



BASICS OF RESEARCH IN ARTS, SOCIAL AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

BOOK PROJECT SERIES NUMBER 1

Edited by

**Professor Adewale, O. Ogunrinade,
Dr. Lawal, A. Oladimeji &
Dr. Yusufu, N. Bachama**

**A PUBLICATION OF
THE FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES,
GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY.**

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NITTY-GRITTY OF ACADEMIC WRITINGS IN THE FACULTIES OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Introduction

Of all the things associated with the life of an academic in the Nigerian University system, academic writing could be considered as the most important task.¹ Research output of an academic contributes significantly to the development of the

¹ A.I. Olayinka, V.O. Adetimirin and A. Ojebode (eds) *Scholarly Writing and Publication*, Published by the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2006

University system. Research constitutes a pivotal assignment in a university. This explains why universities engage in research activities in a bid to ensure human and societal development. However, in most cases, less importance is placed on academic writing both in theory and practice. Specifically, required emphasis is not placed on research. Owing to the dearth of researches in the humanities that focus on the evaluation of the Nigerian academic, the current study examines the nitty-gritty of academic writing in Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences in the Nigerian University system with a view to identifying and describing its required skills and ethics.

This paper is divided into seven sections: academic writings and its features, general requirements for academic writing, academic landscapes of the Faculties of Arts, and Social Sciences, procedures of academic writing in the two aforementioned faculties and conclusion.

Academic Writings

Academic writing, which is often used interchangeably with scholarly writing, refers to a type of writing that is done basically in an academic manner². It is so described as academic writing, which distinguishes it from other numerous types of writings because it has established procedures in specific areas of study. Its setting is procedural, methodical, logical, orderly and systematic in intent, content and context. Based on their pervasive nature, academic writings are of different types. Some forms of academic writings include: long essays, dissertation, thesis, book, articles in learned journals or

² O.A Itiola, An Overview of Scholarly Writing and Publication, A.I. Olayinka, V.O. Adetimirin and A. Ojebode (eds) *Scholarly Writing and Publication*, Published by the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2006, pp 1-11

book/festschrift, monographs, grant proposal, field study reports, critical reviews of a book, an article, software, and a visual object. Others include: review essays, opinion pieces to a professional journal, scholarly response articles and scholarly papers that analyse or critique a specific topic, issue or problem, among other essays.

Features of Academic Writings

An academic writing as a broad-based research uses empirical tools for fact findings. It uses methodical investigation into a subject in order to discover facts to establish or revise a theory, or to develop a plan of action based on the facts discovered³. In order to explicate the features of an academic writing, thirteen broad features which characterise the nitty-gritty research in the Humanities will be explained⁴:

- (a) **Exploratory:** It investigates an area or issue on which little work has been carried out, discovering some of its main dimensions, and possibly planning further more structured writing.
- (b) **Applied:** This one is targeted at finding a solution to an immediate problem facing a society or an industrial/business organisation. A good example is the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic.
- (c) **Fundamental:** This is concerned with formulation of writing theory that could serve as a springboard for other writings both in the Sciences and in the Humanities.
- (d) **Quantitative:** This type of writing has to do with issues relating to quantity or amount regarding writing subject

³Encyclopaedia Britannica Dictionary, Digital Library, 2008

⁴J.K. Ayantayo, Rudiments of Research and Research in Religious Studies, Ibadan: Jay Kay – Ayan Publications, 2015, pp 3-7

and respondents. An illustrative writing into numerical and infrastructural growth of selected churches in Ibadan is an example of quantitative research.

