

## Challenges of the HOW Journal in Spreading Teachers' Works in Times of Ranking Pressures

### Retos de la revista HOW en la divulgación de trabajos de los docentes en tiempos de presiones por las clasificaciones\*

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Colombian universities and some professional organisations have faced the challenge of gaining visibility, mainly via accredited publications whose reputation depends upon their inclusion in prestigious rankings. This article contains a documentary analysis of the evolution of the *HOW* journal, the authors' profiles, and their preferred themes and concerns—as evidenced in the articles published to date and in records of the editorial processes kept over the past ten years. From that analysis we derive a series of challenges dealing with editorial policies and processes which are closely related to current trends in the evaluation systems that govern the rankings of academic journals.

**Key words:** Academic journals, getting published, *HOW* journal, ranking systems, teachers as writers.

Las universidades colombianas y algunas organizaciones profesionales han enfrentado retos para alcanzar visibilidad, principalmente a través de publicaciones acreditadas, cuya reputación depende de su presencia en prestigiosos ránquines. Este artículo contiene un análisis documental de la evolución de la revista *HOW*, los perfiles de sus autores, sus temas de interés y sus preocupaciones —tal como se evidencian en los artículos publicados hasta la fecha y en los registros de los procesos editoriales de los últi-

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mos diez años. De dicho análisis derivamos una serie de retos concernientes a las políticas y procesos editoriales, los cuales están íntimamente relacionados con las tendencias actuales en los sistemas de evaluación que rigen las clasificaciones de las revistas académicas.

*Palabras clave:* lograr publicar, profesores como escritores, revista *HOW*, revistas académicas, sistemas de clasificación.

## Introduction

Colombian universities and some professional organisations have faced the challenge of publishing scientific or academic journals in order to respond to curricular goals, as well as to governmental and institutional interests in gaining visibility mainly via accredited publications. Their qualification is approved if they are included in prestigious rankings, databases, and indexing systems. ASOCOPI, the Colombian Association of Teachers of English, started with a bulletin in 1996 and over the past ten years has consolidated the *HOW* journal (*HOW* hereafter) in tune with the parameters issued by Colciencias, the Colombian research agency (Colciencias, 2010, 2016), and current trends in international periodicals. In this article we report on the results of a documentary analysis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) of the evolution of *HOW* as evidenced in the articles published to date and in some records kept by its Editorial Team. We begin with the context; then provide an account of the evolution of the journal and a description of the method. Next, we draw on the salient points that have characterised *HOW*, namely, the authors' profiles, agendas, and concerns along with some problematic aspects found in manuscripts by reviewers. We conclude with the implications and challenges derived from this portrayal.

## Context

Colombia has witnessed an increase in academic journals in the past ten years. This is due to the interest of research communities and institutions in gaining prominence in highly ranked journals besides the credits granted to teachers' careers and in the enhancement of universities' prestige (Cárdenas, 2014). The latest report issued by the Observatorio Colombiano de Ciencia y Tecnología (Lucio-Arias et al., 2015), which is based on the information registered in Colciencias, shows the existence of a total of 515 journals classified in the Índice Bibliográfico Nacional - IBN Publindex (National Bibliographical Index); 208 of them are classified in the areas of social sciences and 71 in humanities. The former includes 31 journals dealing with education and the latter contains 17 publications focused on languages and literature. Just three of them are published entirely in English and address issues concerning English language teaching (ELT), teacher education, professional development, research, and innovation. *HOW* is one of them.

*HOW* is a biannual publication led and funded by ASOCOPI. It is a journal by and for teachers of English who wish to share outcomes of educational and research experiences intended to add understanding to English language teaching practices. Therefore, the journal falls within the field of education and, specifically, the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language.<sup>1</sup>

The maintenance of periodicals like *HOW* is bounded by local realities (e.g., scholars' concerns and national policies for the publication and evaluation of academic journals) and global trends such as the “publish or perish” trend which clearly embraces the prominence of publication and the pressure in academia to quickly and frequently publish academic work to sustain or advance one's career and thus contribute to progress in science. Publishing is nowadays considered an important factor in Colombian policies which expect, among other goals, to ensure more international visibility of the production of the knowledge produced by its scholars (Colciencias, 2016). Hence, Colciencias is responsible for guiding the design, orientation, and evaluation of national policy of science, technology, and innovation and its corresponding implementation.<sup>2</sup> This way, Colciencias purports to contribute to the competitive and equitable development of the country at social and economic levels and to strengthen the capacity of the country to show an integral behavior in the international sphere in aspects concerning science, technology, and innovation. To this end, Colombian academic publications face—now more than ever—ranking pressures and most of their editorial teams resent Colciencias's policies which, in their opinion, lack equitable parameters and fairness in the application of evaluation procedures. This can be illustrated by noticing the changes Colciencias (2016) plans to introduce in the coming evaluation processes. To date, journals are ranked on the basis of general criteria for indexation: Scientific quality (Committees and articles derived from research and innovation), editorial quality, stability and visibility (in databases and indexing systems). However, new policies are being arranged to give more attention to the impact of the journals via citation metrics which are managed by private international companies specialized in ranking publications (see more information later in the Challenges in Times of Ranking Pressures section).

