Helping Non-tenured Education Faculty Get Published in Peer-reviewed Journals
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Abstract

If university trustees and administrators in the United States require junior faculty to publish or perish, then they should provide extensive support for this requirement. Such support is evident in the School of Education at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, where administrators and faculty became team members and held cooperatively planned informal get-togethers with non-tenured faculty. These informal sessions focused on pertinent topics aimed at getting published in peer-reviewed journals. The topics included: (a) synthesizing a dissertation and condensing it into a manuscript format; (b) increasing an awareness of the format, content, editorial policy, and audience of journals for which authors intend to submit a manuscript; (c) realizing creative potential and being aware of methods that kill creativity; (d) becoming a serious critic and editor of one's own work; (e) weighing the benefits of submitting manuscripts to themed issues or regular issues of journals; (f) selecting journals that represent one's current developmental level of research and writing and that the university considers acceptable; (g) considering electronic journals as viable options for publishing; (h) thinking about presenting a paper at a convention but realizing its pros and cons; and (i) managing a busy academic year while being productive and visible, but not exhausted.

Getting tenure at most schools of education in the United States is usually a six- or seven-year process. Typically, junior faculty are expected to demonstrate excellent teaching, to engage in rigorous committee work, and to publish books and articles in peer-reviewed journals. My experience in academe during the past three decades suggests that non-tenured education faculty sustain incredible stress as they simultaneously strive to become savvy about university politics, cope with low entry-level salaries, and juggle university expectations. Probably, the most challenging expectation for junior faculty is getting published. This milestone is considered a major requirement for gaining tenure, and tenure is viewed as a necessary foundation for being promoted and for advancing to leadership positions.

In the School of Education at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, my colleagues and I formed a team to support publishing efforts among junior faculty. Spearheaded by Dean Robert Manheimer, Assistant Dean Kathy Lusteg, several professors, and me, this project was designed to help junior faculty increase their quality and quantity of articles in peer-reviewed journals. Although books and book chapters

are valued in the School of Education , we focused on helping faculty publish articles in print and electronic journals because they are a priority. Initially, we considered our faculty resources, which included four editors of national journals, members of editorial review boards, and researchers who published extensively in refereed journals. These experienced academics joined our team, and we cooperatively developed pertinent topics for discussion during informal get-togethers with non-tenured faculty. The following topics served as guidelines for supporting their publishing efforts.

Synthesize Your Dissertation and Condense it into a Manuscript Format

When I was a doctoral candidate, an important requirement was to convert the dissertation into a manuscript so that it was ready for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. I recall the challenge of condensing a structured, comprehensive document into a user-friendly paper of fifteen to twenty-five pages. This reflection served as a foundation for our first informal session with junior faculty. We highlighted their recently completed dissertations and the ways in which their hard work could be used as a published study in a reputable journal. As expected, some dissertations consisted of the type of data collection and data analysis that was appropriate for research quarterlies. Other dissertations had greater value for being converted to several shorter manuscripts. For example, one participant's study focused on improving middle school students' literacy learning through interactive discussions, drama activities, and independent reading. We talked about ways of converting this study (especially the comprehensive related literature chapter) to three manuscripts. We also specified that each manuscript should consist of its own introduction, related literature section, practical application, summary, and bibliography. Furthermore, we stressed the importance of maintaining a conversational tone, eliminating jargon, and avoiding stereotyping related to race, gender, age, and disability. As the participants helped one another, they gained insights about their colleagues' research and about ways of improving their own writing for publication.

Know the Format, Content, Editorial Policy, and Audience of the Journal for Which you Intend to Submit a Manuscript

Whether junior faculty are using their dissertations or considering other manuscripts for publication, they must be aware of different journals' individual or collective emphasis on theory, research, practice, or all the above. Intimacy with a journal usually involves reading many issues of it and knowing the instructions for authors, which are often available in the journal or a related website. In *The Reading Teacher*, the editors welcome "Feature Articles," "Teaching Tips" submissions (brief pieces explicitly applied to a classroom), and "Filler" submissions (annotated bibliographies of published articles or websites concerning a topic). In *Intervention in School and Clinic*, types of submissions include "Feature Articles," "Current Topics in Review," "An Interview with," "Technology Trends," "What Works for Me," "Books and More," "20 Ways to," and "Spotlight on Students." Author guidelines for this journal indicate that manuscripts should be practitioner-oriented and from 9 to 18 pages. No extensive reviews of professional literature are accepted, and a one-paragraph introduction for the topic is considered adequate. The editors of *Current Issues in Education*, an online journal, welcome articles concerning theory, research, and practice. Manuscripts for this journal may be submitted in a variety of ways:

- URL(so the related pages can be downloaded for blind review ready to run on *CIE*'s Intranet.)
- Attached to an email. All documents must be in Microsoft Word or they will be returned to the sender. Also, if tables are utilized, it is the author's responsibility to submit them in Microsoft Word Table Format.