- (e) **Qualitative:** It is literary and theoretically based. It studies uncountable issues such as moral behaviour of a particular people, or spirituality of religious denominations or classes.
- (f) **Conceptual:** As the name implies, it concentrates on concepts, notions, ideas, which in most cases, are of public significance for the purpose of knowing what it stands for as against general assumption or over generalisation.
- (g) **Empirical:** This is premised on observation and particularly verifiable and visible facts which are capable of being replicated in the findings of a research.
- (h) **Speculative:** This speculates the implications of a newly introduced government policy (for example, economic policy like devaluation of Naira or religious policy, like Sharia law) for policy makers, policy executors and the general public upon which the policy is implemented.
- (i) **Descriptive:** It attempts to answer the 'what', 'when', 'where', and 'how' in respect of some writings, relating to specific situations and events.
- (j) **Explanatory:** As the name implies, this type of writing is aimed at providing thorough explanations on an issue or a concept (as an example) that looks vague to an onlooker or an unsuspecting audience.
- (k) **Analytical:** It concerns critical evaluation of facts or information already available in the public domain so that the public could have a better understanding of it. A newly introduced government policy could be a subject matter for this type of writing.

- (l) **Predictive:** It is an advanced level of speculative research because it takes clue from previous writing findings and, from there, develops a model that predicts the likely course of events, given particular intervening variables or circumstances.
- (m) **Evaluative:** This is done to evaluate the impact of something such as a new religious, health, and educational policy, event, law, treatment or regime of public significance looking at its pros and cons and suggested recommendations as the case may be.

General requirements for an Academic writing

From the foregoing, it is apt to assert that an academic writing is, to some extent, complex in nature, formal in structure, objective in terms of aims and explicit in terms of presentation. However, academic writing requires some skills and ethics. They include the following:

- (a) **Time:** An academic writing must be timely in terms of currency. A good academic piece should reflect contemporary issues that are of public relevance because academic work is dynamic in terms of theory and practice.
- (b) **Space management:** Every journal or book project, to which an academic writing is submitted for publication, has words limits. Some may be 5, 000- five thousand, or 6,000 – six thousand words or below the two. Failure to abide by the rule may lead to the paper being rejected. For this reason, the writer must use the space very well to capture his/her main theme and sub themes of the subject of discussion without overshooting the words limits.

- (c) **Developing /advancing an argument:** An academic writing, being a product of research work, must be able to develop or advance an argument which would indicate that it has contributed a new idea/ideas to existing scholarship.
- (d) **Targeting specific audience:** In most cases, an academic writing may be done to meet the desires or needs of specific audience – reader. Explanatory, Exploratory and Applied research fall under this category.
- (e) **Well organised:** This means that it must be clearly, consistently, coherently and logically written. It must be devoid of grammatical incorrectness, punctuation and spelling errors.⁵
- (f) **Constant focus on the topic/subject matter:** A good write- up must be devoid of unnecessary digression in the process of buttressing a point or an argument. This is important so that the readers will not be bored from reading the paper or loose the trends of the argument being advanced or emphasised.
- (g) **Good paragraphing:** Paragraphs should be used to separate each important point except in the abstract. It is important to give the draft of the writing to editors to vet before it is sent for publication. There are so many copy editors nowadays that could be employed to do the editorial job. One should endeavour to engage the service of the best of them.

⁵ F.O. Egbokhare, Academic Writing in the Humanities, A.I. Olayinka, V.O. Adetimirin and A. Ojebode (eds) *Scholarly Writing and Publication*, Published by the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2006, pp 67- 70, p68

- (h) **Manual of Style:** A Specific/Specified Manual of Style must be adhered to.
- (i) **The use of Good English or Grammar:** The use of good grammar is important in an academic writing irrespective of the Faculty in which the paper will be published. For instance, present tense should be used to report well accepted facts while past tense should be used to describe specific results. Informal wordings and slangs should be avoided and the reader should not be addressed directly. Also, superfluous materials should be avoided.
- (j) **Citation:** Website should not be cited as primary sources in a research paper.

Academic writing in the Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts is popularly described as the Faculty of Letters. It is so described because it deals with letters and such nomenclature goes with literary activities. This explains why the highest processional association/body in Arts is called Academy of Letters. Learning on University of Ibadan where I have firsthand information, major departments in Faculty of Arts are: Languages - English, Arabic, Yoruba, Igbo, German, French, Latin and Spanish; Religious Studies, History, Philosophy, Classics, Theatre Arts, Music, Linguistics, Communication and Language Arts and Archaeology and Anthropology.

