ACADEMIC WRITING

A CONCISE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Edited by
Rory Keane and Mark Downes

ACADEMIC WRITING
A CONCISE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Edited by Rory Keane and Mark Downes

Editors

Dr. MARK DOWNES and Dr. RORY KEANE

Assistant Editor

Dr. STUART GRAHAM

ACADEMIC WRITING
A CONCISE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Edited by Rory Keane and Mark Downes

Belgrade

2003

Contents

5

Contents

Preface

This edited work brings together specialists with a history of teaching academic writing throughout Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Contributors currently work or have worked in third level education institutions in this region and through their experiences both have seen the great need to write a specialised book – aimed at students in the region – on how to write effectively so as to compete successful. The seven chapters in this work have been crafted carefully, taking into account the specific aspects of academic writing that students in the region find challenging. Today, students in the former so-called Eastern bloc are expected to compete with students in Western Europe and North America for places in coveted universities and for sought after scholarships. Students in the region of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe are well capable of competing in a meritocratic system. However, students may be disadvantaged by the fact that western "academic writing rules" traditionally have not applied further East. Therefore, to create an equal academic playing ground, students further east must, and indeed have a right to be informed as to the writing rules in the occidental academic game. To the credit of organisations, such as the Civic Education Project and the Higher Education Support Project, this process has already being initiated.

This book compliments such endeavours and aims to provide a concise but in-depth guide for students and teachers throughout this region on the skills and technique needed to write effectively in an academic environment.

The contributions cover a wide variety of areas from planning and writing an academic paper, to nurturing the writing styles relevant for specific academic disciplines. Indeed, this work also incorporates lessons on how to write in a business manner together with the broader philosophical issues regarding the need for academic writing and the importance of knowing your audience. For those working in a business environment or the "third sector" writing and reporting techniques are also presented.

Although this edited book is written in English, the editors have arranged to have it translated into Serbian and Albanian, while it is also envisaged that the book would be translated into other languages. It is anticipated that translations will reflect the essence of the book, rather than simply conducting literal translation.

In chapter one of this work, the discourse of "academic writing" is uncovered in a theoretical sense. The purpose of this first chapter is essentially two-fold: in more general terms, it theorises the nature of academic writing within the social sciences; more specifically, it discusses several ways of how to incorporate theory into different forms of written work. In this way, the chapter draws upon the work of Michael Oakeshott – arguing that the purpose of academic writing is to constitute particular "modes of thinking" on paper. Following this,

Roe manifests how theory can be utilised in terms of writing so-called 'position papers' and research papers. Here, the focus is predominantly on writing for the International Relations (IR) discipline, although the points made are intended to apply to social scientific work as a whole.

Within chapter two, Downes develops a systematic approach to writing an academic paper for the social science or humanities discipline. In line with the ethos of this book the objective of this chapter is to provide a detailed, step by step analysis of how one goes about writing an academic paper. The approach taken in this chapter is to provide a clear and concise guide that all students can follow and adapt when writing on any particular subject. While other chapters in the book deal with writing for business or philosophy, this chapter is intended to provide a holistic approach that is adaptable across social science disciplines.

Following on from the holistic nature of chapter two, Akbar in chapter three develops a specific approach – namely writing for business and management studies. The chapter develops approaches and strategies to producing academic writing in the context of the discipline of business and management studies. Its fundamental argument is that while academic writing in business studies requires the same level of quality, the main aims of business research are different from those of academic research in that business research's central aim is to offer both strategic and policymaking conclusions for the reader. Indeed, the chapter argues that there is an inherent paradox between the concept of "academic writing"

and business and management studies. This inevitably leads to an emphasis on the value of ideas in strategy and policy rather than theoretical rigor for its own sake. This is acutely linked to the reality that much leading business research is produced for a managerial audience rather than for fellow academics. The chapter also goes on to argue that both more traditional academic writing and business studies writing have much to learn from each other. Business studies can benefit from the emphasis on theoretical rigor to raise standards of scholarly research within its own epistemic community, while at the same time offering a salutary warning to more traditional academic writing of the dangers of losing relevance to the real world and empirical challenges ahead. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the emerging synthesis of business academe and its more traditional counterpart in areas such as political risk analysis, business ethics, the global environment of business and the new field of critical management studies.