Journal ranking is used to evaluate the impact and quality of academic periodicals. This task is carried out by research agencies and companies with the purpose of showing the position of a publication within its field, its reputation, and the relative difficulty of getting published in it. Although there have been advancements in local initiatives such as Redalyc and SciELO, which evaluate journals edited in the Latin American region, Colciencias is inclined to rely mainly on JCR (Journal Citation Reports, led by Thomson) and SJR (Scientific

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.howjournalcolombia.org/index.php/how>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.colciencias.gov.co/colciencias/sobre\\_colciencias/funciones](http://www.colciencias.gov.co/colciencias/sobre_colciencias/funciones)

Journal Ranking, managed by Scopus). This decision has been criticised as those rankings do not fully account for the impact of publications in different scenarios and the characteristics of different disciplines.

## **Method: Documentary Analysis**

We carried out a documentary analysis in order to trace the evolution of *HOW* because, as Cohen et al. (2011) explain, this method illuminates the past, patterns of continuity and change over time, in addition to the origins of current structures and relationships. Data were made up of the articles published until 2015 and some of the records kept by its Editorial Team over a period of ten years. The records included texts histories (accounts of manuscripts submitted for each edition and their evaluation process), evaluation forms, summaries of relevant features (number of articles, types, themes), and reflections kept by the Editorial Team (mainly the Editor, author of this article, who has coordinated *HOW* since 2004, and her Assistant).

We bore in mind that documents should not simply be used as a resource. They are “social products” and the context of the materials being examined requires close analysis. This embraces considering different relationships, to wit: educational, social, political, and economic. All of them help us “explain the contemporary meaning of the documents, that is, how they are to be understood in the context of their time” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 253). Following the same authors, and in order to attain such understanding, we have considered three specific aspects of the target documents: (1) their authorship, (2) the audience they intend to address, and (3) the outcomes of the document, and an assessment of its influence on deliberations, ideas, and policies as well as of its long-term effect.

The analysis of the documents let us establish different relationships among them. As a result, we can next provide an account of the evolution of *HOW*, its authors’ profiles, agendas, and concerns. We can also portray salient problematic aspects found in manuscripts by reviewers and some challenges we face to act in accordance with the journal’s mission and vision.

## ***History and Evolution of the HOW journal***

From the very beginning of ASOCOPI, back in 1969, the founding members saw the need to keep all affiliates informed about the latest news from the Association. Thus, the bulletin entitled *HOW* was born and from then on it would continue to be published more or less on a by-monthly basis for almost two decades (see Figure 1). Besides news from the Association, this bulletin contained brief articles, intended to provide useful ideas for teachers of English to apply in their classrooms.

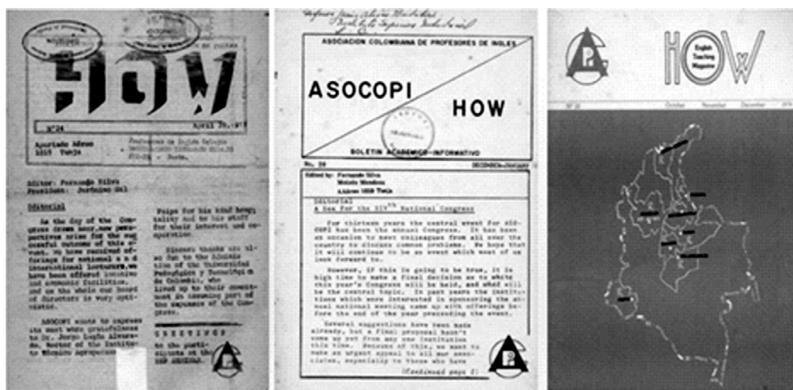


Figure 1. Samples of Covers of First Editions of *HOW*

From 1977 to 1979, the name of the bulletin was briefly changed to *Boletín Académico-Informativo*; however, for Number 33 (corresponding to October-December, 1979) the bulletin was transformed into a journal with the title *HOW: English Teaching Magazine*. This periodical would survive until 1986 and in 1984, the publication would acquire its ISSN registry, which is the one still in use.

In October 1986, the publication entered into a hiatus of eleven years after which, and under the leadership of Professor Edmundo Mora and the sponsorship of Universidad de Nariño, the journal was reborn and a new series started as *HOW: A Colombian Journal for English Teachers*, published yearly (apart from two special numbers) from 1997 to 2003. This time, the approach was more scientific in the sense that the roughly twelve articles featured in each number were the product of research and examination of key issues on the part of authors and included references to updated literature. Additionally, an editorial committee was formed to help maintain the academic quality of the journal.

In 2004, ASOCOPÍ's office moved from Cali to Bogotá and the Board of Directors decided that the Association should take full charge of the edition and publication of the journal. Since then, the editor of *PROFILE* journal, edited at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, has offered academic support. The journal maintained the series started at Universidad de Nariño with a slight change in the title: *HOW: A Colombian Journal for Teachers of English* (see Figure 2).

