

Welcoming Articles about Practice to ALM-IJ

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Context

As ALM conferences have been held in various countries, local practitioners have attended, with many making presentations on various themes such as: their instructional practices, activities they have created or adopted from scholarly reading, and implications of national policies for practice in adult education. At this juncture, ALM would encourage practitioners to share their experience through a published article.

Since 2005, the Adults Learning Mathematics – An International Journal (ALM-IJ) has been publishing research articles about adults learning mathematics at all levels. The articles represent a variety of theoretical frameworks, mathematical content topics, data sources, learning environments, learners' profiles, and related discussions of policy or practice issues.

The Editorial Team of the Journal, with the agreement of the Trustees of the Journal's parent organization, Adults Learning Mathematics, has decided to provide further opportunities to include Articles about Practice in the Journal. This move is in tune with the history and philosophy of our organization – and we hope it will benefit the adult numeracy field as a whole.

From the formation of ALM as a research forum in 1993, practitioners have been attending and participating in the annual conferences, as can be evidenced in the Conference Proceedings available on the website <https://alm-online.net/alm-conference-proceedings/>. In fact, one of the three or four days is typically focused on practitioners' contributions. Practitioners work in a variety of environments, including school and community-based educational programs, workplaces, prisons, family literacy programs, family numeracy activities and civic settings. Even though their travel budgets are often limited and rarely subsidized by their institutions, practitioners have made presentations that are significant contributions to the field.

The mutual respect between ALM researchers and practitioners

Such an inclusive environment is quite unusual for many research conferences. There may be a few reasons why ALM has historically been so welcoming to practitioners at conferences, as Trustees, and even as ALM office holders, when other research associations appear to be less so.

First, many ALM researchers have themselves taught adults in non-tertiary mathematics classes, or in catch-up support courses in tertiary institutions. Sometimes, the ALM researchers came to their graduate work following their own adult education teaching, others teach adults as part of their research mission, while yet others begin their adult education teaching following research careers. In all these cases, the researchers have come to know and respect practitioner colleagues as skilled, knowledgeable and possessing expertise.

Second, the learners of interest in adult mathematics education are often of similar ages to their teachers and the researchers. And, as adults, the learners bring knowledge from their own lives, work, family and civic experience that is valued and explored in classrooms and in research studies. This represents a different dynamic between researchers, teachers and learners than the situation between

researchers and educators who are the adults and those they study or teach who are younger – the elementary, secondary, and even typical university students.

The relationships between researchers and practitioners are further enriched as they work closely together, collaborating in research studies. Practitioners invite researchers into their mathematics education classes in the variety of environments in which they work.

For all these reasons, those with an interest in how, when, and where adults learn mathematics will benefit from opportunities to hear directly from practitioners through ALM-IJ articles.

What counts as an Article about Practice?

Practitioner articles are meant to share the perspectives and provide accounts of the experiences of adult mathematics educators with the larger Adults Learning Mathematics community. Such articles are grounded in the experience and day-to-day realities of practice and would be of interest to other practitioners, researchers and professional developers. Particularly important is to include a description of the context, that will be comprehensible to the Journal's international audience.

Practice articles could be based on descriptions of and reflections on classroom experiences; particular mathematical content, instructional strategies and/or materials; a professional development experience and its impact on classroom instruction, or adult learner assessment issues.

Four descriptions of appropriate journal *Articles about Practice* are described here, but these are meant to inform, not limit, ideas for articles.

1. An *Article about Practice* might describe a practitioner's own experiment or action research concerning a change in practice, with the rationale for making the change, and then the practitioner's observations of results from the change, supplemented where possible by evidence of changes in response, or changes in engagement, from learners.

2. An educator might be asked to develop a curriculum or resources for a particular group of adult learners, perhaps in a workplace setting. An article might describe the challenge, the development of the materials, the implementation process with the adult learners, and the assessment of the resulting learning.

3. A practitioner might pose a problem of practice (e.g., why do my learners struggle with ...?) with a description and evaluation of attempted strategies to ameliorate the problem.

4. A practitioner might comment on how a particular ALMIJ research article or other resource had an impact on the thinking and practice of the practitioner, perhaps supplemented by a description of a subsequent in-class "experiment" that confirms or challenges the research findings.

What is the format of an Article about Practice?

Research journal articles typically have a structured format that includes a statement of the problem, research questions, a review of relevant research, a methodology section, findings, discussion and implications.

Articles about Practice would not likely follow this traditional research format, but would likely include the following components as appropriate:

- Rationale for why the particular topic, method or strategy is important and/or relevant to adult mathematics/numeracy educators and researchers
- Description of the adult learners and the teaching and institutional context
- Description of the implementation

- Description of what happened, including anything that was unexpected, and any changes that might be implemented in the future
- Discussion of the implications of the work for teaching, learning and research more broadly, possibly including references to any related work that has emerged during the process.

Appropriate data might include examples of student work, student interviews, other formal or informal assessment data. Student names or other personal identifiers should be removed, and attention paid to the possibility that even some “anonymized” participants might be otherwise identifiable. In addition, practitioners should ask students to sign agreements to give permission to have their work reproduced for publication. Some adult education programs may already have such permission agreements with students.

What is the submission process for *Articles about Practice*?

Practitioners’ articles should be submitted electronically to the ALM-IJ Editorial Team by emailing editor-ij@alm-online.net with the article as a Word document attached. A second version of the article with the author(s) name and any other identifying information removed should also be attached. This anonymized version will be used to send to reviewers to uphold the anonymity of the author(s) during the review process. If there are pieces of scanned student work or other figures, they, too should be attached if they cannot be easily embedded within the documents.

The goal of publishing *Articles about Practice* is to share interesting, well-contexted and high quality information to improve teaching and student learning in adult mathematics. Thus, each submitted *Article about Practice* will undergo a double-blind peer review process. The review process and resulting feedback to the author(s) aims to provide valuable comments and critique that should be used to improve the quality and impact of the article. This is a similar process to that applied to each research article submitted to, and ultimately accepted by, the ALM-IJ.