Starting to Publish Academic Research as a Doctoral Student

Dorian Stoilescu and Douglas McDougall
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

dorian.stoilescu@utoronto.ca doug.mcdougall@utoronto.ca

Abstract

This article presents some opinions, views and advice that graduate students might consider in order to assess and improve their success as new scholars. Contrary to the famous motto 'publish or perish,' we argue that publishing academic research should be headed by intrinsic motivation for becoming a scholar and not by external pressures of social or professional requirements to produce scholarly work. This paper gives practical recommendations about building and sustaining the initial momentum in publishing. First, we discuss the importance of practicing academic writing as a way to improve scholarship and modalities to practice it. Some important issues about social collaboration, ethics, and policies that should be considered in the process of publication are also presented.

Keywords: doctoral studies, publishing in refereed journals, collaborating policies, ethical issues in publication, submissions guidelines, academic writing

Introduction

Few students, even those registered in doctoral programs, engage in formal academic writing at a level sufficient enough to get accepted in quality peer-reviewed journals (Gray & Drew, 2008). Having grasped the proper construction of a literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, collection of data, data analysis, findings, and discussions, some inspired academics might finish an article in a few days. However, for graduate students, who are finding themselves at the starting point of their academic career, it takes weeks if not months.

It is not easy to adjust one's life to publish scholarly manuscripts Doctoral students have not had much experience in this area. Some feel that focusing on academic writing, other than the dissertation, occurs when one has landed a post-doctoral or assistant professorship position. However, we argue that graduate students should not wait to secure any of these positions in order to attempt to publish academic research. It can be frustrating and an unpleasant experience if one needs to write under the pressure of finding a job or gaining tenure. These might be good reasons to publish for those who thrive being under stress, but there are better reasons. Graduate students should write for refereed journals, in order to see if they enjoy publishing and if academia is a suitable lifestyle for them. Maybe, doctoral students should write just because of who they are and not because of external, social, or professional pressures. There are many ways to start a publish-

ing journey such as serving as a reviewer for conferences and eventually serving as a reviewer for peer-reviewed journals.

The intent of this article is to offer advice about academic publishing for graduate students and include practical strategies about the process of 'breaking the ice' in publishing that seems to surround graduate students. We describe considerations, paths, and reasons that graduate students might consider in order to improve their pursuits of publishing academic articles. For doctoral students, writing in a refereed journal is a major accomplishment of their academic apprenticeship. This paper is written by two authors who hold different perspectives (one is a doctoral student and the other is a graduate faculty member) and explores different paths as well as choices of getting published. The first section gives an overview of writing articles as a graduate student. In the second section, the process of establishing scholarly awareness in academic publishing is presented. Some practical opportunities that graduate students should seek out in order to get published are described in the third section. Some social considerations to social networking are discussed in the next section. In the fifth section, we review some policies and ethical issues that should be considered in the act of writing, while in the next section, we discuss article submission. In the final section, some conclusions about the publishing process as a graduate student are drawn.

The Initial Start: Building the Momentum

There are some reasons why doctoral students delay the process of writing. The most common ones are graduate coursework, comprehensive exams, conducting research, teaching courses, as well as designing and writing of the doctoral dissertation. These requirements are stringent enough on their own to keep someone busy for their entire doctoral program. However, publishing academic work will make a difference when applying for an academic job in a research-oriented position. Likewise, a great number of teaching oriented universities are requiring publications for their scholars in order to offer them a position. Publishing, especially in peer-reviewed journals, is a realistic view of one's ability to prove that his or her work is well-regarded by a disciplinary community. As Gray and Drew (2008) argued, graduate students who publish during their studies are more probable to publish after they graduate.

Other than the barriers posed by the commitments of a doctoral program, there are other reasons that explain why many graduate students have difficulty publishing scholarly work. Some of these are the vicissitudes of graduate life, social obligations, or just the need to have downtime from regular academic work. Hence, during the doctoral program, it is important to recognize how life and writing needs should be well-planned (Ali & Kohun, 2007; Bolker, 1998; Grover, 2007).