Building on the business perspective, Freyberg-Inan in chapter four delves into the empirical side of academic writing and guides students through the successful selection and completion of an empirical research project. It is chronologically organised to explain the practical steps to be taken and the problems that confront students at each stage of the research process. In identifying common problems encountered during the design and writing of empirical research papers, the author draws on her teaching experience in the United States as well as in Romania. Accessible language as well as the use

of examples drawn from different issue areas will make this chapter useful and interesting to students in most academic disciplines and at the undergraduate as well as the graduate level. Providing students with the conceptual tools for planning and writing an empirical research paper, the chapter also addresses pertinent epistemological issues relating to the relationship between empirical and normative modes of inquiry as well as the theory and praxis of research. The overall aim of this chapter is to provide theoretical as well as practical guidance to students during the process of writing an empirical research paper as well as to serve as a "checklist" to enable them to evaluate their own empirical work as well as that of others.

In Chapter five Anderson critiques legal writing; in essence from a philosophical approach. At its heart this paper will argue that law papers, governed predominantly by the manner in which the discipline is taught in modern faculties, have for too long obsequiously bowed in essence to "sound-bite" coverage of the latest case to the detriment of more fundamental concepts and contexts such as the socio-economic and historical background to which law is interminably linked.

Ashworth in Chapter six explores the scourge of plagiarism in academic writing. Using a range of scholarly examples he terms plagiarism academic theft, Ashworth also gives examples from his own experience, showing how and where students fall into the trap of plagiarism. To conclude Ashworth constructively clarifies for the reader what differentiates between plagiarism and simple referenced re-

search, providing a very useful checklist to enable the student to avoid plagiarism.

In Chapter seven Keane provides a comprehensive guide for the report writer. This work is invaluable to those working either in the business sector or indeed the "third sector". The author concentrates on the need for clarity, communication and structure in report writing. The audience is also taken into account as the fundamental variable that must condition the essence and style of the report. In addition to outlining the techniques which go to make a good report, the author also outlines the need for the report writer to be aware of the importance and necessity of generic report writing. In this sense the author exclaims that it is difficult for the report writer to develop a comprehensive report, if he/she is not aware of the significance and value of report writing. The report writer must be made to see the report as fundamental, rather than a Friday afternoon chore. Issues relating to language style, ambiguous lexicon and the technical depth of the report are also discussed. It is argued that if technical depth is necessary, the report writer must firstly provide a holistic background, so as not to alienate the reader for the information provided. This work is novel, insofar as it melts an academic knowledge of report writing with the everyday reality of the report writer. The chapter benefits greatly from such an interaction and thus helps provide the reader with not only the academic arguments that justify a well-written report, but also the practical necessity.

In chapter eight Alice outlines how to write a qualitative research paper. It begins by describing how to ensure that the research proposal expresses intentions and methods. The emphasis in this chapter is on how to persuade readers of the proposal of its value and how to be sufficiently organised and clear about one's objectives to ensure the proposed research is likely to be approved.

The Contributors

Dr. PAUL ROE is a Lecturer in the Central European University (CEU) Hungary. Dr. Roe who is broadly published lectures in academic writing and international relations.

Dr. MARK DOWNES is a Lecturer in Political Risk at the University of Limerick, Ireland. He has taught extensively throughout the Balkans and the Middle East. He is a former CEP fellow.

Dr. YUSAF AKBAR is Assistant Professor of International Political Economy. His main teaching and research interests are in international trade, EU integration and the politics of multinational enterprise strategy.

Dr. ANNETTE FREYBERG-INAN lectures in social and political at the University of Bucharest, Romania and has been a CEP Fellow for many years.

Dr. JACK ANDERSON is an esteemed law lecturer from the University of Limerick in Ireland and is currently a visiting fellow at the University of Canberra in Australia.