In addition to these three publications, other journals provide space for opinion or argumentative articles, and some journals designate entire issues or parts of issues for articles concerning themes. Furthermore, most journal editors maintain a policy concerning manuscript style and require specific guidelines, such as those indicated in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001). Preparation

guidelines vary in certain journals; however, with some editors requiring APA style for the references section and *The Chicago Manual of Style* (2003) for other sections of the manuscript.

We used these and other issues to help junior faculty understand that they must know a journal intimately before submitting a manuscript to it. This insight helped the participants recognize that the more they know about a journal, the more credible their manuscript will be to the editor and peer reviewers.

Realize Your Creative Potential, and Be Aware of Methods That Kill Creativity

I am amazed at how many academics do not consider journal articles to be creative. Granted, some articles are dense with technical data collection and data analysis, but even these contributions can demonstrate unique ways of synthesizing ideas and applying research findings to practice. Teresa Amabile has published extensively in the field of creativity, and her research has implications for both industry and academe (Amabile, 1988a, 1988b, 1992, 1998; Amabile, Hadley, & Kramer, 2002; Amabile & Sensabaubh, 1992; Collins & Amabile, 1999; Conti & Amabile, 1999; Hennessey & Amabile, 1999; Hill & Amabile, 1993). For more related publications by Amabile and her colleagues, visit http://www.hbs.edu/research/index.html. Also, see Florida and Goodnight (2005), Specifically, Amabile discovered the following methods that undermine people's interest and creativity when they are involved in an interesting and potentially creative project:

- *Expected evaluation*: People who focus on how their work will be judged are less creative than individuals who do not have to worry about this evaluative constraint.
- *Surveillance*: Individuals who are conscious of being observed while working are less creative than individuals who are not conscious of being observed.
- *Reward*: Individuals who perceive themselves as working mostly for a tangible reward are less creative than individuals who are not working mainly for a reward.
- *Competition*:People who perceive themselves in direct and threatening competition with colleagues are less creative than those who are not focusing on competition.
- *Restricted choice*: Individuals whose choice is restricted are less creative than individuals who have a freer choice. Scientists who are engaged in creativity seem to be especially affected by choice. Specifically, freedom of choice for scientists was the most important aspect of environments that supported high creativity. Restricted choice was the most significant factor that affected low creativity.
- *Extrinsic motivation*: People who think about all the external purposes for doing something are less creative than people who think about all the intrinsic purposes for doing something.

During our get-togethers with non-tenured faculty, we unanimously agreed that these six methods can stifle, or kill, creativity in industry and in academe. We also agreed that they appear to be embedded in most universities' expectations for faculty. We further concluded that these expectations can reduce or hinder creativity. For example, faculty expect to be:

- *evaluated* by students and administrators;
- *observed* in classes and during committee work;
- *rewarded* with tenure, promotions, and grants;
- stressed about *competing* for tenure, promotions, and grants;
- *restricted* in their choice of teaching schedules and research priorities; and
- involved in tasks for *extrinsic* reasons, such as achieving tenure.

Of course, one can argue that the "real world" encounters much of the above and that intrinsic motivation is idealistic and in conflict with real-world expectations. One can further argue that journals also foster extrinsic motivation for writing, including writing that focuses on themed issues, that meets the readership's expectations, and that fulfills the requirements of journal editors and peer reviewers.

How do we reconcile these external dichotomies? The work of Amabile and her colleagues indicates that more and better creativity takes place in the context of intrinsic motivation. Common sense, therefore, suggests that faculty members are more likely to produce creative, authentic journal articles when external forces are eliminated or reduced. Not surprisingly, neither university nor journal expectations represent a perfect world. Both are similar in requiring prospective researchers and authors to meet external criteria for publishing. Universities usually require faculty publications to advance knowledge, to bring prestige to the campuses, and to achieve tenure and promotions. Journal editors and peer reviewers are equally concerned with issues of advancing knowledge and of gaining prestige for the journals and the professional associations that sponsor them. Educational journals, however, provide a variety of print and electronic alternatives, offering options to prospective authors to write about theory, research, and practice. Thus, writers have opportunities to reach their comfort zone as they match their interests, preferences, and talents with journal expectations.