Writing is considered by some academics as hard work (Boice, 1990, Silvia, 2007) and it requires adequate preparation. Sometimes, students expect that inspiration will just appear and make their writing magical. We argue that this is a very positive attitude toward writing although some additional plans and steps should be taken in order to keep being creative. Some doctoral students believe that they will be able to produce influential research in their field, while even willing to spend more years in graduate school in order to conduct more research and to publish significant academic papers. Other graduate students complete only the requirements specified in their graduate programs and look for opportunities to write after their program is finished. The major challenge in this case is that they might not even know if academic writing is right for them although they might get an academic job. If they wait until they have finished the dissertation, they will have missed some opportunities to disseminate their early findings and experiences. Another issue for them is that they might put their future academic tenure at risk or exclude themselves from getting accepted into research-oriented universities.

Publishing academic research articles in refereed journals is expected by a majority of universities. The purpose of our contemporary doctorate programs is not to make students write articles. Graduate students are supposed to show competence in performing research and completing a doctoral dissertation. However, publishing academic research is strongly recommended and students feel the pressure to publish scholarly manuscripts from the first day of the graduate program.

Each article requires time, quality of reasoning, expertise, and energy to write. Chances to publish sometimes come in too many ways; sometimes they are too rare. If, during the graduate program, a chance is given to a student to publish scholarly manuscripts, they should be adequately prepared to evaluate and take that opportunity. Does it provide one a venue to inform others about the research? Does it focus the student's attention on research or just take them away from the doctoral dissertation? Therefore, it is important to accurately evaluate the chances of successfully getting the article published and to make adequate decisions. By the time doctoral students finish graduate school, they should have become familiar with academic publishing practices and journals in their area of expertise.

Doctoral students may not be the best editors for their own writing, as they might have difficulties separating what is in their mind from what they wrote. In fact, they might doubt their own writing and not be able to determine whether it makes a contribution. Students may not be sure what topic is suitable. As a novice researcher, there are serious challenges in designing research and reporting it adequately. Although students lack the experience in reporting research and are not always being trained in academic writing, there are ways to be successful.

As Boice (1990), Johnson and Mullen (2007) as well as some other scholars acknowledged, the training for scholarly writing is not linear. Academic, familial, social, personal, and financial aspects mingle daily and are difficult to separate when the need to write appears. Hence, the power of cultivating and keeping a schedule to create and maintain a focus on scholarly writing remains essential.

The Awakening Act and the Warming up Process

While a mature scholar is more aware of difficulties in the academic writing process and can write fast, the doctoral student has a different trajectory. In fact, the awakening in academic writing is an event that does not occur quickly. Sometimes doctoral students reproduce previous literature reviews or fail to report new knowledge. A successful article must contribute to the research community in some way and so the article has to have a flow that outlines what the student learned and its new contribution to the body of knowledge (BoK).

The ideal topic to write about is one in which the student has experience. Two important points to consider are originality and the depth of involvement. With respect to originality, very few students are able to be the first contributor to a topic, so they should take the opportunity to write in order to build their expertise. With respect to the depth of involvement, each scholar is asked to select a topic that deeply expresses his or her personality. As Muow (2006) puts it, "Don't write an article because you have to; any journal editor will immediately know your heart isn't in it. The article that clearly and coherently expresses the passion of the author will be the one that succeeds" (p. 2). If the originality of an article is highly desirable, the depth of involvement remains essential.

The article must have some theme or story. While the author will only write one part of the article at a time, it must be clearly connected. As Elbow (1998) mentioned about the holistic aspect of writing, "All parts of a piece of writing are interdependent. No part is done till all parts are done" (p. 75).

Selecting an Adequate Journal

It takes time to learn and produce successful writing in academic journals. Therefore, students should locate adequate journals that are interested in accepting the themes and methods of their research (Knight & Steinbach, 2008). An author should first learn about the detailed aspects of a specific journal that could be the target for his or her article. It helps to read articles in previous issues in order to understand which research topics and paradigms are encouraged and which are not. In addition, potential authors should read about the editor and the core editorial board in order to see what they recently published and what they might view suitable for publishing. In order to write in a specific area, we recommend participating in social activities like congresses or conferences linked with that specific topic. Doctoral students should participate in professional activities, such as doctoral consortiums, that offer opportunities to meet with authors having similar research topics.