Dr. LUCIAN M. ASHWORTH is a senior political Lecturer at the University of Limerick, where he is also Director of International Studies. He has much experience in teaching throughout Eastern Europe.

Dr. RORY KEANE has much experience teaching throughout the Balkans and is the author of Reconstituting Sovereignty, Post-Dayton Bosnia Uncovered. He is a former CEP fellow.

Dr. LYNNE CHRISTINE ALICE is a CEP Visiting Faculty Fellow at the University of Prishtine where she teaches Sociology and Politics. She has numerous publications and lengthy teaching experience in social justice areas such as HIV/AIDS, citizenship, democratisation and gender.

Dr STUART GRAHAM (Assistant Editor) is a CEP Fellow at the University of Belgrade and Belgrade Open School. He was previously a CEP Fellow in Albania.

CHAPTER 1

Theorising About Academic Writing: How to 'think on Paper'

Paul Roe
Department of International Relations
and European Studies (IRES)
Central European University (CEU) Budapest, Hungary

1. Introduction

It has become increasingly clear to me over the past few years of teaching here at Central European University (CEU) that many students seem quite categorically to believe that *thinking* academically is something altogether different from *writing* academically; that is to say, a clear separation exists between how we mentally process our thoughts and how these thoughts are subsequently manifest in our position papers, terms papers, Masters theses, and the like. I would like to dispel this separation right from the word go. As I will go on to argue in this chapter, **writing and thinking academically are one and the same**. On the paper itself is where we do our thinking: through the very process of writing, not only do we come to structure our mental thoughts in a logical and coherent manner, but we also come to make clear certain assumptions bound up in the social sciences. **On paper we reveal as explicit that which in our minds is invariably implicit**.

In this chapter, I begin to address the notion of thinking on paper by more broadly reflecting on the question of university education itself. This is predicated on the view that before we can decide how we should be writing, we should first work out why we are studying in a university at all. Conceptions of ourselves, as students and as teachers, are inherently linked to the way we also think about the writing process. Here, I draw specifically on the work of the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott in making the argument that thinking on paper is all about reflecting particular *modes of thinking*; or, put in slightly different terms, academic writing concerns an engagement with 'why' people think in the way that they have. The writing of the 'position paper', I subsequently propose, demands of students exactly this: to reveal the paradigmatic modes of thinking embodied in specific texts.

The chapter is broken down into three main sections. The first section introduces Oakeshott's work. The following sections explore the notion of thinking on paper and, in particular, how this might be reflected in the writing of a position paper. Here, I want to show in more specific terms how in position papers the gap can be bridged between students mental thinking and thinking through the very process of writing.

Teaching (and Studying) at a University

In a collection of works titled Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays[*], *Michael Oakeshott explores the distinctiveness of university education. He*

---

[*] Oakeshott, M., Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991).

begins by dealing with the proposition that education is 'elementary' (at school) and then, 'advanced': universities being in the business of advanced education inasmuch as providing students with an 'in-depth' treatment of certain issue areas and so forth. However, that university education should be conflated in this way with 'specialization' is, according to Oakeshott, erroneous. And this is best explained by introducing a further distinction: that between university education and 'vocational' study.

In simple terms, vocational education can be described as the learning of specific skills. And, as Oakeshott goes on to point out:

For most people it Švocational studyĆ is an education of one skill. The skill may be complicated and it may have considerable intellectual content, or it may be simply and easily learnt. But it is essentially, a highly specialized education, and not only on account of its concentration upon a specific skill. For, learning here means acquiring a specific body of knowledge and being able to move about within it with ease and confidence and to use it.... ŠItĆ is a strictly circumscribed body of knowledge which does not look outside of itself.[*]

In other words, the study of a particular vocation is strictly bounded by what information is needed to successfully carry out those tasks the vocation requires. For example, a car mechanic must surely know the workings of the internal combustion engine. But it is arguably the case that in order to perform their tasks successfully, car mechanics

---

[*] Ibid, 191–192.

need not engage themselves with the thinking of Karl Benz (its inventor): we have the internal combustion engine, it is part of the present. Thinking about it the very nature of its invention, while indeed of interest to some, for the car mechanic of today can easily be consigned to the past.

