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Writing for publication in business administration: Comparing insights from Brazilian and American scholars

Luís Fernando Varotto ^a*, Ronan Torres Quintão ^b, Tania Modesto Veludo-de-Oliveira ^a

^aEAESP-FGV, 2029 Nove de Julho Ave., São Paulo-SP, 01313-001, Brazil

^bCEFET-MG, Av. Amazonas, 5253, Belo Horizonte-MG, 30421-169, Brazil

Abstract

This paper seeks to compare the process of bibliographical production of Brazilian professors who lecture in postgraduate programs in the field of Business Studies with that of their North-American counterparts. In-depth interviews were conducted with professors, lectures in Brazil or US, who have presented articles for publication to international journals with JCR impact factor greater than 1. Keeping in mind the particularities of each nation's educational system, the results call for the organization of the process of bibliographical production in Brazil, so as to reduce the existing gap between the research conditions prevailing in Brazil and the US.

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1. Introduction

The development of scientific research is among the main assignments of a professor, especially one who acts on higher degree programs as a researcher. The role of the researcher is essential to promote the construction of knowledge in the discipline, the updating of professors through relevant academic discussions, and the transmission of the state of the art to students. The publication in scientific journals with a high impact factor has been widely used as a criterion for evaluating the performance of professors throughout the world. The Journal of Citation Reports (JCR) is an important gauge to measure the impact factor of journals. The JCR “offers a systematic, objective means to critically evaluate the world's leading journals, with quantifiable, statistical information based on citation data” (Retrieved November 18, 2012, from <http://thomsonreuters.com>). Brazil seeks its international inclusion in the scientific-academic scene, and in various areas, such as in Business Administration, having the work of North Americans one of its main references (Bertero, Caldas & Wood Jr., 2005; Roesch, 2005; Vergara, 2005). The Brazilian Ministry of Education, via the Capes Foundation (The Coordination for Enhancement of Higher Education Personnel) has encouraged researchers to publish in international journals with a high impact factor, with the understanding that journals with higher than 1 JCR in the Business Administration area represent the highest scientific production levels. This paper examines how Brazilian professors in the field of Business Administration

* Corresponding Author. Tel.: +55-113-385-9050

E-mail address: luis.varotto@gmail.com (L.F.Varotto)

have managed to establish an outstanding academic production in comparison to its North American counterparts. The objective of the research is the following: How do the Business Administration professors of great international repute of Brazil and the United States are compared in terms of organization to produce, write and publish academic articles in high impact journals?

2. Writing for publication: Barriers and motivators

The process of scientific production requires different skills of the researcher. In addition to developing the research project himself or herself, articulating and executing interdependent steps, which refer to the research design, methodology, data collection and analysis, the researcher still faces the challenge of communicating the result of the research in journals with an impact factor, which requires writing about the research, following strict standards of format and wording. Boice (1990) has pointed out the barriers that professors face during the writing process of a scientific paper, among which we ought to stress the fear of failure associated to the perfectionist idea that the paper is never good or mature enough to be published. The author has also cited procrastination and lack of time, which together cause the difficulty to begin writing. Belcher (2009) has stressed time management as a challenge for the professor in the process of scientific production, as it is necessary to reconcile the writing activity that frequently demands concentration in large different periods of time, class preparation, giving heed to students, among other regular teaching tasks. Furthermore, Belcher (2009) has mentioned difficulty in beginning to write from a blank sheet of paper and the lack of inspiration as common obstacles. Silvia (2007) has complemented this argumentation, reminding that a pretext used for postponing the act of writing is to complain about the lack of something, such as a new piece of equipment, computer or adequate space for the activity (i.e., a quiet study room).

Success in scientific production does not dispense discipline and persistence (Huff, 1999). Strategies to increase scientific productivity include spontaneous writing and sharing annotations and texts with peers (Boice, 1990; Belcher, 2009), and an adequate planning, as well as the stipulation of goals, priorities, timelines and specific places for the scientific writing (Boice, 1990; Silvia, 2007; Belcher, 2009). Huff (1999) brings researchers to attention on the necessity to know themselves, so that they can identify what works better for himself or herself, seeking day times, places and conditions that better promote the writing activity of academic papers. Many researchers have adopted own strategies for the writing of academic papers and followed routines. Quintão, Varotto and Veludo-de-Oliveira (2011) have conducted a study in Brazil to investigate the writing process for scientific production in Economics and Business Management. The authors have identified three main routines of work among the researchers, i.e.: flexible, strict and shared routine. In flexible routine, the researchers work on demand and the papers are developed as projects. Normally the writing focuses on a determined period of time (months or weeks) with dates for starting and for ending. In the strict routine, there is regularity in the writing activity with specific timetables set beforehand. In shared routine the papers are developed in partnership with co-authors. Quintão et al. (2011) have also identified a category of authors who write permanently, which is adopted by researchers who take advantage of any opportunity to write and do not put a concentrated effort of writing but a constant one, and this strategy is more commonly found in the strict or the shared routine.