In 2004, the journal adopted its current format and included nine articles that had been selected through peer-review in order to comply with international standards for academic publications. The purpose of the journal was clearly defined: to maintain communication

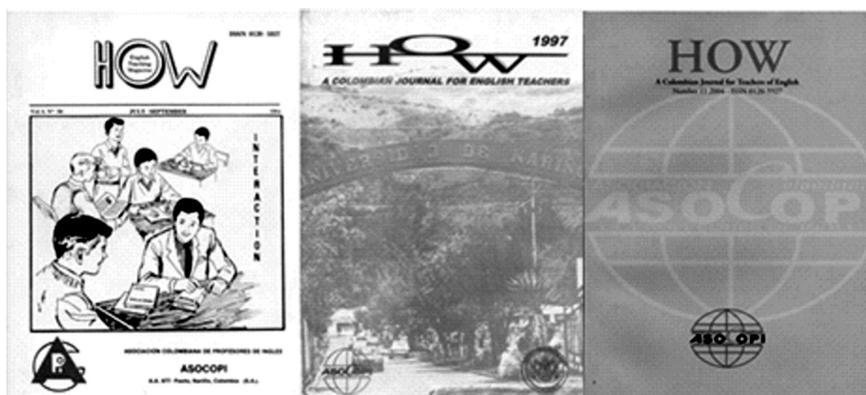


Figure 2. Samples of Covers of the Latest Series of *HOW*

among English teachers both in Colombia and overseas by offering opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge resulting from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching issues.

In the first issue of 2015 (Volume 22, Number 1), the journal's title returned to its origins and it is now simply: *HOW*. Then, there is the sense of coming fullcircle, and now that the “somehow distant future” of the past has become our present, and the humble printed bulletin is now a journal read around the world thanks to technology, one wonders at the imperishable nature of human endeavors and at how common objectives survive, intact, throughout the changing times. We are just receiving the torch from our forerunners (see the list of editors in Appendix 1).

### *Visibility*

As far as the journal visibility, that is, its presence in national and international databases and indexing systems, *HOW* is currently registered with Infotrac GALE Cengage Learning - Informe Académico, The Directory of Open Access Journals – DOAJ, and EBSCO. It is also indexed in CLASE, Educational Research Abstracts – ERA, Latindex, MLA International Bibliography, SCIELO Colombia, and Publindex-Colciencias.

It should be noted that a big step took place in July 2009, when *HOW* was included for the first time in the National Bibliographical Index, Publindex-Colciencias and classified in Category C. This was evidently recognition for the serious and rigorous work invested by authors and editorial staff and constituted not just an achieved objective, but also a new point of departure for further improvement. In the following years, the journal has been

consistently present in the National Bibliographical Index and in January 2012, it was awarded a higher classification: Category B, which is the one the journal has maintained to this day.

By November 2014 there came another significant breakthrough for the journal when, thanks to the sponsorship of Pearson Colombia, the official journal website was launched based on the Open Journal System which allows the edition and publication of the journal's contents on-line. Readers from around the world now have the possibility to read and share all the articles and this will certainly have an impact on the visibility of the journal. In 2015, the journal was accepted in the Directory of Open Access Journals which includes all the academic journals that follow scientific standards and that publish their contents on-line.

### ***Editorial Committees***

For the publication of *HOW* we have counted on the support of academics who participate in the blind review evaluations processes and suggest strategies to maintain its rigor and coverage. Their reviews embrace the use of standard checklists or evaluation forms rather than just the referee's reports in their own words (Rowland, 2002).

At present, the Editor and Assistant coordinate such processes and communications with fifty-three scholars who collaborate as reviewers. Sixty percent of them are Colombian (32) and the others (21 = 40%) are from Mexico (5), USA (4), Brazil (3), Argentina, Chile and Canada (2 each); and Puerto Rico, Iran, and India (1 each). All of them are specialists in the field with PhDs (30 out of 53) and Master's degrees (23). As shown in Appendix 2, the consolidation of the editorial boards has taken place over the past 12 years and included the alignment of the journal with good editorial practices and international standards.

### ***Sections***

Regarding the evolution of the sections in which the journal has been divided, back in 1996 (Number 1) articles were classified under "Current Trends", "Theoretical Issues", "Focus on the Learner", "Building Skills", and "Classroom Activities". However, the division into sections was dropped for the second issue. It was only for issue 17 (2010) when the current three sections of the journal were defined and first appeared: *Research Reports*, *Reports on Pedagogical Experiences*, and *Reflections and Revision of Themes*. This has proved appropriate for, as can be read afterwards, the authors' preferred themes fit into such typology. Finally, it should be noted that in the second number of volume 22, published in 2015, we introduced the *Book Reviews* section, which includes reference materials concerning ELT and related disciplines.

## *Periodicity*

The interest of national and international authors to get their articles published in the journal has steadily increased and this has meant more articles submitted to evaluation and a guarantee to maintain its periodicity—first, annual and then biannual. For this reason, in Volume 17, Number 1 (2010) the issue featured 10 articles, one more than in previous years, and for the following three years (2011 to 2013), 12 articles were published in each issue. The increment in submissions made it possible for the publication to change periodicity and so, in 2014, the journal became biannual, including 7 articles per number, 14 per volume, and Book Reviews began to appear.