In this way, vocational education is concerned with current practice: with that which is known. Thus, what is being acquired is a knowledge of 'what' has been said rather than 'why' people have said it.[*]

Oakeshott subsequently introduces the further division between 'literature' and 'language'. He goes on:

ŠIĆt may be said that in a 'vocational' education what is learnt is not a 'living' language with a view to be able to speak it and say new things in it, but a 'dead' language: and it is learnt merely for the purpose of a reading a 'literature'... in order to acquire the information it contains. *The skill acquired is the skill of using the information, not of speaking the 'language'* (Emphasis added).[**]

What I think Oakeshott is saying here, and drawing upon my own discipline, International Relations (IR), is that with vocational education the study of things such as 'deterrence', 'interdependence', 'integration', and so on is all about acquiring a vocabulary which allows us to both receive and impart information for specific purposes. Vocational education satisfies current demand. To say again: it

[*]   See ibid, 192.
[**] Ibid, 192–193.

is about training people for the carrying out of certain tasks.

Nowhere is this illuminated more starkly than in the study of organisations such as the European Union (EU). In many pre-accession countries, (my own experience relates to Romania and Bulgaria especially, amongst a number of Southeast European countries), for teachers and students alike the foremost task is seen as the training of diplomats and bureaucrats: those who will eventually guide us to membership. Indeed, of the thousand-plus applications received by my department here at CEU every year, it is almost certain that at least two-thirds of students will begin their Statement of Purpose in more or less the following way: 'At this time, what my country needs most is specialists in the field of international relations'. (Meaning those who can go on to get a job in the foreign ministry, with perhaps even the prospect of being posted in Brussels). This is perfectly understandable, and not, in some circumstances, undesirable. But should this be the business of a university? Oakeshott is categorical: no, it should not.

University education, Oakeshott proffers, concerns the study of 'languages' more so than the study of 'literatures'. With vocational education, those books whose information is 'out-of-date' or whose prescriptions have proved to be 'unreliable' are of no significant value. But this is not the case in a university. Why? Because a university is all about *modes of thinking*.

Oakeshott begins to explain this with reference to the practice of teaching. And here it is worth quoting him at length. He says:

As teachers, they Šuniversity facultyĆ may be either better or worse than those elsewhere; but they are different because they themselves are engaged in something other than what they undertake to teach. *They are not people with a set of conclusions, facts, truths, dogmas, etc. ready to impart or with a well-tried doctrine to hand out*; nor are they people who make it their main business to be familiar with what may be called 'the current state of knowledge' in their department of study; each is a person engaged in the activity of exploring a particular mode of thought in particular connections (Emphasis added).*

Teaching, therefore, is not a prescriptive exercise; it is not about saying how things are. No. And to reiterate the point, teaching is all about trying to reveal 'why' (we think) people have said what they have said. In this sense, Oakeshott proffers that 'texts', as they are in a university, are not merely an organisation of information, but paradigms of a language; that is, they are foremost examples of the very construction of a particular language. Take, for example, Thomas Hobbes' classic work *Leviathan*. As a text taken merely to convey information, written at the time of the civil wars of religion *Leviathan* might well be considered anachronistic. However, as a paradigm of a language, in IR the language of Political Realism, *Leviathan* has been, and continues to be, fundamental: the very basis of the so-called 'domestic analogy' concerning the 'state of

---

* Ibid, 196.

nature' transposed to an anarchical international system.

University education in this way is marked by its separation from the need for pragmatism. As Oakeshott points out: 'To be an undergraduate is to enjoy the 'leisure' which is denoted by thinking without having to think in the pragmatic terms of actions and talking without having to speak in terms of prescription or practical advice: the 'leisure', in short, which distinguishes the peculiar academic engagement of explanation".* Thinking about IR, Political Science, and other social science disciplines should not necessarily be constrained by what students and teachers alike believe to be practical out there in the 'real world'.