3. Methods

This research adopted an exploratory-qualitative approach to analyze how Brazilian professors compare themselves to their North American counterparts in their process of scientific production in the Business Administration field. The research method employed was that of in-depth interview. A judgment criterion was used for the selection of the interviewees, so that everyone had publications in international journals with JCR impact factor higher than 1 in the past three years. The interviews were conducted in person with four Brazilian professors in the city of São Paulo between the months of May and June 2011, and three North American professors who were participating in an international congress in São Paulo in October 2011. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and lasted 30 minutes on average. Table 1 shows the profile of the interviewees.

Table 1 - Profile of the interviewees

Professor	Publications in journals with JCR > 1 (previous 3 yrs)	Research Focus
1 (BR)	Journal of Business Research	Operations Management, Strategy
2 (BR)	Journal of Knowledge Management	Competitiveness Management, Competitiveness and Interorganizational Relations
3 (BR)	Organization	Organizational Studies, Critical Studies, Post-Struturalist Approach of Organizations
4 (BR)	International Journal of Human Resource, Management	Organizational Change, Organizational Identity and Creative Industries
5 (US)	Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Affairs, Journal of Retailing, Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	The Impact of Technology on Marketplace Relationships, Value Co-Creation, Collaborative Consumption, Innovation, Social Media Marketing, Entrepreneurship
6 (US)	Management Science, Journal of Management, Information Systems, MIT Sloan Management Review, IEEE Engineering Management Review	Online Reputation, Social Media, Collective Intelligence, Online Advertising, Economics of Media Industry
7 (US)	Harvard Business Review	Innovation for the Botton of the Pyramid, Retailing , Service Marketing, International Marketing, Agribusiness

4. Findings and results

The process of bibliographical production is not substantially different when one compares Brazilian and North American scholars, in terms of individual routines of production. The styles vary but the typologies found may be used in both milieux. There are barriers to the process of scientific production in both universes surveyed. In Brazil, it is mainly related to the time question (or lack thereof), that entails the disruption of the routine in addition to simultaneous demands that causes the interruption of the process. In the US the disruption of routine is considered a barrier to production, but unlike the Brazilians, the American researchers tend to treat the demands not simultaneously, first solving the contingencies then focusing on the process of production.

One difficulty is the demand of several things simultaneously. Having a part of the day reserved for writing is the best way of overcoming barriers. (*Professor 1, BR*)

You need a clear mind, focus, to produce a piece. Interference preempts writing, so if I can't find the peace of mind I'll just do something else. It's worthless to insist, and it's tiring – it wakes you at night without any clear chance of progress. (*Professor 7, US*)

Time management for scientific production, as Belcher (2009) stresses, is an issue in both countries. However in Brazil, the use of formal schedules of work is little common, whereas in the US this practice is more common, although not always used in a rigid form.

I start the article and keep it going. I happen to change the priority and start working on another paper and that first one is kept waiting. (*Professor 1, BR*)

I have no timeline. I am too messy. (*Professor 3, BR*)

Yes and No. There are conferences that have deadlines, so I have to set a timetable. Sometimes you have larger windows, so you can write more, but sometimes it depends on the co-authors, so it's not easy to have a schedule. But yes, all my projects have a draft, but I'm not always on a schedule. (*Professor 5, US*)

I try to write as fast as I can. (*Professor 6, US*)

Inspiration, another factor cited on literature (Silvia, 2007; Belcher, 2009), does not seem to be pivotal to the writing activity among scholars in both countries. As it is common the existence of co-authors and deadlines, among other requirements, the researchers establish techniques and goals in order to write independent of inspiration.

Thus, I think the co-author is significant. He or she stimulates the process because deadlines are arranged and things keep going. Inspiration comes together with some commitment with peers. (*Professor 2, BR*)

I think sometimes you have an idea, but it is not mature yet [...]. I know I have to solve that text, which misses something, an argument, a connection... better identifying the contribution of the text or the message is lacking [...] but there is not any sense in sitting down now [for writing] because nothing will come out. I have to take a time for breathing a little bit. (*Professor 4, BR*)

No, because we depend on each other. I cannot rely on inspiration. I do my planning to write. (*Professor 5, US*)

Discipline and persistence are common features for scientific production with researchers of both countries. However, there is a difference in focus between them. The American researchers cite the necessity for a long period of maturation, reflection and study on the subject to be researched. They are always seeking novelties, answers to relevant issues in the field and so they engage themselves deeply to the topic studied. There is a long process of preparation, research and discussion with peers and afterwards they actively put in motion the resources to undertake and conclude their projects. In Brazil, the focus is mainly turned to the amount of publications and not necessarily to the search for unpublished findings. There is a higher incidence of replications of studies and methodologies used in international publications.