Another important aspect to consider is who are the potential readers and the degree of specialization that they expect to posses when reading the article. For instance, there are journals with articles that focused on a small number of special topics and there are journals targeting a large number of readers having different skills in a specific discipline. There are journals that publish in highly narrowed themes, there are journals publishing only broad themes for a discipline, and there are also journals that are publishing in interdisciplinary areas. With regard to the number of readers, there are journals having a great number of readers, while other journals have only a small number. Therefore, choosing and knowing a journal is essential in order to publish scholarly manuscripts.

The actual submission to the journal does not give the student much credit on their academic record. Therefore, we strongly advise students to cautiously evaluate their chances of publishing in certain journals. We have seen doctoral students contemplating publishing in top journals and unfortunately spending their time without any academic success. While the highly ranked journals are always preferred, students should pay attention to learn about the realistic chances of getting accepted, and the amount of time that is required to apply and pass each submission's stage in order to finally get accepted in these top journals. These journals usually deal with a high rate of rejection (usually 90–95%), and, in most cases, the lack of experience might put some students in this category.

If students are just beginning the journey of publishing, we recommend submission to the middle level journals. There is a high probability that, regardless of journal, the number of revisions might be extensive due to one's lack of experience, so that the time of completion will be greater than expected. On the other hand, there are some quality journals that publish more than 50% of the submissions. They might accept articles that are not well constructed but have great ideas. Their editors take more time to edit the work and the reviewers give valuable feedback. Johnson and Mullen (2007) suggested also targeting middle level journals. These journals deal with a lower rejection rate, somewhere between 25-75%. They are willing to publish any suitable professionally written piece of work or any reasonable academic contribution and give authors a fair credit. In addition, some of these journals might have a faster review process so that the article might get accepted for publication in less than six months.

There are also new journals or journals of major associations. These journals have a higher acceptance rate and will publish without many revisions. They are almost never cited and, as a result, students will not get much merit in getting accepted in these journals. Publishing a few times in these journals might be acceptable, but we recommend not spending much effort on these types of journals.

Opportunities to Publish Academic Research

We believe that writing and publishing are social practices. Although graduate students may spend time writing and thinking alone, writing and publishing do not remain solitary activities. It is through publishing academic writing that doctoral students connect to the research community. Here, we present several opportunities and forms of publishing academic writing that a graduate student might target.

Being a Reviewer

Being a reviewer will give doctoral students opportunities to learn current trends in their areas of interest. More exactly, reviewing for conferences and journals provide them with consistent and practical ways to learn about new scholar trends in their field. In this way, they might evaluate topics and approaches that recently became accepted and build on them. Being a reviewer is considered to be a great accomplishment, and doctoral students and new scholars might find that learning to assess academic research will help them to build scholar apprenticeship as future academics. We suggest that doctoral students avoid volunteering to review articles in journals unrelated with their present academic interest or volunteer for too many reviews yearly.

Writing a Book Review

Although a book review might appear in a peer-reviewed journal, a book review is, in most cases, a non-peer reviewed paper. The book review is usually between 1,000 to 2,000 words. We have seen book reviews written by famous professors and by graduate students. Some people might treat this genre as insignificant. We disagree; insights of the review are important. Advice to follow in writing a book review, the doctoral student could consider the following:

- Write about books that are within one's expertise. It is good to learn what other researchers recently did and systematically disseminate their contributions in the field. By presenting their contributions, a book review will show expertise.

- Try to write book reviews about books that are less than two years old. For books older than two years, write about them only if they are seminal in their area.

- Avoid books that are different from one's expertise. These do not bring the student any benefit and might spoil their reputation. Over the years, when people evaluate academic expertise, finding reviews in which the student do not have any expertise might make that person seem unprofessional.

- Do not write a review that only attacks the content of the book or describe its authors in negative ways. In addition, we recommend avoiding writing about books or authors that the reviewer does not sincerely appreciate.

- Be cautious in writing about books about authors that the doctoral student personally knows. In this case, appreciative phrases should be moderated. Moreover, the reviewers should acknowledge their personal links with authors.

Publishing from Coursework

Publishing papers based on assignments in coursework offers a clear topic for doctoral students. Several students and professors have mentioned to us that they succeeded in publishing assignments from their coursework. Students have the advantage of completing an extensive literature in that topic and may have started a small project in this area.

