

Introducing *Journal of Formative Design in Learning*

Robert Kenny¹ 

Published online: 4 August 2017

© Association for Educational Communications & Technology 2017

We are pleased to launch *Journal of Formative Design in Learning*, a brand-new international journal that is an official publication of the Association for Educational Communications & Technology (AECT). The journal provides reflective practitioners (designers, teachers, instructors, researchers, and others) in teaching and learning with a single source of scholarly work that presents new developments in their field of study and discusses the impact of this new knowledge. The journal publishes original papers covering applied educational design research and development. While the main audience is practitioners, all articles are grounded in research and theory. The journal provides opportunities to established academics and practitioners as well as to junior faculty and emerging scholars. A formative peer-review process is specifically designed with less experienced authors in mind. We encourage you to submit your manuscripts (visit www.editorialmanager.com/jfdl) and experience a fair, balanced, and helpful peer review whose goal is to help authors improve their manuscripts.

The catalyst behind the journal was a realization that there is a lack of publication outlets that focus on formative design and assessment—a timely topic in education and training. A second major focus is to motivate junior faculty to start their scholarship journey using Boyer's ideas on scholarship reconsidered (Boyer et al. 2016).

I am especially proud of the journal's Editorial Board, comprised of experienced and credentialed individuals with worldwide reputations and who are at the top of their fields and who wish to contribute to the field through extensive nurturing and mentorship. Each recognizes that one of the most intensive

hurdles for emerging scholars is getting started. Our goal is to uphold the highest level of academic scholarship, while at the same time instituting support for all scholars to communicate the results of their work. We are not only formative in scope but also formative in the mentoring processes that have been instituted to recruit article submissions. For example, we actively worked with two different venues to provide formative support for potential authors. In 2016 and 2017, we conducted charrettes at the Professors of Instructional Design & Technology (PIDT) meetings held each May. This summer we are sponsoring the first Summer Research Symposium at the AECT summer meetings, using a format that has been previously successful in creating several peer-reviewed book titles. In 2017, more than 20 individuals or writing teams have enrolled; each submits a draft of their article for peer review by all those in attendance. Authors will attend roundtable face-to-face feedback sessions to help them shape their papers and ready them for submission to this journal for formal peer review. We expect this symposium will become a regularly scheduled biannual AECT function.

While most professionals and scholars appreciate the importance of a formative viewpoint, we have noticed there does not exist one central idea as to what “formative” really connotes. In fact, so varying is the understanding of this term, this will be the subject of our opening session at the 2017 Summer Research Symposium. One result will be a consensus definition that we hope to publish in the journal.

Formative assessment is a process that provides on-going data/information needed to adjust research activities and enterprises while they are still in process. McKinney and Reeves (2012) go so far as to describe formative assessment as part of the entire design process from its very beginning (researcher as designer). Formative progression is iterative and forms the basis for the evaluation process implied in the A.D.D.I.E. (analysis, design, development, implementation,

✉ Robert Kenny
rkenny@fgcu.edu

¹ Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, FL, USA

evaluation) and SAM/AGILE instructional design frameworks. Formative assessment guides data collection mechanisms and defines ways researchers can make decisions about future implementations. In the learning domain, several key words denote a formative view of the learning process—observation, questioning, journaling/logging, self-assessment/reflection, among others. In short, the goal of formative assessment in education and training is to gather feedback that can be used by instructors and learners to guide improvements in the ongoing teaching and learning context. On the other hand, the goal of summative assessment is to measure the success or proficiency obtained at the end of a learning experience and is compared to some standard/benchmark. It is in this context that grades are given. In reality, the term evaluation is more closely aligned with that which is summative in nature, which brings about another confound—assessment versus evaluation. That comparison will be the subject of a discussion to take place at another time.

To extend our definition, one may consider the close relationship between formative assessment and the concept of action research. In short, action research is a disciplined process of investigation that takes place by and for those performing some type of action. In education, that action is the act of teaching or learning for the express purpose of performance improvement or refinement. In this vein, formative assessment becomes the tool for making decisions in an action research project.

We make these distinctions here because one of the most common decision points we utilize when deciding whether to accept submissions to the journal is whether the work clearly contains a formative perspective. We also utilize the following

practitioner's notes: (1) what is already known about the topic, (2) what new information is introduced by the submission, and (3) what is the impact of that new information or practice. Taken together in the review process, our experience is that the submissions that finally make their way to being accepted and published offer significant value to our readers and the field. In summary, we believe this journal serves an important and unique purpose.

We welcome your participation as readers, users, referees, and authors of what we believe is a useful and timely journal that is committed to provide high-quality original information and opportunity to all. Manuscripts should be submitted to the journal's submission and peer-review website (www.editorialmanager.com/jfdl); general inquiries, such as suitability of one's work for the journal, should be sent to Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Robert Kenny (rkenny@fgcu.edu). Visit the journal homepage (www.springer.com/41686) for aims and scope, author instructions, Editorial Board listing, and more. We are pleased to note all papers published in the journal's first two volume-years (2017 and 2018) are freely accessible to anyone anywhere during those 2 years.

References

- Boyer, E. L., Moser, D., Ream, T. C., & Braxton, J. M. (2016). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professorate*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McKinney, S., & Reeves, T. C. (2012). *Conducting educational design research*. New York: Routledge.