## *Authors' Profiles*

Table 1 shows some demographics information about the authors who have published in *HOW*. It was collected via the biodata sent together with the manuscripts and a form filled out by all the authors whose works have been published. As can be seen most of them are experienced Colombian teachers with postgraduate degrees. Interestingly, the participation of new generations and schoolteachers is evident and this is a promising fact to ensure their involvement in the profession and their commitment to share their works via academic reports.

**Table 1.** Authors' Profiles

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Percentage / Distribution</b>
Gender	Female: 58% Male: 42%
Latest degree	BEd: 9% MA: 65% PhD: 26%
Years of teaching experience	0-10: 25% 11-20: 40% 21-30: 26% 30+: 7% No answer: 2%

Feature	Percentage / Distribution
Age range	20-30: 10% 31-40: 32% 41-50: 37% 51-60: 18% 60+: 3%
Nationalities	Colombia: 215 United States: 22 Mexico: 14 United Kingdom: 3 Iran: 4 Argentina: 4 India: 3 Puerto Rico: 3 China: 1 Japan: 1 Russia: 1 Venezuela: 1 Brazil: 1 Canada: 1 Total: 274
Educational settings	University: 201 Language Institutes: 24 Pre-service teachers: 10 Schools: 25 Unknown: 14

### *Authors' Agendas*

The authors' agendas and concerns are evidenced in the nature of their articles as well as in the themes they address. Our records show that the research reports get the highest percentage (35%). They are followed by articles of reflection (30%) and descriptions of pedagogical experiences (26%). In a lower degree of frequency, we find articles of revision of themes (8%) and book reviews (1%).

Regarding the themes of the 214 articles analysed, we find some dealing with a unique topic whereas others revolve around two or three themes. The highest number of articles focuses on teacher education, methods, and methodology in teaching English. This group is followed by works about culture, civilization, sociolinguistics, technology in language teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation. In third place we find articles concerning language acquisition, teaching English to children and young learners, curriculum and syllabus design, classroom dynamics and innovations. To a lesser extent, but not less important are the articles addressing autonomy, materials design, language policies, teaching English to adults, literature, psychology in foreign language acquisition and teaching, translation, and teaching English to disabled students.

A couple of remarks regarding the themes: We have witnessed an increase in the works adopting a critical perspective of teachers' professional development and more interest in the examination of issues in light of socio-economic factors and individuals' differences. Authors evidence their willingness to share with our readership the research and innovation processes they have experienced and accomplished, their reflections upon given pedagogical issues and, above all, their great concern about the development of language skills, classroom management matters, the teaching profession, and applications of methods and approaches. All in all, the contents of their articles let us understand professional learning as a continuous process that acknowledges the theories, personal and practical knowledge teachers possess (Golombek, 2009), and their personal interpretations (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

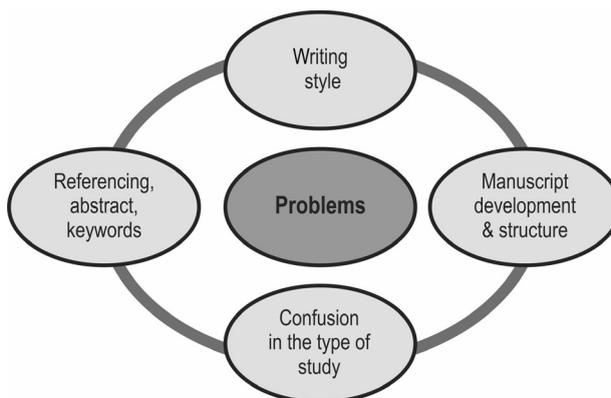
### ***Problematic Aspects Found in Manuscripts***

The analysis of the evaluation forms processed by reviewers over the past twelve years and a retrospective regarding the main aspects authors are requested to revise reveal the following list of most commonly found problems in manuscripts. Items are mentioned according to order of frequency:

- Vague, irrelevant, or incomplete conclusions.
- Manuscripts in need of proofreading due to vocabulary and grammar issues.
- Limited literature review and outdated references.
- Lack of a robust theoretical or conceptual framework.
- Missing references.
- Lack of paragraph organization, cohesion, and coherence; one-sentence paragraphs.
- Generalizations with no support on references.
- Improper style or register.
- Weak, inappropriate, or excessive number of key words.

- The type of article is unclear (according to the classification by Colciencias and the Journal definition).
- Poor description of method and data collection.
- Abstract beyond word limit and unrelated to the content of the manuscript.
- Title unrelated to the content of the manuscript.
- Unclear or faulty structure of the manuscript.
- Confusion in the research method (action research, qualitative, quantitative, case study).
- Superficial analysis of data.
- Manuscripts do not follow the APA (American Psychological Association) style.
- Context and participants not described with enough detail.
- Imbalance in the development of the manuscript's sections.
- Repetition of information.

