing about projects very similar to your area of interest. This often prompts engagement such as reaching out via social media and connecting, resulting in potential collaborative research outputs down the line - the potential for cross-organisational work, the sort which can be both cutting-edge in nature but also impactful on the careers of the participants (Do, 2003). To become a peer reviewer, please create an account with us. In doing so, you will see a tick-box asking you whether you wish to engage in peer review (we urge you to say yes!).

Submission routes

As mentioned in the first article in this editorial issue, we are keen to enable 'voice.' What we essentially mean by this is *employee* voice - upward communication of work-related ideas, concerns, and suggestions which can improve the function of not only the organisation, but the collective industry too (Botero, 2013). Wilkinson et al. (2024) talks about the mechanisms which contribute to employee voice - and this is what we want the journal to be. We acknowledge that a traditional, academic journal article style text, while a great example of 'voice,' is not a productive format for everyone, and while we do accept these, we have carefully considered our submission routes to ensure we capture the knowledge, insights and experiences of a diverse audience of work-based learners. We firmly agree with Hatipoglu and Inelmen (2018) that trust is central to voice being shared and we hope the diverse formats we accept help establish this. Your possible submission pathways, therefore, are:

Research article

Submitted research articles should be of typical journal quality, carrying academic rigour. This should be a fully formed and complete research project, which could be theoretical, e.g., systematic literature review, or practical, e.g., a work-based project report. The word count is between 5,000 and 10,000 words, which may seem broad, however, we are keen to make submitting to JVRP as seamless as possible and we note varied training providers request different word counts for project write-ups, hence we do not want you to spend extensive time re-writing to fit a different word count; although we do recommend embracing your training provider feedback and making those changes prior to submission.

Account of practice / reflection

This is designed to be a short-form alternative to a full research article; hence the word count range is between 1,000 and 2,500 words. These may not carry the same level of academic formality and also may not be complete projects, for example, you may be sharing interim findings or reflecting on the process as opposed to focusing on the results.

Poster presentation

Widely used in academia, poster presentations are a great visual medium for the transfer of knowledge, as noted by Rowe and Illic (2011). Not only are they concise, but they are visually appealing (McEvoy and Tume, 2022). A template is provided for the poster, however, do not feel confined by its layout and section headers - feel free to amend as necessary to suit your message. Accompanying the poster is a 10-minute audio narration in mp3 format. We felt adding this gave a unique opportunity for work-based learners to deploy or refine their 'author presence,' described by Tarigan (2021) as a bundle of language, fluency, vocabulary and eye contact.

Hackathon special issues

We think hackathons are fantastic and something which we wanted to somehow capture the essence of via this journal. If you are not familiar with the concept, hackathons are typically intense, collaborative events involving teamwork to try to create innovative solutions (Briscoe, 2014). They usually take place in the digital and software space but are starting to drift into other settings, including academia (Awuni et al., 2016; Komssi et al., 2015) - and this got us thinking. In academic journals, special issues have become increasingly prevalent; and for good reason - they seem to attract more submissions and have higher impact and reach (Repiso et al., 2021). Special issues involve what Smith and Jackson (2024) define as coverage of a specific topic. In some ways, we feel they are fundamentally set up to achieve the same goal as a hackathon, and so, our concept of the 'hackathon special issue' is born!

Subsequently, we plan to run multiple hackathon special issues each year. This will involve the release of calls for papers around specific topics that you, as a work-based learner, are well-placed to improve. After exploring the concept in your own setting and perhaps trying something new, you produce a short paper (1,000 - 2,500 words) outlining and reflecting on this experience, thus contributing a novel innovation to the topic. The potential to advance your profession is vast - you could be critically

considering how real solutions can address real problems. The topics may be selected by members of our editorial board, but they may also come from you - our readership. We invite fellow academics, industry practitioners, work-based learners, and policymakers to propose ideas for our hackathon special issues. If we opt to run with your idea, we will also invite you to be a guest editor for that issue, giving you a unique opportunity to screen submissions, provide feedback, and generally get involved with the journal's production for a brief period.

Open for submissions

Without further ado, we declare JVRP open for submissions! We would like to share some final tips with you before you engage with the final two items in this editorial issue: two fantastic examples of work-based projects, one in written, and one in poster format, to give you a feel for the types of work we are hoping to see and how to structure them.

Our main tip is do not underestimate the importance of *storytelling*. You are not submitting an assignment to be marked which must hit certain criteria. Instead, you are submitting an original, informative piece intended to be helpful to likeminded folk in your industry and beyond. The readers are unlikely to know the specifics of your organisation, so ensure you keep things simple, and define the problem in common language clearly. What follows is what we call a narrative arc, building nicely up to a climax and keeping the audience engaged. Furthermore, although you are showcasing an example of good, innovative practice, highlight the challenges along the way and reflect on emotions too - this is a key part of creative implementation. We look forward to your submissions and please await the release of our first hackathon special issue topic and brief, which we would love to hear from you in response to.

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