

The dilemma of researchers, the insensibility of policy-makers and the distress of Brazilian dentistry journals

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In an editorial written for this journal eight years ago [Cury JA. The evolution of dental research in Brazil. *Braz Oral Res.* 2004;18(2):97], I enthusiastically reported that Brazilian dental publications in ISI and Medline journals had increased. In only three years of this century, the number of publications by Brazilian researchers was greater than that of the whole last century. This increase was the result of the policies established at the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) in the late 90s. These policies were widely debated in our community and became consensual. The policy to encourage Brazilian researchers to publish their studies in international journals was a great success, but should have ended after running its course. The policy was based on the classification of dental journals by CAPES (named QUALIS), and this classification was further adopted not only by CNPq – to evaluate researchers – but unfortunately also by universities – to evaluate academic merit by faculty members. Since QUALIS ranks dental journals by “quantifying the quality of the studies” published therein, researchers are forced either on their own terms or by the graduate courses to which they are affiliated to publish in the better ranking journals. If, on one hand, this process had at first the virtue of encouraging Brazilian researchers to disseminate their publications in the “best journals,” on the other hand, it resulted in Brazilian publications lending prestige to journals edited abroad in detriment of Brazilian journals.

Accordingly, Brazilian researchers are now in the midst of a dilemma when it comes to deciding in which journal they should submit their writings, because – according to QUALIS – there are no Class A Brazilian journals in our area! Caught up in this dilemma, if a Brazilian researcher decides to publish a Class A study in a Class B journal, he will be jeopardizing not only his graduate course in its evaluation by CAPES, but also himself in requests made to CNPq or to research support foundations in Brazilian states, which have this evaluative bias.

With this in mind, CAPES evaluation policy-makers (unfortunately – or not – CNPq also uses the QUALIS system) have not had the sensibility to propose changes to encourage us researchers to publish in our journals, and, in so doing, contributing towards their gaining international recognition and eventually attracting publications from foreign colleagues. As a result, the vicious cycle of colonialism goes on, and we seem condemned to live with it forever (“our gold still continues to be sent out of our country”).

The upshot is that Brazilian journals, specifically *Brazilian Oral Research* (BOR), have to deal with their distress of how to consolidate themselves internationally: if they are not attractive enough to attract our own Class A publications, how can they attract foreign publications? I cite the BOR specifically because it is the journal of our research society – the Brazilian Society for Dental Research (SBPqO) – and it is not given the same institutional support granted to other journals. SBPqO belongs to the International Association for Dental Research (IADR), which should be the institution most interested in promoting its Regions, Divisions, Sections and respective achievements; nonetheless, BOR’s distress must first be resolved locally.

In a nutshell, if we have displayed incompetence in doing our own “housework,” we cannot look forward to anything else beyond it.