We note that the overwhelming majority of course papers will never become journal articles. This is because these papers probably contain themes and sections requested within a specific course

outline, or previous threads of discussions with professors and colleagues. The writing style and expectations presented in a course paper are usually much lower than that of an academic research article. Therefore, a great amount of effort is required to refine the clarity and quality of the course paper if desired to submit such work to a journal. Becker (2007) mentions that he is still attempting to finish a course paper after dozens of years. Overall, these are good points to start with but should be further extended with adequate expertise and effort.

Publishing an Article Based on a Conference Paper

Writing an article from a paper presented in conference is a promising path. If it is a conference with proceedings, the student has already completed writing a substantial part of the article. During the presentation, the author might receive feedback from the conference reviewers or, at least, learn more about what is clear and what needs clarification. Students should socialize by approaching people with similar interests. This provides time to think about the topic, to clarify some of the ideas, to think more clearly about a possible article, and to receive new input.

Students should take this opportunity to write the article based on the conference paper, preferably within the same publisher of the conference and the journal. After the conference passes, students should finish writing of the article. This time should be used to finish the paper as the feedback and the new perspectives gained from the conference will highly increase the chances of improving the article. We noticed that many papers are only presented at conferences, without being further published in journals. This is because the text of a conference has less quality than an article from refereed journals. Therefore, the authors have to improve the quality of the conference paper in order to increase its probability of acceptance to a refereed journal.

Writing as a Research Assistant or Graduate Assistant

Being a graduate or a research assistant might provide some opportunities to publish academic reports. Students should find a team where research is the main focus. Most graduate students finish their research tasks at the data collection stage and do not have any opportunities to do some data analysis or write the findings and the final conclusions. If students find an opportunity to publish as a research assistant or as a graduate assistant, they should do so, given that they are part of a team that will accept additional writing members. Second, students should mention in advance that they want the opportunity to publish as one of the outcomes of participation in the research project.

Writing from Doctoral Dissertation

Students should view the doctoral dissertation as a great opportunity to write academic research articles (Schniederjans, 2007). Students are experts in their area of study. They have worked for years reading articles and performed original research in this topic. Despite these advantages, there are not a great percentage of doctoral students publishing from their dissertation (Dunleavy, 2003; Francis & Mills, 2009; Goldsmith, Komlos, & Schine Gold, 2001). We know that doctoral dissertation is quite different from an academic research article (Bolker, 1998; Kamler, 2008; Luey, 2005). The doctoral dissertation design has been discussed and presented to the dissertation committee. The student will have given them many details while explaining the arguments in the dissertation. Therefore, the dissertation has received much feedback and should have most of the grammatical and structural errors removed, however, its length and details are different than that needed for journal article.

Reshaping the text for a larger audience may require much additional work (Francis & Mills, 2009). The size of an article is less than the size of a doctoral dissertation. The student will have to seriously think about what to remove. There are some key questions to be considered: What

literature should be kept and what literature should be removed? Should the theoretical frame-work be mentioned, should it be omitted, or should it be changed? What research questions, find-ings, and explanations should be maintained for the article, and which should be removed? These issues are not perfunctory tasks that get done easily but, rather, require a lot of effort, additional time, creativity, and dedication. As Schniederjans (2007) mentioned, it is very important that doc-toral students work with their supervisor and committee members for a long period of time, in order to learn ethical issues, work habits, writing skills, and methodological protocols.

Writing Articles Based on Literature Review or Theoretical Aspects

Some journals do not appreciate an article based on theoretical concepts or review of the litera-ture and automatically label this genre as unoriginal or minor. As others, (i.e. Levy & Ellis, 2006) already pointed out, we totally disagree with that; it is, in fact, the quality of the review that mat-ters. The difference is whether the review offers a systematic approach, a consistent perspective of a specific topic, and a valuable contribution to the BoK. Instead of poorly designed or reported 'original' research, disseminating previous research and predicting tendencies based on previous contributions makes the contribution valuable. It is essential to go beyond simply mentioning stu-dies and theories. Students should pose the following questions: What are the main ideas? What are some general trends? Who are the main contributors and why? How are these similar and what differences do they take in their approaches? Is it possible to make consistent evaluations, recommendations, or predictions for the further research in this area? Are there any gaps in the literature? What is currently well known and what is still unknown?

