

Expert Interview with Anna Robinson-Pant, Yusuf Sayed and Paul Morris, Editors of [Compare](#)

Recorded on 7 June 2010 at the Institute of Education, University of London

Journal Specific Questions

1. For researchers or students who have never encountered [Compare](#), what is the journal about in a nutshell, what are its aims and scope? (Anna Robinson-Pant)

Well I'd say it was about education and change generally, and ways of analysing these from a comparative perspective and we cover all regions of the world. We're defining education much more broadly than just schooling, so including informal learning in organisations, in everyday life and adult education. It's unusual in bringing together perspectives from practitioners, researchers, policy makers, educators, and that would include teachers, lecturers, NGO workers, so quite a wide range of people are writing and reading our journal. And I'd say we're generating theoretical understanding through practice, and in some ways challenging the assumption that some people have assumed that practice-orientated is automatically inferior to theoretically-orientated articles or writing. And we're based on the idea really that everybody holds theories that inform their practice and part of our journal is around interrogating practice from different perspectives.

[Compare](#) has been seen as having a unique position at the intersection of comparative education and development studies, and taking that perspective we do aim to bridge theory and practice, providing an outlet for research into international education and development that's evidence based and connected through comparative analysis into international policy debates.

2. Which areas does it primarily focus on? (Anna Robinson-Pant)

In terms of sector wise, we are looking at higher education, primary, secondary, learning in other formal and informal institutions such as aid organisations, non formal education, adult literacy is covered too. In terms of geographical coverage, as I mentioned, it is global, covering developed and developing countries, using that terminology, with a stronger European dimension than is found in other similar journals. And we have a commitment to encourage articles on societies that are under researched and relatively unrepresented in such journals. However, having said that, [articles] that are focussed on one country, we do stress the need to relate the national context or even the local context to wider debates of international interest.

3. What is the range of issues the journal aims to explore? (Anna Robinson-Pant)

Well many of the articles that we have are examining the impact or the influence of educational policy on practice, and I suppose have the idea of speaking back to policy makers often from a kind of grass roots level. Also looking at the impact of international policy, or national policy. An example of that was a very popular Special Issue in 2008 edited by Madeline Arnot and Shailaja Fennell and that was on [Gendered Education and National Development](#). Again, that was looking very much at the impact of international policy within that area on national policy and practice. Another area which I could identify really is in terms of what I would call alternative theoretical and methodological explorations. Again there are articles within that Special Issue around Southern feminist challenges to Northern feminist theory and that's an area which has been quite interesting within *Compare*. Another Special Issue that we had was around [narrative methodological approaches and the contribution to comparative and international education](#), edited by Sheila Trahar, that was in 2008 as well and that was unusual in bringing articles which perhaps we hadn't normally had within *Compare*, using a narrative research approach into and looking at what their contribution was in terms of comparative education field.

I'd say a lot of articles which we publish are looking at policy or certain areas of educational practice through post-colonial lens really. An example of that is one around [Language Policy](#) by a writer who is talking about Zimbabwe, Kedmon Hungwe, or looking at how to develop a particular analysis on a particular area such as language policy. [Hornberger and Vaish](#) did a very interesting comparison of India, South Africa and Singapore, looking at how English language policy and indigenous language policy kind of intermeshed in those contexts, which again was very successful.

I think inevitably because we are at the cutting edge of comparative education and international development, we're quite strongly influenced by development trends and the current debates, and it's noticeable that decentralisation and issues around governance have come up quite strongly in a lot of our issues. Again there was a Special Issue looking specifically at [Non-state Provision of Education and Public/Private Partnerships](#). A lot of those issues were talked about in individual articles within our open issues and that led to a Special Issue focussing on that which is guest edited by Pauline Rose.

And in looking at how things have changed over the five years that I've been Editor, I'd say there is increasing number of articles which are reflecting on cross-cultural issues, which are of particular interest for educational researchers. And we are getting articles around international student's experiences in UK higher education for instance, the methodological issues around researching in

different cultural contexts, insider/outsider sort of perspectives as non-native researchers, whichever country they are in reflect on their experiences, and with the DIFID RPC, the research centres, we are getting more articles looking at cross cultural collaboration of research institutions and the issues around power and voice that these bring about. So I think that sort of covers the range of issues that have come up recently anyway.