By virtue of being concerned with letters, the Faculty, in terms of operations, is by nature abstract, normative, descriptive, analytical, theoretical, communicative, artistic, historical, mythological, scriptural, argumentative, skillful, stylistics, rhetorical, imaginative, predictive, dialogical and arguable

among others. The understated are considered popular methods of academic writing in the Faculty of Arts:

- (a) **Title Framing:** The title of an academic paper must be precise and easy to understand by a layman, even when researcher uses technical term. It is important for a researcher to avoid a topic that is journalistic or unnecessarily sensational.
- (b) **Title page:** It should specify names, Institutional address, and Academic or Professional status (like Professor, Senior Lecturer, and Research Fellow).
- (c) **E-mail address and phone number:** Usually, the two items are personal.
- (d) **Abstract:** An abstract, which appears on a separate page or a part of opening page, can be defined as a condensed, shortened, synopsised, precised, and abridged section, showcasing the totality of a research endeavour by emphasising: statement of the research problem which includes aims of the research, scope, and significance of the writing; research methodology - methods used for gathering research information such as interview, observation, focus group discussion and questionnaire.

It also indicates sample methods in terms of their size or population and figures and justification for their choice, analysis of data could adopt content, descriptive, theoretical or percentage based approach. Finally, the theoretical framework which is generated from relevant theories is also an aspect of the abstract. It forms the basis for the argument a researcher intends to advance, knowing fully that an argument could not be made in a vacuum. Others include research findings, which show the fulfilment of all the objectives of the study which

the author had earlier indicated. The next is contribution of the study to scholarship /recommendations. This aspect of the abstract is the section where a writer is expected to draw inference(s) which is /are capable of demonstrating that the research has contributed new things to existing study on the subject matter of the research. The recommendation could also feature how to enhance further studies on the subject matter being researched into. On this account, the researcher could say beyond the present moral interpretation or approach to the present study.

The Abstract is wrapped up with mostly 5 words count as key words inherent in the paper: The total word counts of the content of the abstract are indicated in figures such as 478, 500, and 369. However, acceptable maximum number is 500. After this, minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 key words in the abstract will also be indicated. The importance of this is that whenever each of these words is checked on the internet like Google, the abstract will come out for the reader. This is possible where the abstract exists on the internet.

- (e) **Introduction:** This appropriates background to the study. It enlightens the reader's understanding of issues inherent in the subject matter. It succinctly presents the issue a research intends to address. It has to be short, precise and straight to the point.
- (f) **Aims of the writing:** This specifies the goals, targets, and intention of the author for writing the paper.
- (g) **Research method:** This is concerned with how the author intends to obtain information concerning the argument he/she wants to advance. The researcher has to spell out the methodology in terms of the profile of

the respondents, their numbers, location and relevance to the information obtainable. This is wrapped up with specifying theoretical framework upon which argument to be advanced will be predicated.

- (h) **Literature Review:** This aspect provides a context for the research paper by justifying the need for the research. It proves that such issue has not been written on from the perspective the author is approaching the subject of discussion, thereby showcasing where the writing fits into the existing body of knowledge. It also highlights identifiable flaws in previous writings and possibly gives allowance to a researcher to outline gaps in previous research, identify and (if possible) resolve contradictions and also show that the writing is adding a new thing towards a robust understanding and knowledge of the subject matter.⁶
- (i) **Discussion of the topics and its sub-themes:** The major themes and sub-themes foregrounding the main title should be outlined and discussed with attention paid to the actualisation of the stated objectives and specific contributions to knowledge.
- (j) **Recommendations:** Recommendations are made with reference to the objectives earlier stated. For instance, if one of the objectives of the writer was to proffer solution to some identified problems, the researcher should make recommendations in that light. The recommendations could also feature how to enhance further studies on the subject matter being researched

⁶A. Idowu Olayinka Typical Format of a Research Proposal: Cover Page, Abstract and Introduction, Planning and writing Grant – Oriented Proposal: Proceedings of a Training of Trainers Workshop, L. Popoola, O Adetimirin, and O. Olorunnisola, Published by the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2006 pp 16-32

into. It could suggest that far beyond the approach a researcher used to discuss his/her subject matter, further research work on the subject could be explored from a different viewpoint.