In all, writing an article based on a review of the literature might offer another possibility to pub-lish scholarly manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals. The advantage is that students are not re-quired to design and report on their own research. Another advantage is that, after completing this work, one will learn the state-of-the-art research in this specific area. We recommend writing ar-ticles on topics that match the student's original research as it helps to build their expertise.

Social Aspects to Consider When Writing

Although intellectual and academic abilities are very important, we argue that these are not al-ways enough to sustain writing. Scholar writing is about publishing in different conference pro-ceedings, journals, or books, which inevitably requires a complex socio-academic environment. Thus, it is vital to have social skills and know how to extend professional contacts in the aca-demic community. Social skills are not only an ability to conduct ice-breaking activities but also to find people committed to join a team, build trust, and dedicate their greatest intellectual efforts to scholarship. We often meet doctoral students who get stuck completing a publishable version of a paper. Even though the content was clear in their mind, sometimes it is not easy to explicitly write it, and to be able to produce a scholarly outcome.

Authors do not start writing academic articles from nothing. Previous expertise, ideas, questions, paragraphs or big pictures about what the article would be are always present (Belcher 2009; Boice, 1990). There are doctoral dissertations, coursework, and conference presentations that might be a good start for graduate students. Social skills are essential to develop a nurturing envi-ronment that will sustain scholarship. Students need these skills to find the right coauthors - and negotiate the topics and participants for their research. Students also need these skills to discuss the rewriting of articles with other authors, journal editors, and reviewers in order to establish a publishing portfolio. At a minimum, doctoral students need some people willing to review what they wrote and to give them feedback. In order to have a long time relationship with academics who are able to be reviewers, students should reciprocate these commitments for them.

Finding Social Opportunities to Improve Writing Skills during the Graduate Program

There are several ways to improve writing skills that will be examined systematically in this section.

Writing alone

Writing alone is a major path to build academic personality. It is how both students and senior academics practice their writing skills and make progress. Writing alone is a positive aspect as long as the student is able to be clear about their thoughts and remain productive (Johnson & Mullen, 2007). However, students should stop writing alone when they have spent long periods of unproductive effort and still remain stuck with the same troublesome problems. When the article has flaws that can be mended by collaborating with other scholars, it is definitely the moment to stop writing alone. We have seen many papers left on the shelf for years since the student did not find the right people for assistance at the appropriate time.

Learning from books and special courses designed for writing

There are good books and articles about academic writing and learning how to write. Some of them are masterpieces. For scholarly writing, there are different categories of books that might be helpful: dictionaries, grammar books, books about academic writing (Strunk & White, 2000; Williams, 2000; Zinsser, 2001), books that discuss the motivations for the passion of writing (Boice, 1990; Elbow, 1998; Johnson & Mullen, 2007; Silvia, 2007), books about reporting research (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 2003; Day, 1996), and specialized books about writing articles (Belcher, 2009; Murray, 2009). Most research-oriented universities allocate an important number of resources for courses, workshops, and one-to-one counseling meetings in academic writing. The biggest inconvenience is that no book, course, or counselor will be enough to guarantee success in writing. However, used properly, these resources might be very helpful.

Collaborating with writing experts

It is always good to have writing adequately criticized by others. Adequate critiques might give valuable feedback and new ideas to improve the article. This is especially challenging when English is not the first language for doctoral students (Carter, 2009). However, experts in writing are not able to save articles based on poor research ideas. Elbow (1998) portraits such a writing expert by mentioning that "he isn't really listening to you. He usually isn't in a position where he can be genuinely affected by your words... He has to read them as an exercise" (p. 127).

But practicing writing techniques will not solve the problem of writing. As Strunk and White (2000) mentioned, writing is an act of believing in oneself and not a technique: "Style takes its final shape more from attitudes of mind than from principles of composition, for, as an elderly practitioner once remarked, 'Writing is an act of faith, not a trick of grammar'… If you write, you must believe in the truth and worth of the scrawl" (p. 84).