4. Are there any recent topics, papers and/or issues which you feel have been particularly successful? (Yusuf Sayed)

I want to start by addressing this question by first looking at what I think are the characteristics of topics, issues or papers that make them successful, and I think there are four things. I think first is issues or topics that are successful address the obstacles to education progress at all levels of the education system, for children, youth and adults, thus they are about shining the spotlight on the gaps in education provision and how they can be overcome in specific contexts, and as such I think the key characteristic here is they are successful to the extent that they talk to the issues of social justice and equity in an increasingly polarised world.

I think secondly they are successful because the intention of the journal is to bridge the gap between knowledge on the one hand and practice on the other or theory in practice, and bridge the gap between what policy intends and what the outcomes of policy are, so the gap between policy intention and policy outcomes. And I think those papers are particularly successful, those issues are particularly successful.

And I think lastly, successful topics are those which I think hold in tension or mediate the dialectic between global policy imperatives and local regionally and contextually specific policy responses. In this sense I think there are three examples that I think match those four criteria, or come close to them. One is we've had successful papers and focus on globalisation, analysis of globalisation, why it comes about, what its impact are. I think a successful topic has been one that tried to address the issue of the core global governance agenda and what the local specific responses are, in particular how education decentralisation and privatisation, which is almost a broadly global agenda right now in education reform, how that gets shaped, reinterpreted, mediated and reflected in different contexts. The third one I think which is the gap that has been addressed is issues around adult literacy or literacies, so that is the educational provision of those who are not in schools or formal schooling as we know it. So I think those are the kinds of successful or hot topic issues that the journal welcomes and seeks to encourage.

5. What do you look for when considering articles and submissions and what are the most common mistakes? (Paul Morris)

I think we have to start from the premise that the journal is a social science journal and therefore a lot of the things that we are looking for really derive from the nature of social science. Critical points that you'd look for is the development of a coherent argument and in the context of a social science journal that would mean that the writer is trying to develop an argument, is marshalling evidence to support that argument and is locating the argument in a body of literature and explaining how his argument supports, verifies or possibly rejects what we already know or what has already appeared in the literature. So apart from questions of clear writing etcetera, you are really looking for an article that brings together and develops a clear argument with evidence and links that to the existing literature. It follows from that, that spotting a good article I'd say very often if in the first couple of pages, possibly even the first page, if you don't have a clear idea what it is that the author wants to communicate and if you have to read on and on to find out, you're probably not going to be very impressed with it. If you are impressed with an article, you're usually grabbed fairly quickly in the abstract or in the introduction, where the author says very clearly 'this is what I intend to do, this is how I am going to do it and my argument is...' and then you think 'wow, powerful, right I'm going to read on'. If you're grabbed early on, very often it is an article that you're going to read supportively. If in the first couple of pages you are not really absolutely clear what they're trying to achieve, then it's much more difficult to get the reader's attention back and positive if there's a weak start.

That relates really to the question of the most common mistakes, the corollary is, if the argument is not clear or the evidence might not support the argument or there is no evidence to support the argument, and/or it develops an argument with the evidence but there's no attempt to link it to what we already know, to what other authors have already said about that country or that issue or that policy area. So it's quite possible to have an article with a very strong argument but the evidence doesn't support it, or an article with a strong argument and evidence but there is no attempt to recognise that this has been addressed by other people, that we already know a lot about this and to try and locate it in a literature.

Very often you receive articles that essentially are reports rather than articles. The distinction I'd make between a report and an article is a report is describing a situation, a context, a problem, a setting, and it might be very interesting, but there is no attempt to go beyond the description and to develop an argument or to try and link it to what we already know.