I am not unaware that this may well seem like the perfect example of what some positivists find so troubling about so-called 'critical' approaches; the apparent denial of a world that exists independently of the way we think about it. This is not, however, what I think Oakeshott means here, and it is certainly not what I want to say. The point made is that students should not preclude themselves from thinking about, say, mutually assured destruction (MAD) by virtue of the fact that in the real world the Cold War is (apparently) over. In understanding why the language of MAD was constructed, students are engaging themselves in a particular mode of thinking; trying to reveal 'why' (and for that matter, indeed 'how') the vocabulary of Mutually Assured Destruction became the crux of the U.S.'s policy of deter-

---

* Ibid, 199.

rence. And the value of this alone should never be taken too lightly.

'Information' is not unimportant. But information simply for the sake of satisfying the current demand for 'specialists' can arguably be disseminated in a number of other ways. To return to Oakeshott once more:

The current state of our knowledge about voting habits, about the organization of the Conservative Party, about the President of the U.S.A., about the propensities of Trade Unions, about the structure, control and administration of Public Corporations are as tangible pieces of information as the current state of our knowledge about the properties of the materials and devices in domestic plumbing.*

For sure, not everyone can learn how to be an excellent car mechanic just by reading a manual. But many will be able to pick up their *A-Z of the Internal Combustion Engine* and do a pretty decent job of fixing their car from time to time. Therefore, if we would like our students to know more about the workings of, say, the European Parliament, can we simply not point them in the general direction of a library suggesting that once there they request a copy of *All You Wanted to Know about the European Union But Were Too Afraid to Ask*?! Okay, so this may be stretching the point just a bit too far. But there is a serious argument to be made here: for information per se, you do not necessarily need a university. What you might need a university for,

---

* Ibid, 205.

though, is learning how to *critically engage* with that information.

Time to pause now and reflect for a moment as to where we have been so far, and where, in the next section, we will subsequently be going. Drawing explicitly on the work of Michael Oakeshott, I started out by saying that there is a distinction to be made between university education and vocational study, inasmuch as a vocational education is more about receiving, and thus, in turn, being able to impart, information, while studying at a university is more to do with *modes of thinking*. In the next part of the chapter, I go on to argue that in this way academic writing is *an engagement with modes of thinking on paper*: it reflects our ability to analyse and evaluate texts and not our skills in simply taking on board large chunks of information.

Thinking and Writing Academically

The way we think about studying in a university is inextricably bound up with the way we write about what we are studying. The point is a simple one: before we can tackle the question of how to write academically, we must initially establish what we think a university is all about. For instance, if we believe that in departments (or programmes) of European Studies the main goal is the training of Brussels Bureaucrats and the like, then what we ask of students in terms of their writing will surely have to reflect this. If, on the contrary, like Oakeshott we take the view that vocational education must exist separately from the university, then again students will be required to write accordingly. In a university,

academic writing must be more than just revealing information on paper.

Academic writing is not simply a 'technical exercise'. And I'll explain exactly what I mean by this. There is a tendency for some students (and not simply because of time constraints) to approach the writing of term papers and the like in more or less the following way: **Step 1**, run to the library, gather some books, photocopy some journal articles, which are thought to be relevant for the topic. **Step 2**, spend a period of time reading frantically. **Step 3**, spend a further period of time thinking about exactly what I'm going to write: 'What's my research question?' 'What kind of arguments do I want to make in the paper?'. **Step 4**, after thinking has been completed, sit down and put fingers to keyboard (based on the prior calculation that 2,500 words a day can easily be written!).

For many of us (including those of us who are in the business of teaching academic writing) this seems all too familiar: a concerted effort, usually with the help of huge amounts of caffeine, to get the words down on paper before the deadline.

Such a process is less than ideal from the point of view of time management, let alone from the perspective of students' health. And these are both important in themselves. However, the more fundamental argument I want to make concerns the type of thinking bound up in this approach. It is, in short, a type of thinking which makes an ostensibly clear separation between thinking academically and writing academically; hence the allusion to writing

being simply a 'technical exercise'. Or, to put it another way, it assumes that academic writing is a relatively unproblematic manifestation of our mental thoughts; the idea that once our thinking over a particular issue is more or less established, it can then spill rather effortlessly onto the paper in a suitably coherent way.