Writing with well established scholars

Writing with scholars who are well established would be advantageous and the first choice could be the student's advisor or a member of the dissertation committee. A scholar who has similar expertise is a good writing partner. In fact, they likely have already given the student some ideas for their doctoral dissertation and coursework. In addition, they are already aware of the student's expertise, potential, and research focus. They might be one of those people able to finish in one day the paper that kept the student struggling for months. However, serious thought should be considered about how to negotiate the power, time, and expertise with established scholars. First,

they are usually mature researchers and writers, so due to hectic schedules, professors might not be able to have enough time to spend with the student. For them, writing with a professional is faster and smoother, while writing with a student requires additional time for training and mentoring. Even writing the article together with senior academics, the student might not be able to understand their approaches or might be displeased by the small amount of time they spent actually writing the article. After publishing the academic research paper, students might feel frustrated because they felt that most of the paper was their own work and ideas yet two or more names have been attached to the paper as co-authors. Students should try to understand what the expert did in the article and, if they disagree with the contributions, write on their own the next time.

Writing in a peer-to-peer group

Building a peer-to-peer support group is very useful. There are support groups where people share their doctoral dissertation journey (Bolker, 1998). Some of these groups may support peers in their efforts to succeed in publishing. These groups might be valuable in that participants are sharing similar interests, and the different levels of expertise might be attractive (Becker, 2007). Unfortunately, few groups are effective in building adequate networking in order to support graduate students in their efforts on writing articles (Bolker, 1998).

Policies and Ethical Issues in Academic Publishing

There are multiple policies and ethical issues expressed by authors and editors (Brice & Bligh, 2004; Denholm, 2006; Serebnick & Harter, 1990; Tandon, Mahajan, Sharma & Gupta, 2006). Here we will discuss the following: 1) fake data and tendentious interpretations, 2) plagiarism, 3) unclear authorship, and 4) unacceptable submissions.

Fake Data and Tendentious Interpretations

Journals and editors have been reporting cases where the data for research was forged (Bartlett, 2010; Kaufman & Sugarman, 2001). It happens usually when researchers do not have enough data, they have inaccurate information, they do not have enough time, or they do not have enough evidence for their study. Another dishonest practice takes place when researchers willingly misrepresent their findings. This means avoiding some inferences and fabricating or exaggerating others. To avoid inaccurate or fake results, some journals from medicine and scientific fields often request the data and files containing the analysis, in order to verify if the research design, collection of data, and data analysis were properly performed.

Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism

Plagiarism, defined as using someone else's text or ideas without acknowledging it, is a serious breach of copyright agreements and has major consequences for those who trespass the rules of scholarship and honesty. There are different degrees of plagiarism, from copying paragraphs and sections, to copying ideas. They might have different causes, from sloppy documenting techniques and negligence to knowingly committing of fraud and misdemeanor.

One of the particular cases is self-plagiarism, which is reported when authors attempt to republish the same article or substantial parts from an article already accepted by another journal. Being under the pressure to publish, some authors attempt to recycle articles published previously. Therefore, it is required to train graduate students properly to avoid these traps. As Bouville (2008) recommended, these cases of plagiarism should be learned by doctoral students, not as ways of avoiding severe punishments, but as ways to reveal paths to adequate scholarship.

Gift, Pressured, and Ghost Authorship

Unfortunately, many articles containing multiple authors do not report accurately the "true" authors. These facts have been mentioned repeatedly by editors (Alexander, 1953; Slone, 1996). Alexander (1953) signaled the occurrence of suspected undeserved authorship, which means individuals who do not participate in the process of writing the article or their contribution is not substantial enough to be mentioned as co-authors. Unfortunately, these cases are not treated as seriously as plagiarism, although they have the some consequences: undeserved authorship.

The reverse phenomenon was also noticed, ghost authorship, where people participating in the writing of a paper and having a decisive contribution were not recognized as authors. In order to avoid these cases of fraudulent authorship, we suggest that, along with other suggestions (Bags, 2008; Slone, 1996), participating in the publishing process should be responsibly considered.

Unacceptable Submissions

Unacceptable submissions occur when an author submits, without any acknowledgment, the same article or large parts of it to two or more different outlets, including conferences and journals. All peer-reviewed journals require that the articles submitted are not under review by other journals. The most obvious reason for this is because reviewers are volunteers who provide feedback. There are many academic journals, so multiple submissions means that there are many extra reviewers looking at the same research article.