6. What advice would you give researchers who would like to be published in *Compare*? (Paul Morris)

The advice really is to try and upfront, be clear about what it is, what point it is that you're trying to develop, what argument you are trying to sustain. One way to do that is to get feedback on what you're going to submit before you submit it, because one of the things I think we probably all notice reading journals is, 'has the person really shown this to a third party before they come to the point of submitting it to a journal'? And very often people who work in institutions or in contexts where maybe they have networks of colleagues, they have mentors, critical friends or whatever who will read through a piece and give them feedback which they can respond to, that often shows. In other words they've had some sort of informal review from a friend, a colleague, a mentor, a supervisor, whoever it might be, before they submitted it, and that can greatly help identify weaknesses or problems or issues at a very early stage. I think it often shows when a person who spends a great deal of time developing an article and submitting it, but has maybe not had the possibility because they might not be in a setting, an institution, where they're not part of a network. Maybe they don't like to show it to colleagues. You know the culture, the institution they're in, if you show it to somebody, somehow it becomes part of a formal evaluation process or people make judgments on it. But it does show where somebody has got feedback and been willing to consider and respond to that feedback before they go further and submit it as a journal article. If you can find ways to get people whose opinion you respect, who might be more experienced at publishing, to give informal feedback before you submit it, that can be extremely useful, not only point about argument, evidence, clarity, etcetera which I mentioned, but also in terms of people writing in their second language, the clarity of their English, their syntax etcetera which sometimes if the language is such that it interferes with clear communication, it will affect whether an article is accepted or not.

7 . What advice would you give practitioners who are thinking of writing an article? (Paul Morris)

I think the main advice you'd give practitioners is to try to locate what they are writing, to find out what has been said about people who might be addressing or trying to look at the same problems that they are looking at. A practitioner concerned with adult literacy for example or implementing a World Bank project in a specific location, is to try and find out what others have said about the problems faced in implementing that policy or literacy strategy and then try and reflect the extent that their experience conforms with, modifies, doesn't support what has already been said; to try and put it in a much broader framework than merely describing their own experience. Then it becomes more interesting because you are actually saying 'well my experience doesn't really

support what has already been said about teaching adult literacy programmes'. 'My experience suggests that's a really powerful idea there, but in my context, it doesn't work or it needs to be modified' or something like that. So they are going from the general to the specific and back and forward. Practitioners I think have got to reflect on how their own experiences might relate to other people in other contexts, trying to address the same issues or practices that they are dealing with. Just describing my personal practices and my personal reflections on what goes on, failures and successes, that's got to be taken up to a more reflective level.

Can I add, specifically in terms of Special Issues, which one of the features of the journal is, we do encourage authors to put together Special Issues, which is a themed issue of the journal, where a Guest Editor says basically "I want to have a whole issue of the journal devoted to a topic such as gender mainstreaming, globalisation, higher education." Maybe eight, nine, ten authors who will write separate articles on this theme, and there what we are really looking for is apart from the coherence and argument of each article that I was referring to earlier on, we're actually looking for a Special Issue which the Guest Editor is able to demonstrate that there's a logic about these papers, how they relate to each other, there's a coherence, they address a common theme and in so doing it's not just a collection of eight articles. The guest editor is also able to provide an introduction that explains how the articles come together and at the end is going to try and have a final article which explains how they relate to each other, what are the common themes that emerge and so on. So in a Special Issue it is extremely important to try to demonstrate that there is not just a collection of eight separate topics vaguely related to a theme, but there's a very strong element of coherence which is because of both the articles themselves but also the Guest Editor is able to, bring them together and tease out points that might go across, different countries where the authors are addressing a common theme.

8. What do you see as the strengths of Compare as an academic journal compared to other titles in this field of educational research? (Anna Robinson-Pant)

Well as I suggested, we do see ourselves as at the intersection of development studies and comparative education, so we kind of look to two kinds of journals; the ones around comparative education. [Compare](#) I'd say is distinguished from *Comparative Education Review* and [Comparative Education](#) in terms of its intersection with development studies. We are engaging with international development policy issues in terms of connecting educators within the field of development and international education into what might be considered the strengths of adopting a critical and comparative view. Perhaps we are more concerned with the policy practice interface as well than

some of those journals. The most obvious difference also is our geographical focus which is much wider and includes developing countries or the South as well as European and UK focus. If we are comparing ourselves with IJED, the *International Journal of Education & Development*, and perhaps other development journals such as the [Journal of Development Studies](#), I would say it was our European strengths, the comparative emphasis and our engagement with cross-cultural issues which are a particular relevance for educational researchers.