- (k) **Conclusion:** It should be brief and concise. The conclusion of a research generally highlights important findings generated from research data. Conclusions should not unnecessarily explain or elaborate already known research facts; rather, they should be stated as concisely as possible. At this level, no deductions, inference or interpretation should be made.
- (l) **Bibliography:** This should be done in accordance to specified rules and regulations for author(s) who intends to publish an article in a journal or book. It could be done in tandem with popular Citation Style such as APA, MLA, Turabian or Chicago Manual of Style.

Academic writings in the Faculty of Social Sciences

In terms of description, Faculty of the Social Science is popularly called the Faculty of Data. It is so described because it deals with standardized data collection, analysis and discussion relating to social cum practical activities and phenomena. No wonder why some scholars describe academic writings in the Social Science as attempts to make sense of social situations that are more or less complex. Departments in the Social Sciences are: Geography, Economics, Statistics, Archeology, Sociology and Demography, and Anthropology among others.

Going by the fact that the Faculty is concerned with verifiable, empirical and analytical data, research in the faculty is carried out in a theoretical, quantitative and procedural approach. The

process requires creativity as well as conformity to some general standards of scholarly investigation⁷.

It should be noted that there are no much dissimilarities between paraphrasing and thematising in the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences. However, research in the Faculty of Social Sciences also features the following: titling, title page, e-mail address, abstract, introduction, and aims of the research as in the case of Faculty of Arts. The points of departure from that of the Faculty of Arts are highlighted below:

- (a) **Choice of Research Questions/Topic:** There are no hard rules about choosing a research topic. However, the topic should have a real-life importance; it should be practical, feasible, and have potential to make contributions to knowledge or the existing social scientific literature.
- (b) **Formulation of a theory or hypothesis about the questions:** A theory or hypothesis presupposes a relationship between one observation and or variable and another. Such by nature are precise and easily observable or measurable. It appropriates both knowledge of existing work on the subject and the collection of some data without which the research question itself cannot be formulated.
- (c) **Data Collection:** In most cases, it takes the form of survey, interview, questionnaire and focus group discussion. It also involves field work.

⁷ A.S. Gbadegesin, and R.T. Suberu, *Style of Scholarly Writing in the Social Sciences*, A.I. Olayinka, V.O. Adetimirin and A. Ojebode (eds) *Scholarly Writing and Publication*, Published by the Postgraduate School, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2006, pp 84-91

- (d) **Data analysis and Discussion:** Data could be analysed quantitatively or qualitatively or the combination of the two for the purpose of generating causal or descriptive inferences. Causal inference allows the author to demonstrate causal relationship or reflects from the data observed. Descriptive inference allows the author to learn about previously unobserved facts.
- (e) **Presentation of Results:** This should be done transparently without giving room for embellishment. In the same vein, Interpretation is done point by point or paragraph by paragraph to avoid mix up.
- (f) **Discussion of Results:** This section principally deals with explication and interpretation of the results earlier presented. In this case, the author should compare and contrast his/her findings with related findings in the existing literature, explain how the results are built upon and identify the challenges and the necessary modification. Finally, the research should be able to showcase the contribution of the study to existing scholarship, and underscore what the results mean for understanding of the research problem or topic.
- (g) **Conclusion:** This section is meant to recapitulate the result of the research and their general implications. Thus, it brings to the limelight recommendations for further research and for policy –making.
- (h) **Bibliography:** It follows the same pattern earlier stated while discussing what obtains in Arts.

