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*Editorial:*

## **Journey of Research Practice**

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Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Research Practice* (JRP). This journal has resulted from a widely shared interest that researchers in different disciplines and professional fields should communicate with each other freely and remain open to learn from each other's individual journey of research.

The title of this journal may look surprising to some readers. There may even be a legitimate doubt as to whether the journal would take-off at all, the title being so broad and unspecific. On the contrary, to be more optimistic, the journal could meet a long-felt need, i.e., that of bringing researchers, and various forms of organised inquiry, into fruitful connections with each other, without the restrictions imposed by formal disciplinary boundaries.

Research and researchers have been the focus of many discussions in the past. These discussions have proliferated following different threads. There is a *logical* (and philosophical) thread that seeks to explicate the logic of research and the structure of scientific inquiry, seeking out the rules and methods deployed by researchers in arriving at justifiable results. It also delves into the ideology of scientific research. There is a *sociological* thread that seeks to understand research communities as social entities and knowledge as a product of social interaction among human beings. There is an *institutional* or *political-economic* thread that seeks to understand the workings of regional or national research systems--complete with their councils, funding, and power play. Likewise, there are other threads too, such as research as a *space of struggle* and

resistance, research as a *practice of freedom* and self-transcendence, etc. There is something to be gained by bringing these threads together, in the hands of researchers themselves, no matter what disciplines or fields they might individually pursue.

Undoubtedly, the success of research in the older disciplines has been a motivation for the proliferation of newer ones. The very spirit of open inquiry and the forms of reasoning associated with research are still considered important companions of mankind. Difficulties do emerge when new disciplines or fields of research are not able to achieve the success of well established fields of knowledge, despite using similar methods, procedures, and tools. This certainly generates doubts regarding the enterprise of research itself: Are some areas not amenable to research as we know it? Or, is it only a matter of time until appropriate methods and tools are developed to deal with these more complex areas?

Sometimes, individual researchers in their specialised research areas, working on their well defined research problems, not to mention their tightly controlled research budgets, tend to lose sight of the wider significance of their work. More so, when they are dealing with problems that require original solutions, which may also be of interest to researchers in other disciplines or fields. The disconnection among researchers continues to grow, as we strive to further our own inquiries, using our own specialised tools and languages, gradually drifting away from the more general meanings associated with open and organised inquiry, *per se*. No wonder, the boundaries between researchers continues to harden, and too much is made out of the differences between the domains of inquiry, which nonetheless involve similar pursuits, at least in spirit. Simple insights and interesting innovations from one field do not travel to another. Somewhere, the journey of research is obstructed.

This state of affairs might be seen as a *collective amnesia* among researchers. Looking at the development of research and inquiry in different fields in the recent past, as also in the remote past, one cannot miss the substantial impact of *border-crossing interactions* among people pursuing different forms of systematic inquiry. The growth of mathematics over the centuries indicates that, for example. The history of all forms of organised inquiry shows us the important role played by the search for that special quality expected in the outcomes, with an explorer's mindset, while remaining open to new experiences and new meanings, which are so crucial for research, be it in a scholarly discipline or some other field of creative action.

Traditions of open and organised inquiry can be found in many different social and historical locations. These tend to have their own preferred problems, idioms, conventions, styles of participation, and unique innovations. Appreciating these might help us reconnect with the different rich traditions and practices associated with organised inquiry. This may remind us that even modern science was a historical product of such open and organised inquiry, and perhaps not the ultimate vision of such inquiry itself.

Let us now come to the thoughts behind launching this new journal, especially when it is so easy to lose count of the journals currently in circulation, even within one's own field of study. *First*, there is the collective amnesia leading many researchers to confine themselves to their disciplinary or institutional cubby-holes. But, as the context of research is changing, for example, demanding designs, interventions, and solutions--not just explanations, expecting a greater degree of user-orientation, requiring accommodation of multiple rationalities, etc., researchers are being confronted with too many new challenges, for which, good responses may not be found in their own cubby-holes.

*Second*, reflections on research are now scattered in different areas, such as methodological reflections within disciplines and professions, meta-disciplinary projects (such as *systems thinking*), philosophy and history of science, sociology of knowledge, cognitive psychology, scientometrics, research and development (R&D) management, education and learning, knowledge management, study of learning communities, reflective practice, etc. The insights from these areas need to be available to researchers themselves so that they can participate in developing a more *critical self-understanding* of their own practice as researchers.

*Third*, researchers working in different domains are continuously coming up with creative responses in order to address the specific challenges faced in their own domains of work. Some of these may suggest new ways of doing research in some other domains, opening up new areas and styles of inquiry.

*Fourth*, given the pressure to publish and the prevailing culture of academic writing, many researchers tend to conform to the disciplinary or professional conventions in doing their research and in reporting about it. This results in too little critical engagement with the prevailing constructs and methods. This also results in writing, which are highly *sanitised* and suspiciously devoid of the flavour of exploration and adventure that ought to characterise research writing.

*Fifth*, academicians, research-oriented professionals, and research students around the world today do not have a readily accessible place where they can share experiences of doing research and facilitate learning about the traditions, languages, and methods of research in various disciplines or fields.

*Sixth*, given the alacrity among various professions, institutions, and practices to claim support from research, there is a need for researchers to reclaim their own *autonomous ground*. This autonomous ground, i.e., *research practice*, need not be insulated from its environment. It can continually self-assess and adapt to the worlds changing around it.

These are some of the concerns the journal aspires to address. The specific aims and the editorial focus of the journal, as described in the JRP Web site, have surfaced from these concerns.

Among other things, the journal is expected to trigger an ongoing process of reviewing the practical and conceptual repertoire of research, including elements such as the concepts, languages, conventions, criteria, methods, and goals of research. This may be done at different levels, from that of an individual researcher to that of a whole discipline or research tradition, spanning decades or centuries. It is not JRP's aim to launch a new discipline, or a specialised field, dedicated to the study of research. On the contrary, the journal is expected to develop the conditions for an ongoing review process that would make us aware of the range of resources available to us as researchers and, hopefully, also identify areas for *creative extensions to research practice*.

This inaugural issue is a sample of the kinds of deliberation JRP would promote. In this issue, we have been fortunate to have researchers from different fields sharing their experiences and arguments concerning the practice of research in their fields and relating it to some of the broader dimensions of research practice. The articles cover topics such as innovative characterisation of science, comparison between acquiring knowledge and acquiring experience, role of one's experiences in developing a long-term research interest, use of modern communication technology in research settings, innovations in participatory design research, ancient traditions of open inquiry, network thinking for researchers, and some issues in the areas of information systems research and leadership research. The variety is evident. The unifying thread will be evident too, hopefully.

One of the ideals of JRP is to develop itself as an important companion to every research-inclined individual and every research student in the world. There are obvious hurdles in achieving this. However, as a research-like project itself, JRP will remain open to inputs and initiatives that help it move closer to this ideal.

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