The strength really has been bringing together geographical areas and cultures which may not usually be compared and really developing a critical perspective on outsider/insider relationships, perhaps within an aid context or within educational systems, which are more explicitly developed than I've seen in development studies journals, in other words looking at who is doing development is really important within *Compare*, and whose theories are informing the analysis.

9. What are your aspirations for the future of the journal? (Yusuf Sayed)

I think there are six or seven key aspirations for the journal that I see us having. I think the first one is the journal needs to have a far more diverse readership and I mean a diverse readership in two ways, a diverse readership which includes academics, policy makers, NGO workers, donor agency officials etcetera, but also readership that spans continents, that's not primarily situated in the North, as it's called, but also incorporates strongly the readership of developing countries.

And I think with the changes in readership goes my second aspiration for the journal. I think we need a more diverse pool of writers writing for the journal, in particular we need to have authors who challenge the conventional orthodoxies and hegemony of journal production. In other words we need writers from developing countries who have grounded experiences of the gaps in education provision, and the effects of policies be they global, regional or national.

I think the third aspiration for the journal is that it needs to continue to be a journal that is at the leading and cutting edge of theoretical and methodological debates in the field of comparative and international education. We need to set quite forcefully and firmly what we think are the big issues in the field, whether they are of a conceptual or a methodological nature.

My fourth aspiration for the journal is that if we begin to diversify our readership and authorship and continue to remain at the cutting edge, we are likely have higher visibility and higher impact, not just in conventional international citation indexes, but also amongst policy makers for whom this might make a difference.

I also think that my future aspiration for the journal is that we can begin to identify, solicit and encourage contribution in areas which I suspect we need to strengthen and develop, in particular areas such as higher education because I think we need a lot more writing on higher education, particularly around issues of equity in higher education, and provision, particularly around issues of higher education in developing countries. I think we need to have a lot more writing around secondary education. I think we need to have a lot more writing around issues of migration. The fourth area I think we want to see more strongly reflected is ICT in education.

Fifthly I think we need to have a stronger focus in terms of one of global gaps in education provisions is around peace education and education in conflict affected states. Currently there are 72 million children out of school, while estimates may vary, the majority happen to be in either countries in conflict or emerging from conflict. Clearly we need more grounded analysis of what works in those contexts, what policies mean in those contexts, and we need knowledge about those contexts.

And so for me the future aspiration is one in which we have a stronger diversified readership, an intellectually rigorous and challenging agenda which talks to policy but also begins to shape policy, it's not simply a handmaiden to policy, but actually challenges policy. In that I think we need to strengthen and focus a lot more on shining the spotlight on those regions of the world for which we have a very limited knowledge base, not just in [Compare](#), but I think across most journals of comparative education. We need to shine a spotlight for example on Middle East and North Africa where there have been few writings and few published writings particularly in established journals like [Compare](#) and others. Other areas we need to focus on is for example South West Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, again Afghanistan for example is a country emerging from conflict so again we need a far more regionally diverse one. So I suppose in a sense at the same time is to find a future aspiration, which not only challenges our readership but also challenges our ways of academic knowledge and how we get to know the world of international and comparative education.

Topic Questions

10. 2010 is *Compare's* 40th anniversary. How has the direction of the journal changed since its establishment in 1970? (Anna Robinson-Pant)

The journal was set up originally as a newsletter or a news sheet of the British section of the Comparative Education Society in Europe in the very early days, and the first Editor said it was really

to serve the needs of teachers of comparative education and I think that sort of immediately signals the ways in which the journal has changed as it becomes increasingly professionalised. We are obviously expanded in terms of the issues published, we're now publishing six a year. The number of articles being submitted and the range of articles, mainly because we've got a much wider group of contributors both in terms of diversity of their expertise, professional background, but also geographically, and I think this has inevitably influenced the kind of topics and issues which are addressed in the journal. I suspect now we have far more articles from researchers who are based outside the UK and perhaps outside formal research institutions than originally.