During our get-togethers, we reflected on the creative process and its connection to the vitally important role of imagination in the development of knowledge. In their thoughtful chapter, "Imagination and the Growth of the Human Mind," Kane and Carpenter (2003) provide essential insights for nurturing playful environments that stimulate children's imagination and establish a foundation for the development of knowledge into adulthood. As adult academics, we probably came from backgrounds that either stimulated imagination in natural, meaningful contexts or encouraged abstraction—"the removing of something from its context, [which] necessarily tears it away from the forces that generate its particular form and substance" (Kane & Carpenter, 2003, p. 128). Thus, as children, some of us experienced fascination dwelling on bugs and worms found in soil, their natural habitat, while others might have been exposed to direct instruction about bugs and worms. Regardless of our backgrounds, academics have potential to engage in (serious) imaginary play as they construct manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals. At the very least, we need time to think, reflect, and imagine before we engage in thoughtful writing. The last-minute, or eleventh-hour, perspective usually does not work well in writing with creativity and imagination. In addition to time, when we engage in actual writing, we need to remind ourselves not to overemphasize explicit aspects of knowledge; otherwise, "we underestimate the importance of the implicit, *the imaginative*, components of human knowing that provide the context rendering meaning and understanding rather than information alone" (Kane & Carpenter, 2003, p. 129). Manuscripts should reflect a balance of pertinent information, accompanied by imagination and creativity, as they lean toward representing authentic contributions.

During our informal meetings, we discussed these and other issues related to creativity and imagination. These discussions seemed to provide non-tenured faculty with a clearer sense of direction and to reduce some of their anxieties.

Become a Serious Critic and Editor of Your Own Work

Most junior faculty have strong content backgrounds concerning their specialties. Their work sometimes lacks credibility, however, because it has not been carefully revised and edited. To demonstrate credibility with editors and their peer reviewers, we stressed the importance of writers not only generating substantive content but also reading their manuscripts (sometimes aloud) at least five times, spaced over several weeks. During this process of revision, we suggested that authors share their drafts with colleagues for the purpose of receiving constructive feedback that could result in more credible rewrites. We also encouraged authors to edit their work carefully while focusing on such criteria as:

- *Brevity*: Omit words that add nothing to meaning. Examples: Change "during the course of" to "during" and "few in number" to "few."
- *Clarity*: Do not use vague adjectives when specific ones are called for. Do not write "We considered numerous strategies." Instead write "We considered 9 strategies."
- *Tone and style*: Make sure your words sound as if they come from a human being—not an institution.

Example: Change "Further notification will follow" to "I'll keep you informed" and "In the judgment of this author" to "I believe."

- *Variety*: Avoid starting each sentence with the same part of speech, such as a noun or pronoun. Caution: Do not try to start each sentence with a different part of speech. Just strive for some variety.
- *Content*: Make your purpose immediately clear. Do not force the reader to wade through several pages before understanding why you wrote the piece.
- *Paragraph strength*: Each paragraph should deal with only one topic. Including too many topics will make your reader work too hard. Also, when needed, use transitional devices between paragraphs.

These six suggestions were adapted from When Editing Your Own Work (2004). Other suggestions for revising and editing one's work were also considered, with the following reminder: "Don't expect journal reviewers to do this work!" (McKinney , 2005). Both junior and senior faculty seemed to benefit from this perspective.

Weigh the Benefits of Submitting Manuscripts to Themed Issues or Regular Issues of Journals

Another concern that surfaced was writing for themed versus general issues of peer-reviewed journals. Not surprisingly, both have merit. For example, themed issues approach an important area from a range of perspectives and, thus, provide opportunities for targeting manuscripts toward specific aspects of themes. General issues provide more topics for readers and more choices for potential authors.

In support of writing for themed issues, Henson (1995) found that 31% of articles appearing in 49 journals

> … were related to designated themes. The advantage of writing on a designated theme is that most journals that publish at least some themed issues receive only one-third as many manuscripts for their announced themed issues as for their general issues. Put another way, writing for a themed issue reduces the competition by about two-thirds and so can double or triple your manuscript's potential for acceptance. (Henson, 1995, p. 803)