In the following section I want to demonstrate the notion of thinking of paper with specific reference to the position paper. But before this, and keeping firmly in mind that my argument will be predicated on what is certainly a culturally specific mode of thinking, some brief words about cultural differences in academic writing.

Different cultures use different rhetorical structures to organise ideas. In other words, 'logic' is not a universal quality of the human mind, but varies from culture to culture. Thus, 'teachers of students whose native language is not English should understand that the problems these students have in organizing their English language may be due to interference from rhetorical patterns common to their native language'.[*] Accordingly, academic writing in English is 'typically linear in logic.... Arabic, by contrast, tends to proceed by means of a variety of parallel constructions.... Writing in Romance languages... tends to be constructed around many more digressions than English usually allows. This tendency is even more pronounced in Russian, where

---

[*] Language Teaching Centre (LTC), *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Budapest: CEU, 2001:9).

these digressions may have... no direct relation to the stated topic'.[*]

While cultural differences might indeed be significant, when it comes to the writing of a position paper (especially), native English speakers tend not think on paper very much differently than the rest.

2. The Position Paper

Perhaps the first piece of assessed writing that students are asked to do in my department here at CEU is the position paper. Students find that writing a position paper is particularly difficult, not only because the task in itself is new to them, but, and more fundamentally, so too is the logic of the thinking on paper required.

The following question and answer section, written by myself and CEU Language Teaching Centre's Tom Rooney, was designed to give students some initial ideas as to what a position paper actually is.[**]

What is a position paper?

A position paper is a critical examination of texts by one or more authors.

What is the purpose of a position paper? To introduce, analyse and reflect on important issues, problems and debates in your discipline. In other

---

[*]   Ibid.
[**] Roe, P. & Rooney, T., *The Position Paper* (Budapest, CEU, 2001). Available online at .

words, to examine and respond to *the positions* authors take.

Is it like a critique? In some ways, yes; in others, no. Both genres are based on your critical reading process. Like a critique, a position paper is a reaction in writing to something you have read. Unlike a critique, most position papers focus on more than one essay, research article, or book chapter. These texts may be by the same author, but more often will be written by different ones.

What features should I include in a position paper? You should consider including summary, contextualisation, analysis/evaluation and reflection. You may also want to include a few questions for further discussion.

How much summary should I include? A brief summary is all that is necessary. You do not need to spend a lot of space re-articulating the major issues. Remember that the primary audience – your professor – knows the texts; she certainly wants to see that you understood the main points, but is more likely to be concerned with how you analyse the texts, as well as relate them to each other and to the larger issues in your field.

Should I include my own opinion? Certainly. When you analyse, evaluate and reflect on the texts you will be giving your opinion. But do not confuse a position paper with an argumentative essay. Your purpose here is to analyse the positions of others, not to persuade an audience that your position is correct.

How many quotations can I include? We recommend you summarise and paraphrase as much as possible, and use quotations sparingly. For example, if you are going to evaluate an author's language (his style, perhaps, or use of jargon) then it is crucial you include a quotation as an example. When you are analysing concepts or evidence, however, use your own words. If you do include quotations, we believe you should also keep them short. In our experience, the long, block quotations you find in research papers are not appropriate here.

How should it be structured? There is no secret formula or recipe for writing a position paper. However, many writers first introduce the topic and summarise the major points in the debate before going on to contextualise, analyse/evaluate, and reflect on them. If you are going to include questions, these are usually located at the end.

Can I write about one author/text first, and then the other? As we believe the purpose of the paper is to focus on the issues, problems, and debates in your discipline, we recommend you organize the paper thematically rather than by author. However, you will find examples where each author is examined in turn.

I have two very long texts to examine, but my word limit is short. What should I do? First, ask yourself why you are reading these particular texts, and why are doing it at this time in your course. They probably were not chosen randomly, nor placed out of sequence. Think of your task as discovering the relevance of the texts, in addition to

understanding them. Your insights here may even provide a framework around which you can write your paper. In addition, try to always stay focused on the larger issues, and avoid getting bogged down in details. Finally, you will save words by organising the paper thematically; we often see a lot of repetition in papers which look at the authors separately.