The abovementioned problematic aspects can be grouped into four main areas: writing style; the mechanics of referencing works and choosing the right metadata (title, abstract, and keywords); structure and flow of the article; and method (see Figure 3). These results coincide with what has been found in some studies that have inquired into the obstacles authors face to comply with the demands of article preparation for scholarly publication in English in China (Flowerdew, 1999, 2007), Indonesia (Adnan, 2009), Japan (Okamura, 2006), Spain (Pérez-Llantada, Plo, & Ferguson, 2011), the United States (Smiles & Short, 2006), and Colombia (Cárdenas, 2003, 2014). Likewise, the analysis of the problems found in the manuscripts submitted to *HOW* provides relevant information for the editing process and, as discussed afterwards, pose challenges for academic writing and teacher preparation.



**Figure 3.** Problematic Aspects Found in Manuscripts Evaluated in *HOW*

In regard to the conventions of academic writing, we have identified problems concerning communicative and social conventions (Canagarajah, 2002). Under the communicative conventions, the author differentiates between textual conventions and publishing conventions. The former embrace matters of language, style, tone, and structure. The latter are understood as

the procedural requirements of academic journals, such as the protocol for submitting papers, revisions, and proofs; the nature of interaction between authors and editorial committees, the format of the copy text; bibliographical and documentation conventions; the particular weight and quality of the paper; and the manuscript copies required. Social conventions are the rituals, regulations, and relationships governing the interaction of members of the academic community as they engage in knowledge production and communication. Each of these levels of convention, then, helps us move from the product of writing to the process and to the larger social contexts of text production/reception. (p. 6)

We have tried to prevent the aforementioned problems by constantly revising the guidelines for authors so that they contain detailed and illustrative hints to guide them in the preparation of manuscripts. The submission process is also monitored by having authors follow checklists so that they fully comply with the journal policies. Later on, along the evaluation process, feedback is provided in terms of content and formal aspects with the purpose of enhancing an in-depth review on the basis of the evaluation received and commitment to strengthening the quality of manuscripts. When some papers do not meet the standards of publishable articles, but contain relevant aspects to be shared with the ELT community, authors are encouraged to produce a short text to be published in the ASOCOPÍ's newsletter. This has proved effective in motivating teachers to persevere in their writing activity.

### ***Challenges in Times of Ranking Pressures***

Although *HOW* has succeeded in shaping its nature as an academic journal, maintaining its periodicity, and gaining a place in the Colombian arena, we should be aware of the many challenges ahead. In times of ranking pressures, we need to generate more consideration of Open Access and, most of all, more action to account for the many facets that play a role in the editing of such a journal, to wit: possibilities to increase international impact, that is, to be accepted in databases and indexing systems; sponsorship; availability of reviewers; submissions to keep the different sections alive; and authors' skills in academic writing.

### ***Impact and Ranking Possibilities***

In countries like Colombia, practitioners and many academics still have limited access to key databases, new knowledge, and research findings due to journal pay-walls. Therefore, *HOW* is in line with those who recognise a need for the development of a better,

not-for-profit system to make publishing and reading research outcomes available to all. This does not mean, as some suggest, that everything is published or that journals should be in the service of the “publish or perish” trend which forces academics to look for forums that guarantee quick publication and thus credits in their career. On the contrary, the fact that there is more probability for articles to be found by a wide readership should make editors more aware of rigorous reviewing and publishing processes.

On the other hand, we wonder if the proposed new model of journal ranking for Colombian publications conceived on the basis of politics to improve the quality of national scientific publications, in Spanish, “Política para mejorar la calidad de las publicaciones científicas nacionales” (Colciencias, 2016) takes into account the reactions raised in connection to the inconvenience of acknowledging such quality on account of citation metrics.

In this line of thought, criticisms from scholars in areas such as humanities, arts, and social sciences show their discontent with the predominant practices of assessing the academic quality of journals and the unbalanced prominence attached to citation indices and the impact factor (IF). They are contained in a “Declaration on Citation Indices and Editorial Practices” issued in 2015 and which has been endorsed by many Latin-American journals in their latest editions (see *HOW*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2015, pp. 148-154).

As already mentioned, the proposed policy has been censured because the ranking system does not fully take into consideration the contributions of publications in its surrounding communities or the characteristics of different disciplines. The new model in question has integrated the procedures used by the two main companies in charge of ranking: JCR (Journal Citation Reports, led by Thomson) and SJR (Scientific Journal Ranking, managed by Scopus)—and the data obtained from Google Scholar for the calculation of the h5 index for the lower categories.<sup>3</sup> They use different measurements to establish the impact of journals and their articles. Among them we have:

**Impact factor:** a measure of how often an average article in a journal has been cited. The impact factor of a journal is calculated by dividing the number of current year citations to source items published in that journal during the previous two years.

**Cited half-life:** the number of years, going back from the current year, that account for half the total citations received by the cited journal in the current year.

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<sup>3</sup> The four categories that are part of Colciencias's system of classification for Colombian academic publications are, from the highest to the lowest: A1, A2, B, and C. To be classified in the top two categories, a journal must be included either on the JCR or the SJR. If not, the journal will be classified in one of the lowest two categories and resorting to its h5 index, as explained above (Colciencias, 2016).