There are other important issues that doctoral students should consider about submitting academic research papers. First, as an important rule for all peer-reviewed journals, never submit the same article to two different journals at the same time. Second, if an author has used some of its content in other conference proceedings or article, they should discuss it with the editor or mention it in the acknowledgment section.

Submitting and Publishing Scholarly Manuscripts

Although the manuscript may have good ideas, is clear of typos, and employs the use of good grammar, first submissions are not the final stage. The student should be prepared to work with the reviewers to make the required corrections. In this view, some journals and associations such as American Educational Research Association (AERA) and Informing Science Institute (ISI) mentor authors and reviewers. There are often important issues to negotiate with the editors and reviewers. Delays often occur and the student should be prepared to wait for the feedback. Most of the journal reviewers are scholars working as volunteers; however, this does not mean that the journal can keep the article for years without reviewing the manuscript. Therefore, it is wise to negotiate with them a deadline when it is possible to have feedback about the article or check periodically on the status of the paper.

Assuming that all stages of preparing for writing, choosing the right team, and following the policies and ethical guidelines for submissions were properly accomplished, the final stage of submitting the final version requires the author to work with editors and reviewers. When the final papers are signed, the persistence finally pays off and the student starts a life as a scholar. This journey has been an opportunity for the student to learn to be a scholar.

This process of peer-review is not always smooth. As several editors mentioned, there are cases when the reviewers or the editors are not able to draw a competent evaluation (Benos et al. 2006; Roth, 2006). In addition, there are cases where peer-review might have conflicts of interest with the publication (Ancker & Flanagin, 2007; Bosetti & Toscano, 2008; Johnson, 2006; Langfeldt, 2006).

In all, although the peer-review system has flaws, it remains the only way to accept and validate one as a scholar. This is the stage when persistence and scholarship are highly required to make the difference. Taking the risks and finding one's voice are both indispensable to get through (Drake & Jones, 1997). Therefore, the student needs to learn from rejections as well as from acceptances (Foster, 2006). The first version of submission almost never gets accepted as it is (Mouw, 2006).When it is a positive outcome, the student is still requested to provide corrections and improved versions in a specific time limit.

Often, publishing has a domino effect: the more one publishes, the easier it is to get published again. Authors should acknowledge those persons who provided helpful feedback. It is important to celebrate successes and be aware of events and persons that have supported the writing. Step by step, academic writing will become a long term perspective and strategy. Therefore, it is important to balance academic achievement with adequate social and family interactions, adequate nutrition, routine exercise and physical activities, as well as personal health concerns. A life strategy will be required for success in academia.

Final Comments

Designing adequate academic projects, being aware of policies and rules in place, socializing and finding the right collaborators are essential aspects for doctoral students in their attempts to start their academic life. There is not only one right answer or right choice for make their plans succeed. Each case remains unique and should be considered in its particular context. By adopting a lifestyle suitable with their scholar life, doctoral students are deemed to find ways of sustaining their academic writing. Therefore, it is important to make realistic schedules and stick with them (Boice, 1990, 2000; Johnson & Mullen, 2007). Writing for a referred journal is the core of academic life.

As Cameron (1998) noted, "all of them did it by making time to write rather than waiting to 'find' time" (p. 14). Publishing academic research is not a onetime shot. Publishing is neither a random act nor a linear process: inspiration and hard work should prepare each other so that the academic writing work gets accomplished. Willing to contribute to the academic community should be attentively planned in order to find adequate paths of success in academic research.

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Biographies

Dorian Stoilescu is a doctoral student in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. His research interests include educational technology, teacher education, and mathematics education.

Douglas McDougall is Chair of the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. He teaches graduate courses in mathematics education. Currently, he is working on a SSHRC grant to investigate mathematics improvement in elementary schools using the Ten Dimensions framework. Also, he has been working on the Learning Consortium project on improving the teaching and learning of Grade 9 applied mathematics and is very active in professional organizations for mathematics education and school improvement. He is a former president of the Psychology of Mathematics Education, North American Chapter (PME-NA) and Educational Computing Organization of Ontario (ECOO).