PUBLISH OR PERISH OR NEITHER: WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ACADEMIA

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INTRODUCTION

This article brings together a sample of research findings in the business/social science area which are pertinent to the following questions:

(1) How much research and publication is being done by academics?
(2) To what extent do such activities have an effect on decisions associated with promotion, salary and selection?
(3) How much importance do academics themselves attach to research and publication?

In a world of rapidly shrinking job opportunities for academics, the above questions and the answers to them have become increasingly important. This is particularly the case in North America and the United Kingdom. It may be that the early consideration of these problems by academics in countries not so drastically affected would be of benefit.

A great deal has been written on this topic. Therefore, it is not intended to provide an exhaustive review of the literature here but simply to present that evidence which is relatively recent and representative and paints a reasonable picture of the existing state of affairs.

There is a tendency to oversimplify the issues involved and to state them in strong terms: an example of this is provided by Van den Berghe (1970). "Publishing has become a compulsion. The average academic author does not write because he has something to say, because he hopes to contribute to knowledge, or because he has fun doing it; rather, he writes and publishes in order to improve his vita. This document is frequently the only thing about him which his colleagues will ever read; it is the passport to academic success; published titles are the main ornament of a vita" (p. 87). To some degree this statement describes a popular view: it is hoped that the following discussion will throw some light on its validity.

HOW MUCH IS BEING PUBLISHED?

Strauss (1971) in the USA, found that of the 3800 economists with Ph.Ds listed in the 1966 **National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel**, 61 per cent had nothing cited in the **Index of Economic Journals.**

Glenn and Villemez (1970) considered 45 US departments of Sociology with graduate students. Using a weighting system for articles in 22 journals, monographs and books, they found that the average productivity per person was equivalent to one article in a non prestige journal every three years. However, in the better institutions the rate increased to one article every two years. Even if one acknowledges the fairly limited coverage in this study there is still a lot of leeway to be made up if academics are to be thought of as compulsive publishers.

Krohn (1971) in his study of a group of physical biologists found that the top producers are prolific and tend to distort the general picture: 23 per cent of his sample had published 30 or more articles but their average production was an astounding 173 articles each, bringing the average for the group up to 54 articles. Hansen and Weisbrod (1972) found that two articles per year would have been sufficient to qualify an economist for the Top Ten for "Most Articles Published During Lifetime, 1886-1967".

This brief review indicates that most academics do not publish; of those that do relatively few are prolific.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROMOTION, SALARY AND SELECTION DECISIONS

Skeels and Fairbanks (1968) found a clear relationship between position and publication in their study of a 25 per cent sample of American Economic Association members teaching in American Colleges and Universities in 1963. Halsey and Trow (1971) concluded that academics in Britain tend to perceive a publication requirement, "Researchers (i.e. academics with a research orientation) can look forward to a readership and can hope for a chair. Teachers cannot realistically hope for more than a senior lectureship . . ." thus ". . . men with primarily teaching orientations rate their chances of a chair consistently lower than researchers" (p. 399).

Luthans (1967) asked a variety of academic decision-makers (business college deans, university presidents and the like) what weights they assigned to various promotion criteria. The average weightings were research (and publication) 34 per cent, teaching effectiveness 25 per cent, personal character 13 per cent, seniority 10 per cent. In their study of promotion requirements Weinstock and Coe (1969) asked a number of management department heads in the USA if publication was necessary for promotion to different levels: 14 per cent felt it necessary for promotion to assistant professor, 62 per cent for promotion to associate professor and 85 per cent felt it necessary for promotion to professor. It is worth noting that the last figure was not 100 per cent.

From the above it appears that publications are nearly always essential for promotion to the more senior academic positions of associate professor (reader) and professor. However, in order to achieve these positions one does not have to be prolific. Luthans (1967) in his study of 47 state universities with 10,000 or more students and an AACSB accredited college of business found that one third of the full professors and nearly a half of the associate professors had published a maximum of three articles when promoted. In his study of a large high status public university Katz (1973) assigned points for publication: books received 230 points, articles 18 and excellent articles 102. The modal score for promotion to associate professor was within the range 101-300 (the mean was 427) with a mean of 840 for promotion to full professor. However, 43 per cent of the sample achieved professorial level with less than 601 points.