**Immediacy index:** the average number of times that an article is cited in the same year it is published.

**Citation distribution:** the distribution of citations to articles over the previous two years that contributes to the current year's impact factor. (The Royal Society Publishing, n.d., par. 4)

**Eigenfactor:** an estimate of the percentage of time that a reader spends with a particular journal. The Eigenfactor is calculated using *Thomson ISI* data in a model in which readers follow chains of citations as they move from journal to journal. It ignores self-citations.

**Article influence:** A measure of the impact of a journal as a whole on the rest of the literature. It is the fractional contribution of a journal to the total Eigenfactor divided by the fractional contribution of journal to the total articles published. (The Royal Society Publishing, n.d., par. 5)

**h-index (h5):** The h-index of a publication is the largest number h such that at least h articles in that publication were cited at least h times each. For example, a publication with five articles cited by, respectively, 17, 9, 6, 3, and 2, has the h-index of 3. . . . The h5-index . . . of a publication [is] . . . the h-index . . . of only those of its articles that were published in . . . the last five complete calendar years. (Google Scholar Metrics, n.d., par. 1-4)

As Lillis and Curry (2010) note, the impact factor “both determines the inclusion of particular journals in indexes, and in a cyclical manner, helps contribute to the higher status of a journal” (p. 15). However, its limitations have also been pointed out. The most important one points out that “citations are a shallow measure of research quality or impact” (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 15). Likewise, the impact factor's two-year window of calculation is detrimental for disciplines with longer interval time to publication or slower dissemination, as is the case of humanities. Furthermore, and as noted by the same authors, one cannot deny that the geopolitical location of scholars, texts, and language choice to publish are central to the politics of academic text production. Consequently, opportunities for journals like *HOW* to be cited in journals that have a long tradition or are well-known in the international field are low because authors may prefer citing journals from their own contexts and/with a high reputation. In connection to this Canagarajah (2002) claims that

for discursive and material reasons, Third World scholars experience exclusion from academic publishing and communication; therefore the knowledge of Third World communities is marginalized or appropriated by the West, while the knowledge of Western communities is legitimated and reproduced; and as part of this process, academic writing/publishing plays a role in the material and ideological hegemony of the West. (p. 6)

The abovementioned situation affects our possibilities to gain visibility via international indexing systems such as Scopus and Thomson, which are placed in hegemonic centres, that is, Anglophone western countries with strong economies. In turn, it hinders the options of periphery journals like ours to escalate better positions in the national rank whose classification is produced on the basis of the examination of journals' presence in a selected number of international indexing systems. Let us remember that most of these systems

classify journals based on bibliometrics, i.e. statistical analysis. Nonetheless, gaining citation is not a priority for most authors and even for many local journals. Instead, disciplines like ours have been working hard to build research communities, to make scholars familiar with research and publication practices.

*HOW* and many other Colombian journals are committed to creating local academic cultures and to disseminating local knowledge. In this respect, Cárdenas (2014) remarks that authors are aware of the importance of sharing and of the role of academic journals in sustaining spaces for the spreading of teachers' initiatives and knowledge. As a result of their participation and contribution in their academic communities, authors have the opportunity to interact with a wide audience and thus, are positioned as "accountable authors" (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). In this line of thought, the interplay embedded in the publication process is in tune with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital for it is likely to be created by mutual recognition, getting respect, and being an author whose ideas are appreciated in the eyes of the local and larger community. All of this evidences the paramount role of journals in creating interactional spaces for agency work in the teaching profession and their understanding of visibility, albeit not only in terms of citations received and measured elsewhere.

### *Sponsorship*

Along its history *HOW* has counted on the support of scholars based in different universities and, since 2014, of Pearson Colombia which, as already mentioned, makes it possible to be online via the Open Journal System. Unlike most Colombian journals, *HOW* does not have the support or infrastructure of editorial centres which are now established in most universities. Its publication depends upon the voluntary work of ASOCOPI's Board of Directors, the Editorial Team and, since 1994, the scientific support of *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, edited by Universidad Nacional de Colombia (see Appendix 1). In this regard, Canagarajah (2002) invites us to "take note of the power of the written works to transmit information to the global community. Those who enjoy the academic infrastructure that allows them to publish have an advantage in the dissemination and construction of knowledge" (p. 5). In contrast to the Colombian journals and research groups that have some budget set up for the publication activity, ASOCOPI has made outstanding efforts to maintain *HOW*'s periodicity with very limited resources. This scenario could be changed should we have a culture among members of the ELT community of contributing with funds or more voluntary work to sustain associations like ours.

### *Availability of Reviewers*

Reviewers are experts with busy schedules and who voluntarily collaborate with journals with no payment or any other recognition except the credits they receive in the editorial notes

and on the legal page of each publication. However, often-times scholars do not accept evaluations due to their workloads; others notify that they cannot comply with due dates required by journals in order to meet publication schedules; and, in a few cases, they simply do not respond or take a long time to do so. Nevertheless, the number of members of the reviewing team has smoothly increased and the contributions of scholars from different countries have guaranteed the quality and periodicity of the journal.