I've recently been interviewing some of our previous editors of *Compare*, Fiona Leach and Rosemary Preston, and it's been really interesting to hear their stories about how the journal became gradually more, well they describe it as more professional, in terms of developing and realising the scope for developing a good relationship with the publishers and how this has really enabled the journal to grow from the very early beginnings where there was really no financial support or professional support for the journal, to the situation now where we have very strong relationships with a huge group of reviewers, writers, publishers. And I think the relationship with BAICE, which is the [British Association for International Comparative Education](#) and we are actually the journal of this Society, that has helped to inform debates within the journal and the journal has also helped to strengthen the organisation of BAICE through increasing membership and the actual royalties from the journal.

In terms of how the journal may have developed, I think probably we have broadened the focus as well in terms of education from largely focus on schooling to look at lifelong learning, we've had two Special Issues which particularly looked at lifelong learning and as I mentioned the internationalisation of higher education has become a growing area of interest within the journal. I think we are very influenced by how the fields of comparative education and development studies are changing and evolving as well, and perhaps there's more explicit attention now to how those two fields are intersecting and evolving and the relevance that that has for the journal, that they're no longer taken as a given but evolving fields. And that may have taken us towards a more explicit look towards how theories develop and the issues that I was mentioning around North/South, exchange of knowledge and generation of knowledge.

11. What educational and/or policy developments do you feel have specifically shaped the journal over recent years? (Paul Morris)

Here I can really only add to what Anna and Yusuf have already mentioned, but the one I'd like to pick out is the extent to which educational policy around the world, is increasingly influenced by international comparisons across educational systems. You see it in this country where ministers can

make a state visit overseas and we suddenly have proposals that we should have new policies based on what's going on in Taiwan or China or wherever it may be. In the 80's, this country was adopting all sorts of policies because ministers were looking at countries that did very well in international league tables and then saying 'what do they do that contributes to their doing well in international league tables and can we copy it?' So literacy hours came from Taiwan and the minister for the last Labour government had a visit to China which his first press pronouncement when he returned was to say schools in the UK should start teaching Confucianism because that was the source of their success.

A real feature of current Educational policy making is the influence of international comparisons, and specifically the international comparisons that emerge from league tables done by bodies such as PISA and IEA. From that you get certain global trends in educational policy and in the background bodies like World Bank, very much promoting a common agenda around the world, privatisation, marketisation, quality assurance systems etcetera. Policy makers and teachers and school principals have often got to try to implement these in contexts that are very different from the ones that they were originally developed in. So I think there is a whole package to do with educational policy making, the role of international agencies, the influence of international league and comparison tables that is creating a massive range of questions which the journal has been involved in addressing and which is, I think, going to become increasingly powerful. That trend is going to become more acute with the growth of forms of web-based communication, the speed of comparisons that is possible nowadays and where Governments are increasingly seeing education as one of the few variables that they can have an effect on, which is free to them to manipulate in ways which other variables, let's say economic ones, are totally out of their hands. One of the few areas that they can act upon is education, housing, because often economic variables now are not within the decision making of national governments. So as governments concentrate on education, so these issues become more powerful.

12. How do you see comparative and international education developing in the future? Are there any particular questions and/or issues which you feel will come to the forefront for researchers, academics and practitioners? (Paul Morris and Yusuf Sayed)

I think it goes back to what I just said. The influence of comparison in the development of policy and within that the influence of international comparisons through league tables etcetera, as a key factor in how countries develop policies and the problems that creates at the local level. I would see

a key interface between development studies and comparative being the influence of comparisons on educational policies both in developing and developed societies. I'd argue that nowadays if you look at most educational policy documents, and this applies to the North as much as it does, possibly even more so than that South, is the extent to which the logic of the policy is derived from or informed by comparisons with elsewhere. You cannot look at an educational policy statement in this country now, without it being prefaced as to what goes on in Texas, or Sweden, or somewhere else in the world. The actual logic of the policy is, "this has worked well in Sweden, or USA, therefore we can adopt it here", and that is a very different type of logic for promoting policy than was the case 20 years ago, very different.

I think for me the one issue on the agenda which has been missed in this year of 2010, is that as we get closer to the millennium development goals of 2015, I think we are going to see a turn away from an agenda that's purely focussed on access into education, but a turn towards what actually happens to those who enter education, be it at a school or any other level. In other words, there will be I think a far more important return to quality issues in education and to pedagogy, which is why I think there is such a concern with international assessment and league tables because people are asking not just what happens or why people don't get into schools or any other learning, but what happens once they're there. I think that will also bring to the fore a much stronger concern with progression at all levels, not just about primary schools but what happens in developing countries to secondary and tertiary education, and I think that will be a key issue for the future.

