

Teaching Academic Writing for Publication: A Liminal Threshold Experience Towards Development of Scholarly Identity

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Abstract : In the academy, scholarliness or intellectual craftsmanship is considered the highest level of achievement, culminating in being consistently successfully published in impactful, peer-reviewed journals and books. Scholarliness implies rigorous methods, systematic exposition, in-depth analysis and evaluation, and the highest level of critical engagement and reflexivity. However, being a scholar does not happen automatically when one becomes an academic or completes graduate studies. A graduate qualification is an indication of one's level of research competence but does not necessarily prepare one for the type of scholarly writing for publication required after a postgraduate qualification has been conferred. Scholarly writing for publication requires a high-level skillset and a specific mindset, which must be intentionally developed. The rite of passage to become a scholar is an iterative process with liminal spaces, thresholds, transitions, and transformations. The journey from researcher to published author is often fraught with rejection, insecurity, and disappointment and requires resilience and tenacity from those who eventually triumph. It cannot be achieved without support, guidance, and mentorship. In this article, the authors use collective auto-ethnography (CAE) to describe the phases and types of liminality encountered during the liminal journey toward scholarship. The authors speak as long-time facilitators of Writing for Academic Publication (WfAP) capacity development events (training workshops and writing retreats) presented at South African universities. Their WfAP facilitation practice is structured around experiential learning principles that allow them to act as critical reading partners and reflective witnesses for the writer-participants of their WfAP events. They identify three essential facilitation features for the effective holding of a generative, liminal, and transformational writing space for novice academic writers in order to enable their safe passage through the various liminal spaces they encounter during their scholarly development journey. These features are that facilitators should be agents of disruption and liminality while also guiding writers through these liminal spaces; that there should be a sense of mutual trust and respect, shared responsibility and accountability in order for writers to produce publication-worthy scholarly work; and that this can only be accomplished with the continued application of high levels of sensitivity and discernment by WfAP facilitators. These are key features for successful WfAP scholarship training events, where focused, individual input triggers personal and professional transformational experiences, which in turn translate into high-quality scholarly outputs.

Keywords : academic writing, liminality, scholarship, scholarliness, threshold experience, writing for publication

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