On the other hand, ranking systems like Publindex-Colciencias, demand certain profiles which are not always met by experts in the field e.g., publications in indexed journals. This is the case of scholars in human and social sciences who mostly publish chapters, books, and research reports. To our surprise, these academic products are not considered for the evaluation of reviewers' credentials. Although, apparently, this is going to be solved by looking at the reviewers' h5 which takes into account all quoted material regardless of the source. The downside is that as this is based on a search in Google Scholar, all the material has to be somehow available or registered online.

Hence, the editorial boards might face challenges to recruit the required number of reviewers needed to process the submissions they receive for a particular edition and, at the same time, comply with the percentages of members from Colombia and from overseas. It should be noted that this last factor is very important for Publindex-Colciencias in the evaluation of journals presented for ranking purposes.

### *Keeping the Sections Alive*

Lillis and Curry (2010) remark that the geopolitical location of scholars, texts, and language is central to the politics of academic text production. Gaining readership and reaching a high position on the authors' list of possibilities to publish have demanded sustained efforts on the part of *HOW*'s editorial team. Although the consolidation of the three sections that currently characterize *HOW* was the result of an analysis of the authors' preferred themes and ASOCOPI's commitment to welcome different subjects, this has not been an easy task. Contributions by authors from different contexts, submissions to keep alive the different sections, and coverage of varied and relevant themes do not always come as regularly as expected or get straightforwardly accepted as a result of evaluation processes.

We have used—and need to envision more—different strategies to procure a high percentage of submissions and high quality in what gets published. Constant communication with reviewers so that they become aware of authors' profiles and the journal's mission and vision, together with an ongoing update of our guidelines and agile communication with authors, have proved useful to raise the standards of our publication.

## *Academic Writing*

It is widely known that “academic writing holds a central place in the process of constructing, disseminating, and legitimizing knowledge” (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 6). Those three goals are the cornerstones of academic journals and, in turn, entail having the capabilities to handle the different types of conventions governing academic writing; these conventions have an influence on academic discourse and on the specialized domain of academic writing in research journals. As noted by the same author, this mode of writing is quite central to the practice of knowledge building in the academy and plays a major role in the leadership of Western communities in scholarship.

In this respect, we should mention the difficulties and low possibilities scholars like the ones who publish in *HOW* have should they wish to publish in well-established journals which are considered the most prestigious in the ELT and teacher education fields. Most of the authors who have published in *HOW* belong to the Developing World or peripheral communities that have been working towards strengthening their research and publication tradition and skills. Although some institutions might force them to mainly publish in journals with high positions in the ranking systems, their purpose is not necessarily to compete. As found by Cárdenas (2014), authors are more inclined to building up communities of practice, expertise in the publication field, and some sort of networking. Nonetheless, the authors who participated in her study plus what has been observed in *HOW* indicate that possibilities to get published are strongly connected to academic writing.

Although academic writing is evidenced in its final product—the text that circulates via different forums—its culmination and quality depend upon an array of factors. The analysis of the editorial processes and reviews helped us identify the following: authors' competencies and practices, criteria established for texts' acceptance, support provided to empower writers, awareness of authors' profiles, commitment to understand their profiles, and a disposition to contribute to their familiarization with the conventions of academic journals. Beyond the text production we should also acknowledge the role of two additional factors in nurturing authors' self-confidence and commitment to engage in further initiatives, to wit: circulation of what is published and recognition of their contributions.

Likewise, the communication maintained with reviewers and several authors also let us assert that although there is often a lack of confidence—mainly among less-experienced authors—“the disposition to overcome fears, and the implementation of a timely, user-friendly editorial process can help authors build confidence to continue writing and, in the end, lead to personal satisfaction” (Cárdenas, 2014, p. 17). This cannot be achieved unless novice authors critically assess their abilities to write academic papers and/or get pertinent support. In this line of thought McCutchen (2011) pinpoints “two necessary (although not

sufficient) components in the development of writing expertise: fluent language generation processes and extensive knowledge relevant to writing” (p. 51).

To achieve the expected expertise, the developing writer needs opportunities along his/her professional career so that s/he can acquire the necessary resources to communicate fluently and effectively. Hence, teacher education programmes, not just publishers, need to be aware of what publishing entails. This, in turn, involves conceiving publishing beyond the need to comply with institutional requirements so that novice authors get acquainted with the mechanics of discourses used in academic journals. Lastly, emerging communities of authors can benefit from a culture of collaborative writing between experienced and novice authors and, ideally, between scholars in the centre and the periphery.

## Conclusion

The documentary analysis carried out in order to account for the evolution of *HOW* allowed us to trace the history of the journal, the authors’ profiles, their agendas and concerns. It also led us to foresee the most relevant challenges we face to act in accordance with the journal’s mission and vision. Although achievements are promising, several issues need further attention should we wish to maintain spaces for different teachers’ voices: publishing policies, our position as to journal evaluation systems governing the academic marketplace, the suitability and repercussions of those systems, their impact on scholars’ self-esteem and knowledge-making practices, the conceptions of “locally and globally relevant knowledge,” and teacher education in English language teaching, among others.