I have the findings, then you need to do another twist... What's the wow, what is really going to be new? What is the new in this? I am always trying to find out... is there something new here? [...] That takes time. Time and brain. You need to devote time to... what is new in here? How I am going to surprise people here? That takes the most time... And there is also as much as I can of researching in terms of literature. [...] I am not going to invent coffee and milk, so let's see what is already written and what other people have thought. There are some thought leaders and I am looking at what they are doing in the specific field, so first of all, I am trying to understand the land, and which are the questions. Which are the relevant questions, interesting questions. I also test these questions with other people that I consider are also some kind of experts in the field, so to see the relevance, to test the relevance of what I am working on. (Professor 6, US)

The strategy of sharing and the division of work with peers, aiming to increase the productivity of scientific production, along what Boice (1990) and Belcher (2009) have already highlighted, is common for Brazilians and Americans.

I have been working more collectively than I would like. I would prefer to have more individual works being done throughout the process, as I have been working much with master and doctorate students. I think the ideal is to have the combination of both things. (Professor 1, BR)

I work with many people I have never met personally and others I meet once a year. (Professor 4, BR)

I work almost always collectively. (Professor 5, US)

I write with co-authors. They are professors of marketing [from other universities], we call every week by Skype. Once a week, think about focusing on the paper. We try to meet, once or twice a year during conferences. We work together, each devoted more to one aspect, but all revise. At the end each review, send comments. (Professor 6, US)

Another relevant issue, mentioned by Huff (1999), refers to the necessity of self-knowledge of the researcher, in order to better leverage their personal features and to organize more efficiently the resources for scientific production. Issues such as schedule and a more adequate location for the production are critical. Regarding the place of production there is uniformity among researchers on the necessity for a reserved place, large desks, computers, notebooks (sometimes more than one).

I write primarily in here [school]. My room is unshared. In it there is a desk, a chair, a bookcase, a computer and a whiteboard. (Professor 3, BR)

I have an office where I work. There is a big table, a desktop and notebook. (Professor 5, US)

I have a room at home where I set my office. I prefer it to my office at the School – though it's very nice –, but it's distracting. [...] It all goes in my laptop, but I use a desk for laying the related material, it will also go on the floor, so the place looks rather messy while I'm on a project. The bigger the project, the larger the mess. (Professor 7, US)

Perhaps the most important difference observed between the researchers of both countries is the focus given to the research activity. The American researchers have their focus on academic research, so that their various activities converge to research and publication. There is a lesser fragmentation and an activity serves as support for the other. On the Brazilians' side, professors engage in various activities simultaneously, which reduces their attention to research. Such aspect is evident when the interviewees report the degree of importance attributed to the activity of research and publication and what could be done to increase the volume of production.

Professors have much opportunity. Thus you are kept thinking about what is better to do: to write a paper, do a consultancy or teach in an executive course. (Professor 2, BR)

Research is the most important activity for me. More important than teaching. (Professor 5, US)

For the Americans the possibility of counting upon teams of students of doctorate and research assistants, larger and better qualified, would be fundamental for the increment of their researches, whereas among the Brazilians, responses of more individual character arouse, such as personal motivation, a better infrastructure in universities and more time to engage in research.

The bases of journals and software are too bad; I am struggling now to make the applications. The library is too slow to acquire new books. (*Professor 3, BR*)

I think working with more and better qualified students could improve my production. (*Professor 6, BR*)

A bigger group of research assistants. (*Professor 7, US*)

5. Final considerations

In general, as a barrier to bibliographical production, the Brazilian interviewees reported lack of time and structure, whereas the American interviewees pointed out the need for larger and well-prepared research teams. In the US, the professors usually focus their teaching and management activities in one single semester, thus being able to dedicate their time and attention exclusively to research in the other. They invest more time in maturing their thought and on reflection about the study to be undertaken, continuously seeking innovation. In Brazil they show greater concern about the number of publications. Brazilian researchers devote a good part of their time to teaching, both in graduate and undergraduate courses, in addition to acting in management of the institutions, in committees and also as consultants. Although some of them understand that these activities contribute to their scientific production, the majority understands that there is little synergy with the research activity, which ends up being harmed by competition with other activities. US professors also spend part of their time to teaching, however the activity has a very well-established time frame and in general it does not occupy the whole year. They also participate in some management activities and in committees in their universities, however in apparently lower intensity than their Brazilian counterparts. For American researchers, research invariably seems to be the main focus of their activity, whereas among the Brazilian professors it is not unanimous. Thus, the gap reduction between Brazilian and American publications invariably seems to pass by restructuring of the researching conditions offered by the Brazilian universities. The internationalization of the Brazilian academic production demands more support to its professors, in terms of infrastructure, the possibility of whole dedication to research, and work teams.

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