13. The journal has recently implemented a new forum, which is to include perspectives and views in key contemporary issues. What is the philosophy behind this new journal section, and what do you hope to achieve through the contributions? (Yusuf Sayed)

Building on from what I was saying about building bridges between communities of knowledge and communities of practice, between policy on the one hand and practice on the other, is to create a section of the journal called the *Compare Forum* and I think in the Forum we try to do three or four things. Firstly we want it to become an important space where we can debate topical and contemporary education and development issues in a very timely manner. Thus it's a space where we don't have to go through the usual routine or process of waiting for peer-reviewed articles, but we can have topics which address contemporary policy issues. I think secondly we also envisage a space where we can bring the voices of NGO workers, agency officials, academics, teachers,

practitioners together, to shine a spotlight on a topical issue, whatever that may be. We want to hand control back to our readership where we are hoping that the *Compare Forum* is a space where our readership can write back to us, either responding to an article they like, an article they dislike, or an issue that's been pressing in their minds without having to submit a fully refereed piece of work. And in that sense it's a space where we feel the readership are also getting a stake in the journal in a bigger way.

Through all those ways I think the forum then becomes the interface between the intention of producing knowledge, which is conventionally academic, and if you like validating knowledge which is practice based, knowledge which is topical, knowledge which shapes and responds to pressing policy problems. So in that sense it is space in which we interface the different bodies of knowledge, the different communities of practice.

Now for example I think, we have in mind that one of the key topics we will be debating in the *Compare Forum* in the next while is the DFID Education Strategy. It has just been published in 2010 and it is a very important document in the field of international education and development, it is going to shape the nature of how the government of the UK spends its development money over the next 10-15 years in education. Clearly this is something that requires contemporary and immediate response from a diverse range of stakeholders. A second topic which we would like to invite our readership to respond to, the World Bank is currently going around globally right now consulting on what it calls its 2020 Education Strategy Paper. We'd like our readership to say what they think about the paper, what they think about the World Bank writing a strategy paper now, what would they like to see in strategy paper, if they've been to a World Bank consultation process what they feel. Again it is a way for our readership to get in touch with us very quickly.

A third issue we have thought about for the *Compare Forum* is the 'Cambridge Education Review' was published which reviewed education in England and Wales over the last so many years. Again we would like critical responses to it and as much as we would like critical responses to the McKenzie High Performing School Report. Again these are issues which have contemporary policy traction and one in which we feel diverse stakeholders have quite strong views about which need to be aired in journals like *Compare*.

14. The *Compare* writer's development programme has been in operation for the last couple of years, with workshops held BAICE and UKFEIT conferences. Could you explain to those who may not have encountered the programme its focus and objectives, and how they could get involved? (Anna Robinson-Pant)

This programme was really established in response to some of the issues that we've been working on around what Canagarajah has called the geopolitics in academic publishing. Canagarajah wrote a really interesting ethnographic study of the University of Jaffna and the experiences he had as US academic going back there in terms of both trying to publish in centre journals such as our own, he uses the terms centre and periphery, but also really negotiating really with his colleagues in Jaffna around what he now considered to be a good journal article or a good piece of published research as compared to their criteria for judging academic good writing. And his book really brought out the practical constraints that many of his colleagues faced at the University of Jaffna in terms of, you know, not being able afford the postage, or photocopying, or printing out that were needed to access some of the literature. The lack of access to published articles and to conference networks and so on and all those practical constraints, but what was interesting to me was what he calls the rhetorical constraints, which was the lack of familiarity with the conventions of a high status US or UK journal that a lot of his colleagues faced. It was not just that they weren't familiar with them, but they actually disagreed with some of the conventions which were valued highly by these US and UK journals and some of these they saw it as being unnecessary to actually attack your other researchers and they felt it unnecessarily contentious, the literature review. And so very subtle differences in the ways in which they were writing within the Sri-Lankan academic context, and they were all academics, as compared to US/UK journals. So this programme which we set up through funding from BAICE, the *Compare* Writers Programme, was actually set up to address what he called the rhetorical constraints, because I realised as Editor that we were getting a few quite good articles in terms of the material but I could see that they were going to be rejected by the reviewers because they were not written in the usual journal style and the authors were not familiar with some of the expected elements of a standard journal article, such as having a literature review, introduction, giving details of your methodology, a lot was taken for granted. Although we don't actually insist on a sort of ingredients for a journal article, there is a sense in which if you're going against that kind of set genre you need to be aware that you are doing that and perhaps to negotiate with the reviewers, or explain in your introduction what you are doing.