We hope that this portrayal serves to inform teacher educators, schoolteachers, pre-service teachers, and editorial boards about some of the challenges we face to produce a periodical like *HOW*. Finally, we expect that, despite the difficulties we have before us to get the recognition a local publication of this nature deserves, we continue fostering the inclusion of different teachers’ voices. After all, the ranking systems and the pressures they place on today’s academic or scientific journals and scholars cannot be the only reason to evaluate the relevance and quality of knowledge produced as a result of the examination of issues chosen by academic circles based in periphery countries like Colombia.

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## Appendix 1: Editors of the *HOW* Journal

An acknowledgement is due to some of those forerunners who helped keep the *HOW* journal alive in its previous and current series:

### Previous series:

Fernando Silva and Moisés Mendoza, editors, (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia) 1977-1978

María Ramírez Bustos and Marcia Dittman, editors, 1979

Margarita Ruiz, director, and Marcia Dittman, editor (Universidad Nacional de Colombia) (No. 33 – 34)

Margarita Ruiz, director, and Ruth Pappenheim, editor (Universidad Nacional de Colombia) (No. 35 – 37)

Bertha Raquel de Maurice, director, and Clara Marina Prada Olarte (Universidad Nacional de Colombia) (No. 38 – 40)

Okley Forbes, director, and Martha González Maya, editor (Universidad del Quindío) (No. 41 – 45)

Okley Forbes, director, and Silvia Valencia, editor (Universidad del Quindío) (No. 46)

Jesús Alirio Bastidas and Edmundo Mora, directors and editors (Universidad de Nariño) (No. 47– 52, March 1985)

Fernando Silva, director, and Moisés Mendoza, editor (Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia) (No. 53, July-September, 1986)

### Current series:

Luis Fernando Gómez, editor, Universidad de Antioquia (1996)

Edmundo Mora, director and editor, Universidad de Nariño (1997 to 2003): 7 issues edited

Martín Jiménez, coordinator and editor, Centro Colombo Americano Medellín (2001, special issue)

Melba Libia Cárdenas, editor, Universidad Nacional de Colombia – Sede Bogotá (2004)

Rigoberto Castillo, editor, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (2005)

Melba Libia Cárdenas, editor, Universidad Nacional de Colombia – Sede Bogotá (2006 to the present day): 12 issues edited up to 2015.

## Appendix 2: Editorial Committees and Reviewers Along the History of the *HOW* Journal

Year	Editorial Committee	Reviewers	Total	Colombian	%	From overseas	%	Nationalities
1996	4	0	4	3	75	1	25	Malaysia (1)
1997	4	0	4	3	75	1	25	Unknown
1998	4	0	4	3	75	1	25	United Kingdom (1)
1999	6	0	6	5	83,3	1	16,7	United Kingdom (1)
2000	5	0	5	4	80	1	20	United Kingdom (1)
2001/1	4	0	4	2	50	2	50	United Kingdom (1), USA (1)
2001/2	9	0	9	8	88,9	1	11,1	United Kingdom (1)
2002	5	0	5	2	40	3	60	United Kingdom (1), USA (2)
2003	7	0	7	4	57,1	3	42,9	United Kingdom (1), USA (2)
2004	3	7	10	6	60	4	40	India (2), Argentina (1), Brazil (1)
2005	3	9	12	8	66,7	4	33,3	India (2), Argentina (1), Brazil (1)
2006	2	13	15	9	60	6	40	India (2), Argentina (1), Brazil (1), United Kingdom (1), USA (1)
2007	3	25	28	20	71,4	8	28,6	Argentina (3), United Kingdom (2), Brazil (1), India (1), USA (1)
2008	5	27	32	24	75	8	25	Argentina (3), Brazil (2), India (1), United Kingdom (1), USA (1)
2009	5	27	32	24	75	8	25	Argentina (3), Brazil (2), India (1), United Kingdom (1), USA (1)

Year	Editorial Committee	Reviewers	Total	Colombian	%	From overseas	%	Nationalities
2010	5	33	38	27	71,1	11	28,9	Argentina (3), Brazil (2), USA (2), Canada (1), India (1), Mexico (1), United Kingdom (1)
2011	6	25	31	21	67,7	10	32,3	Argentina (3), Brazil (2), USA (2), India (1), Mexico (1), United Kingdom (1)
2012	6	37	43	28	65,1	15	34,9	Brazil (3), Mexico (3), Argentina (2), Canada (2), USA (2), Chile (1), India (1), Iran (1)
2013	6	39	45	29	64,4	16	35,6	Brazil (3), Mexico (3), Argentina (2), Canada (2), Chile (2), USA (2), India (1), Iran (1)
2014	6	46	52	32	61,5	20	38,5	Mexico (5), Brazil (3), USA (3), Argentina (2), Canada (2), Chile (2), India (1), Iran (1), Puerto Rico (1)
2015	6	46	52	32	61,5	20	38,5	Mexico (5), Brazil (3), USA (3), Argentina (2), Canada (2), Chile (2), India (1), Iran (1), Puerto Rico (1)
2016	6	46	52	32	61,5	20	38,5	Mexico (5), Brazil (3), USA (3), Argentina (2), Canada (2), Chile (2), India (1), Iran (1), Puerto Rico (1)