Another point of view suggests that only extraordinary manuscripts should be sent to themed issues of journals. One reason is that editors designate specific issues for particular themes, and this publishing schedule can result in a manuscript being held for review. For instance, manuscripts submitted for a theme in the May issue of a journal might have a deadline submission date of December 1. Realistically, this timeline means that the manuscripts might be reviewed from December to March and that busy editors might send rejection letters to the authors between March and April. If the authors completed and submitted their manuscripts in September, then the manuscripts will be held for most of the academic year as the editors and peer reviewers make decisions about acceptance, rejection, or revision. Another reason is that themed issues tend to attract "big names" who are well-known in the thematic area, and their experience and expertise increase their chances of getting published in the thematic issue. Regrettably, well-known authors sometimes receive preferential treatment, even if their manuscripts are not excellent. Recently, my colleagues and I read all the articles that addressed an important theme in a respected journal. Most of the articles were excellent, but two were embarrassingly mediocre. We believe that the editor relaxed the standards for these two articles and published them because of the authors' worldwide reputations. We also feel that better manuscripts were rejected because the authors were not well-known. Simply put, politics can affect journal writing.

These issues were discussed at our meetings, and they seemed to provide junior faculty with realistic insights about choosing themed or regular issues of journals as writing outlets.

Select Journals That Represent Your Current Developmental Level of Research and Writing and That Your University Considers Acceptable

Becoming an effective writer for peer-reviewed journals involves developmental growth and savvy. Serious writers are continuously improving their craft by reading extensively, engaging in deep reflection, and seeking constructive criticism of their work. Savvy writers are also aware of the degree to which their manuscripts fit the needs and expectations of different journals and simultaneously fulfill the publishing requirements of their universities. "Publishing in the right journal is recommended to aspiring authors, although determining the right journals in which to publish can be a problem for the beginning writer. One method of determining what constitutes a top journal is the publication's acceptance rate" (Shelley & Schuh, 2001, p. 11). According to Cabell and English (1998), manuscripts that represent significant contributions tend to be published in journals with the lowest acceptance rates. One criterion for top journals is an acceptance rate of 10-20% (Murningham, 1996).

During our get-togethers, we talked about these issues as well as resources that are available for helping faculty match their manuscripts with potential writing outlets. One such resource was developed by the Education Department faculty for the Committee on Rank and Tenure at Le Moyne College. Specifically, journals were given designations, such as *Above First Tier* (with multiple blind reviews and an acceptance rate of less than 10%), *First Tier* (with blind reviews, usually by less peer reviewers, and an acceptance rate of 11-20%), and *Second Tier* (with or without peer reviewers and an acceptance rate beyond 20%). Then, journals were listed under these designations. For example, *Above First Tier* journals included *American Educational Research Journal, Harvard Educational Review, Reading Research Quarterly,* and *The Reading Teacher. First Tier journals* included *English Journal, Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, Journal of Literacy Research*, and *Language Arts. Second Tier* journals included *Behavioral Disorders, English Education, Journal of Learning Disabilities*, and *Middle School Journal*. For more information concerning these journal designations and related periodicals, visit Education Department Faculty (1997) of Le Moyne College at http://www.lemoyne.edu/faculty_senate/rank_tenure//standards/education.html.

Consider Certain Electronic Journals as Viable Options for Publishing

Faculty also engaged in thoughtful discussions about the value of publishing articles in peer-reviewed electronic journals. We considered e-journals as potential writing outlets because some of them seem to be having a greater impact on their readership (Rudner, Miller-Whitehead, & Gellmann, 2002). For example, Tenopir and King (2000) estimated that a typical article appearing in an American scientific journal will probably be read about 900 times. In contrast, "it is not uncommon for an article in *Education Policy Analysis Archives (EPAA)* to be read more than 10,000 times; several articles have been viewed more than 30,000 times. The 100 articles in *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation (PARE)*, a more specialized electronic journal, had averaged more than 7,000 views per article as of February, 2002. In September, 2002, *PARE* readership reached the one million mark." (Rudner, Miller-Whitehead, & Gellmann, 2002).

Many scholars, however, believe that e-journals are not as esteemed as traditional print journals. Non-tenured faculty, therefore, might be apprehensive about the possibility of tenure committees' negative view of online publications. Undoubtedly, some tenure committees will underestimate the value of e-journals and not give them as much credit toward tenure. A related issue is that some e-journals might fail or "are likely to be less permanent than printed journals" (Kiernan, 1999, p. A25).

On the contrary, Rudner, Miller-Whitehead, and Gellmann (2002) believe online "journals are often as rigorous as print journals and have a much greater impact in terms of educating readers." These researchers offer recommendations to editors and publishers of e-journals. Some of the recommendations are also pertinent for authors. These include: (a) submitting articles on current topics, (b) selecting e-journals in which articles are permanently archived, (c) choosing online journals that are indexed by *Current Index to Journals in Education* and *Education Index,* (d) researching e-journals with a focus on their usage statistics, and (e) providing colleagues and tenure committees with information concerning the value and impact of certain online journals.