So what we decided to do was to set up a workshop, a day's workshop, for new writers and we didn't consider that this was for students necessarily, it was for any writers who were not familiar with or were not experienced in publishing in a UK/US journal. The workshops have been led by Theresa Lillis from the Open University and Anna Magyar from the University of East Anglia, who are both experienced facilitators in academic literacies and drew on research they'd done around what they call the text history of an article, which is the idea that you start off with an article and then you get the reviewers reports and then you get the response of the author and the rewritten article and

then you might get the final article. So it's looking at the journey really of an article and recognising that at points along that the author is actually involved in a series of mediation with the Editor and with the reviewers and so on, and as a published author you are often quite aware of how to manage those interactions but for somebody coming new to the game that's all kind of unfamiliar literacy practices really.

So the workshop is actually based around inducting people really into what it means to have an article published in *Compare*, and it is specifically focussed on *Compare* as a journal because we look at the *Compare* criteria and what we mean, for example, for having a comparative dimension. It's around introducing the elements of what has been a successful *Compare* article, and we approach several of our previous published writers to ask if they would be willing to share the first draft and the second draft and their correspondence and so on with the reviewers and the reviewers' reports. We also asked the reviewers if they were happy to use that as material in the workshop, so that we could analyse what they had done before and after revisions, and why they had done it and so on.

After the initial workshop every participant is linked with an academic facilitator who helps with the writing style and the structure of the article, and a subject specialist who is somebody on our Editorial Board or on our reviewer database, who has a particular interest in their area, either in their topic or their geographical area. And they actually have one-to-one advice from both these mentors really, by email, after the workshop has finished with the view to finalising it and then their article will be submitted to *Compare* and it goes through the usual peer review process. And I'm pleased to say that quite a few workshop participants have succeeded in publishing their articles afterwards, and we don't tell the reviewers obviously that they have been on this mentoring process. But more importantly some of the people who failed to get published actually said they did value the process in terms of professional development, it wasn't a complete waste of time, so we are quite clear, we set this up as a developmental process rather than a guarantee that you will get published.

From the perspective of being Editor, it has also provided useful feedback on our peer review process and the letters that we send out. A lot of the participants who got a major revision letter, which is actually quite a frequent outcome of the review process, it's very unusual to get a minor revision letter, saw this as a very negative outcome and weren't going to revise their articles again and they saw it as rejection letter. And I hadn't kind of realised that from somebody who was unfamiliar with the wording in the letter that it could come across so negatively.

Looking to the future and also people who might be interested in participating in this programme, we are continuing to run it as an annual workshop, a face-to-face workshop, which is held in conjunction with the two conferences which BAICE is involved in, the [BAICE conference](#) this year in September (2010) but also the UKFIET Oxford Conference on Education and Development which will be next September (2011). But we were concerned that a major constraint was that many people couldn't afford come to the UK for a face-to-face workshop, so we now have agreement from BAICE to develop a web-based version which people could download a certain module and do that before having email mentoring from someone in their field.

We are also looking at the practical barriers. Within *Compare* we moved some years ago from demanding hard copies which, obviously involves postage and people sending photocopies, to encouraging people to send email attachments and now we are looking at moving to a web-based submission system, but we are looking continuously at whether this would set up different barriers from before in terms of people needing continuous access to the internet and about how far it may marginalise people who don't have IT confidence or the kind of experience in submitting to a web-based system.

So our concern is still how can we encourage writers from the South, in particular, and those writers who haven't been published before in English language or centre journals, but we're also very concerned obviously not compromise the quality of the journal so it hasn't affected the rigour of our peer reviewing process.