Ethical guidelines for academic writings

An academic writing is a form of human action, deed, effort, endeavour, enterprise, exploit, undertaking, work and activity a person or a group of persons perform at a given time. It is a subject of ethical disquisition because ethics is concerned with

the assessment of human action and determines its goodness or otherwise, rightness or wrongness, correctness and incorrectness and with attention given to how such course of action being evaluated affects the person who performed the action, the person at which it is directed, and the society or the environment where the action is performed. On the basis of the above description, there are dos and don'ts that an academic writing should take into cognizance. This informs our concept of ethical guidelines⁸. At this point, it must be reaffirmed that an academic writing must pass the following criteria:

- (a) **Originality:** This means it must not be a duplication of previous studies. It should be foregrounded on previous writings, and must show evidence of the use, and make reference to adequate literature on the subject of research.
- (b) **Novelty:** A good research should be aimed at filling a lacuna in the existing relevant literature. In other words, it should be capable of increasing our understanding of the phenomenon being discussed. This is to say that, a good research must be novelistic and should be capable of contributing and reiterating an already established fact. Hence, research calls for innovation and creativity. It is important to note that only a novel research can attract funding where funding is available.
- (c) **Clarity:** This entails that a good research should follow specific plan or procedure which requires collection and interpretation of data and definition of its scope and limitations clearly. In other words, the research should

⁸ This was discussed extensively in *Rudiments of Research*, pp 8-11. See also J. K. Ayantayo, (2010), Religious Studies scholarship in Nigeria: The Professional Ethics Imperative in *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.3, No.6 March, pp 143-159

state the process or procedures it follows and explain it so that anybody in doubt may verify its findings following the same procedures so stated. In essence a good writing should be well designed and well executed.

- (d) **Empirically evident:** It follows that a good research must be done with moral consideration and also according to the rules and the assumptions. This requires that a researcher should ensure that relevant research data is adequately collected, analysed and discussed. A researcher is also expected to present all research findings unambiguously, with all conclusions justified by sufficient evidence. That is, research should be within the ambit of practical ethical research standards. On this note, research should not be based on false bases or judgments. In addition, research must be devoid of any deficiency, question of interpretation, errors, and literary and / or technical issues.
- (e) **Avoidance of Plagiarism:** All forms of plagiarism should be avoided. Plagiarism is an act or practice of using another person's ideas or work and pretending that it is your own. It is a great offence in academic circle because it is against the principle of intellectual property⁹. One of the best ways to avoid plagiarism is by paraphrasing the thought of scholars whose works were consulted in the process of reading. This means not writing the information the way it is written by the author of the information. The source of information can also be summarised, that is, writing a brief statement that presents the main points in a concise form. However, as the writer uses his/her own words to express information sourced from the author, he/she must be honest in the summary by not misrepresenting information or express

⁹ University of Ibadan Intellectual Property Policy, 2012 Published by University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2012

himself/herself contrary to what the author of the source expresses or intended to express.

In order to carry out a meaningful research, it becomes important for a writer to fulfill the following:

- i. Adopt correct procedure for identifying a problem and working on it conscientiously.
- ii. Find a solution to the identified research problems.
- iii. Have a complete knowledge and information of the field of investigation in order to avoid speculation and falsification of facts.
- iv. Have a good background of the study. This will enable him/her to have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- v. Have a vision.
- vi. Deploy an open mind in order to be flexible enough to make changes regarding his/her writing scope as the need arises¹⁰.
- vii. Stability and consistence.
- viii. Honesty, sincerity, and boldness
- ix. Creativity and innovativeness.
- x. Seek technical expertise particularly when he/she intend to construct questionnaire.

Conclusion and recommendations

¹⁰ J.K. Ayantayo, "Ethical issues in the Academic Bias in the Study of Nigeria Indigenous Traditional Religions and Its Ethical implications for Interreligious Conflicts in Nigeria *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. XLIII/1, June, 2011,

We have succeeded in discussing the nitty gritty of academic writings in the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences. It is our recommendation that the rules guiding writing in the two areas discussed should be followed to the letter.

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