Siegfried and White (1973) in their study of 45 economists at the University of Wisconsin-Madison reckoned that an article in a national journal was worth $392 per year, an article in a regional journal was worth $345 per year and other publications were worth $76 per year. Katz (1973) estimated the worth of one to two books as $451 per book in 1969. More than two books were worth $310 each. For less than 9 journal articles the average value was $111 but for more than 38 articles the average value reduced to $57. Despite the wide differences in the average value attributed to articles in the two studies both indicate that publishing does have an *appreciable* effect on earnings.

Most vacancies, particularly in England, are filled internally (Collison, 1962; Halsey and Trow, 1971). In the USA there appears to be more mobility among lower level staff; for example, Brown (1967) claims that 88 per cent of all hiring is at the instructor/assistant professor level (who will have published less) despite the fact that only 45 per cent of all faculty jobs are at that level. Also, Caplow and McGee (1965) found that 40 per cent of instructors/assistant professors and 61 per cent of associate/full professors knew someone in the department they joined. Gross (1970) has made similar findings. In most cases former students are involved: they tend to be less expensive and more tolerant (McGee, 1960). This evidence suggests that publication does not ensure employment; prior contact stands out as the single most important selection criterion. Brown (1965) found that for 80% of the time there was no thorough search for a suitable candidate and that for 15 per cent of the time selectors knew of only a single candidate.

Typically selection decisions are based on the *curriculum vitae* recommendations and interview. There are conflicting views as to whether publications are read; Caplow and McGee say they are not whereas Weinstock and Coe suggest the opposite. Recommendations, according to Lewis (1971) tend to emphasize personality rather than competence or ability. Brown (1965) found that where interviews were conducted, in 60 per cent of cases the man hired was the only one interviewed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Generally speaking all faculty assign most importance to the teaching function. However, there is a tendency among younger faculty members to place more emphasis on research (Klapper, 1969; Kelly and Hart, 1971). There do not appear to be differences between institutions in the USA with regard to the importance attached to teaching, but in the better institutions more research is expected and carried-out. For example, Parsons and Platt (1967) found that at better institutions about one third of the week was spent researching whilst teachers at less important institutions devoted one sixth of their week to research.

Collison and Webber (1971) have shown that in the period 1950-1970, 18 per cent of authors (in three British sociology journals) were aged 25-29, and 23 per cent 30-34. From 1965 to 1970 the percentages were 26 and 23 respectively. One can safely say that there is a trend toward more publication generally but particularly amongst younger faculty.

CONCLUSIONS

The publication bug is not nearly as widespread as commonly believed. To that extent equating not publishing with perishing is an over dramatization of the present condition. However, there is evidence to show that those who do publish are rewarded both financially and promotionally; although there is a diminishing financial return on increasing publication and there are differences between greater and lesser institutions with regard to publication and promotion (Weinstock and Coe, 1969). Most vacancies are filled internally or through prior contact. For the remaining positions the *curriculum vitae* and references are the most important selection criteria: sometimes publications are read, sometimes they are not. It seems reasonable to suppose that in a situation of open job competition publications would be a decided advantage. Most academics give priority to teaching over research although there is agreement about the importance of the latter.

The moral: if you have a job by all means publish but do not worry too much if you are not publishing, most of your colleagues are not publishing either; non-publishers earn slightly less and are promoted less rapidly but still have a good chance of making it; particularly in lesser institutions. If you are looking for a job and do not have good contacts there is some cause for concern: publications would be a decided advantage.

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THE JAPAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENCE

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Recently I was awarded a visiting professorship by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This enabled me to spend part of a recent study leave at the Institute for Protein Research, Osaka University with Professor M. Kakudo.

I was so impressed by this society that I have taken this opportunity of writing a short note to outline some of its activities.[1]

It was initially founded by the Emperor in 1932 as a private foundation for "contributing to the advancement in the sciences" through "extension of grants in aid for scientific research, support to researchers, promotion of international co-operation in science", etc.

Its activities include the support of international scientific programmes such as fellowships for foreign research workers. This allows research for a period of up to a year at a Japanese University. Applications must be made through a Japanese host scientist with the consent of the head of the host institution and accepted in September-November of that year. The fellowship covers the return air fare, living expenses in Japan and a small maintenance budget. The applicants must be a national of a country with diplomatic relations with Japan, be under 40 years of age, in good health and hold a doctorate degree. There have been 197 fellows for the period 1964-1974, with three from Australia.