Think About Presenting a Paper at a Convention, But Realize Its Pros and Cons

Chairingsessions and presenting papers at conventionsare exciting activities for academics. These conventions provide excellent opportunities for meeting new colleagues, solidifying friendships, and sharing ideas. Participation at conventions can also lead to authorship and co-authorship of articles, especially when the presenters are thoroughly prepared, attentive to audience feedback, and committed to transforming the presentations into manuscripts.

Making contributions at conventions, however, is time-consuming. Presentations involve months of preparation, travel and hotel arrangements, and related groundwork. Though exhilarating, these activities can siphon time and energy away from publications. Realistically, most convention presentations do not result in articles, book chapters, and books.

As we discussed these and related concerns at our meetings, both novice and experienced faculty talked about their experiences at conventions. We agreed that *judiciously* getting involved in convention activities is important for both sharing and learning. We also concluded that these activities have potential for creating articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Manage Your Busy Academic Year While Being Productive and Visible, but Not Exhausted

During some of our get-togethers, new faculty talked about being overwhelmed with the challenge and frustration of getting published in the context of other time-consuming responsibilities. They felt inundated with (a) planning, teaching, and assessing their students' progress; (b) serving on curriculum, personnel, academic standing, and ad hoc committees; (c) becoming involved in partnerships with local school districts; (d) attending department and faculty meetings; and (e) becoming savvy about politics. Compounding their stresses are low salaries and expenses for college loans, which can cause new faculty to teach course overloads during the academic year and summer sessions. This harried context can drain the human mind of cognitive and creativity energy, which is necessary for clear thinking and effective writing. Expecting junior faculty to be overly involved with university responsibilities and to still find time to publish substantive articles is unrealistic. As new faculty struggle to survive the tenure process, they need support, not more stress.

During our informal meetings, we talked openly about the stresses encountered by new faculty, and we considered potential solutions. These solutions included having junior faculty choose only one committee on which they would like to serve and supporting their efforts and growth on this committee. For example, as members of the Curriculum Committee, junior faculty might work closely with mentors to revise standards, goals, and course syllabi. These new faculty, therefore, would have the opportunity to choose the one committee on which they prefer to serve, to receive help in completing committee tasks, and to learn from this process. In addition to committee work, we considered ways of helping non-tenured faculty publish articles. Again, mentors can be helpful, especially if they have good track records as researchers, writers, and editors. To increase the chances of matching the right mentors with the right faculty members, we sought potential mentors and asked them to list their areas of expertise. We also asked new faculty who were interested in being mentored to list their research and publication priorities. This approach provided new faculty with opportunities to decide if they needed a mentor and, if so, to choose a mentor closely connected to their research agenda. These types of assistance seemed to help junior faculty to be more productive and visible and less frustrated and exhausted.

Conclusion

As we reflected on the informal meetings and mentoring sessions in the School of Education, we noticed faculty developing a greater willingness to conduct research and to publish related articles. We also

recognized some differences in the research agendas of the female faculty and their male counterparts. In general, most of the women conducted research at a somewhat slower pace (Bellas & Toutkoushian, 1999), probably because they were extremely careful about their data collection and data analysis and because they were more likely to collaborate and coauthor articles with colleagues. Understandably, these research styles resulted in most of the women taking more time to submit their manuscripts to journal editors, and they, therefore, did not publish their work to the degree that men did (Bellas & Toutkoushian, 1999; Boyer, 2004; Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, & Chronister, 2001; Schneider, 1998; Tesch, Wood, Helwig, & Nattinger, 1995). These tentative comparisons of the women's and men's research styles are not intended as indicators of quality in research methodology or in published outcomes. Rather, they suggest differences in comfort zones of the female and male faculty who conduct research and publish their findings. The informal meetings and mentoring sessions scheduled for next year will focus, in part, on supporting the different research agendas, interests, and styles of female and male faculty.

Overall, we are pleased with the dedicated efforts of our colleagues who are working cooperatively to instill a commitment toward scholarly writing. Although our work is not a panacea, it represents steps in the right direction. Thus far, both junior and senior faculty have demonstrated genuine interest in continuing their research and publication in print and online journals. In a sense, this vitally important growth and development have increased the key players' academic empowerment through a reconceptualization of their roles as reflective, dialogical, and mindful educators (Kane & Snauwaert, 1999/2000). During the next few years, we will continue to monitor these efforts as we reflect on the quality and quantity of articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

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