The visiting professorship programme allows senior scientists to visit Japan for a period of up to four months to do research with host scientists and to give lectures, etc. Applications must be made through a Japanese scientist and not directly to the society or through diplomatic channels. Similar conditions and benefits apply to those for research workers. A total of 541 foreign scientists have been invited from 1959 to 1974, with 16 from Australia. A partial list is given in Table 1.

The society looks after Japan's interest in International Joint Projects like the U.S.-Japan cooperative programs in Science, Humanities, Social Science, Cancer and Particle Physics, and US French efforts with CNRS and INSERM. It also arranges bilateral programmes for the exchange of scientists with foreign academic institutions of England, Germany, Russia, Israel, and Hungary. It offers to Japanese scientists overseas fellowships in the U.S., Germany, Italy, Kenya, and Iran. It also supports selected international meetings with less than 100 participants. Recent meetings have been the International Symposium on the Mathematical Problems in Theoretical Physics at Kyoto and a joint Japan-Soviet seminar on Electrochemistry in Tokyo.

It has a domestic programme to encourage science through doctoral fellowships, visiting professorships. It arranges seminars, publishes scientific books and organises Industry-University research committees. It is supported mainly by the Government but receives some private contributions.

More information may be obtained from the society.[2]

Notes:

1 J.S.P.S. VISITING PROFESSORS AND FOREIGN RESEARCH FELLOWS, 1959-1973, J.S.P.S., Tokyo, July 1974.
2 THE JAPAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENCE, Yamato Building, 5-3-1, Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan.

TABLE 1.

Visiting Professors (Australian Awards)

1962 **Professor G. H. Aylward,** Univ. of N.S.W.—STUDIES ON ELECTRODE REACTION OF COMPLEX COMPOUNDS, with **Professor N. Tanaka,** Tohoku University.
1968 **Professor F. Gutmann,** University of Pennsylvania—FUNDAMENTAL STUDIES OF ORGANIC ELECTRODE PROCESSES, with **Professor T. Toya,** Hokkaido University.
1971 **Dr. E. M. Hutton,** Div. of Tropical Pastures, C.S.I.R.O.—A SURVEY OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR SUBTROPICAL GRASSES AND LEGUMES IN THE WARMER DISTRICTS OF JAPAN, with **Professor S. Nishimura,** Kyushu University.
1972 **Dr. B. A. Bolt,** Seismographic Station, University of California—STUDY ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE EARTH'S INTERIOR AND THE EARTHQUAKE SOURCE MECHANISM, with **Professor H. Takeuchi,** University of Tokyo.
1972 **Dr. S. D. Hamann,** Div. of Applied Chemistry, C.S.I.R.O.—PRESSURE EFFECTS ON AQUEOUS SOLUTIONS, with **Prof. J. Osugi,** Kyoto University.
1972 **Prof. H. Muir,** University of N.S.W.—STUDY ON WELDING CRACKS IN HIGH STRENGTH STEELS; GAS-METAL REACTION KINETICS IN ARC WELDING, with **Prof. T. Kobayashi,** Tohoku University.
1972 **Dr. C. S. Taylor,** CERN—STUDY ON LINEAR ACCELERATORS (INTENSE BEAM EFFECTS), with **Prof. T. Nishikawa,** Research Laboratory for High Energy Physics.
1973 **Professor J. W. de Jong,** A.N.U.—CRITICAL STUDIES ON BUDDHIST TEXTS, SANSKRIT, PALI, TIBETAN, CHINESE, MONGOLIAN AND JAPANESE, with **Prof. M. Hara,** University of Tokyo.
1973 **Dr. J. R. Frency,** C.S.I.R.O.—METABOLISM OF SULPHUR-COMPOUNDS IN SOIL, with **Prof. C. Furusaka,** Tohoku University.
1973 **Dr. T. D. C. Grace,** Div. of Entomology, C.S.I.R.O.—ESTABLISHMENT OF INSECT CELL CLONE, with **Professor S. Kitamura,** Mie University.

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