Do I need to include references? Yes. We think the best place to do this is at the top of page one, below your title and before your first paragraph. Put a full reference to the texts (first name, last name, title, journal, publication information, and page numbers). If you quote an author in the body, you should put the page number in parentheses. However, you probably do not need to include page numbers every time you paraphrase or summarise something from the texts.

Can I mention other writers/theorists in my position paper? Where relevant, certainly, but keep in mind the primary purpose of the position paper is to focus on the texts which have been assigned. Do not spend more time on a third author than the two you should be discussing. And if you do bring in other writers, be sure to include a full reference to the source (either in a footnote or end note).

Does anyone else write position papers besides CEU students? Yes, but they may not be called position papers. In journals, review articles do more than simply review books; they are longer essays which relate the texts under review to wider issues. Many times a journal will include an essay

reacting to a piece from a previous issue; this too is a kind of position paper, and is often followed by a response from the author of the original article. It is not uncommon for a debate to carry on for many issues. Finally, the letters section of journals often include longer responses to previous articles. Look through the key journals in your field for these and other examples of "real" position papers.

The position paper, then, asks students to write about a number of texts, usually two, perhaps three, even four. And for many, this is the hardest part.

Having read a lot of position papers over the past few years, I can conclude with some degree of confidence that the overwhelming tendency is for students to read the texts almost in isolation from one another. Students will very often recognise that the texts are indeed dealing with some of the same subject matter, but nonetheless often fail to grasp 'why', in very specific terms, they have been put together. This, to begin, is a matter of 'what' questions are being asked.

The position paper, at least as I see it, tries to steer students away from the simple imparting of information. While many, many texts that students are asked to read may well have (potentially) 101 interesting things to say, the crucial question in this respect is: 'Interesting with regard to what?'. It is only by first addressing this that: one, students can provide themselves with a manageable (thematic) structure for the paper; and two, reveal the paradigmatic nature of the texts (in terms of representing a particular mode of thinking). Let me try to explain this further.

Within an 'International Security' course I was teaching here at CEU, I had assigned two texts for a certain seminar. These were Alexander Wendt's 'Anarchy is What States Make of it', and Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil's chapter 'Revisiting the "National": Toward an Identity Agenda in NeoRealism?'. The reason I chose them was that in specific terms they both made a particular critique of what they contend is the overly deterministic role of anarchy as embodied by the concept of the security dilemma (Wendt's critique situated at the inter-state level, Lapid & Kratochwil's at the intra-state). It is by no means necessary to know the work of these authors, let alone the finer points of their critiques in this way, to appreciate the nature of the task involved.

With the texts read in isolation from each other, we find that Wendt talks about a, b, e, g, h, j, and k, while Lapid and Kratochwil touch upon b, c, d, e, f and i. But what particular value is there in this? Of course, any analysis of the texts themselves is not altogether unimportant, but it lacks the required specificity of a position paper. I can certainly demonstrate that Wendt talks about the security dilemma (b) and the role of anarchy (e), but only as two points amongst a total of seven important things. So how do I prioritise? How do I avoid a simple description followed by some analysis? How do I go about revealing a particular mode of thinking? I set Wendt against Lapid and Kratochwil.

As a **first** stage in the process, a student can work out 'what' is interesting (meaning important) simply by noting which things both Wendt and

Lapid and Kratochwil are talking about: *a* and *e*, and not *b, c, d, f, g, h, i,* and *k*. This, in turn, informs a **second** stage of the process: 'why' are they both talking about *a* and *e*? **Third, fourth,** perhaps even **fifth** stages might very well follow with the prompting of further questions, but the main point, I would say, has been made; that is, the very fact of us asking 'why' begins the process of revealing *modes of thinking*.

3. Some Concluding Remarks

As teachers and as students, all of the texts we engage with carry with them certain assumptions; certain assumptions bound up in the social sciences about the world out there. Critically engaging with the texts is to try to make explicit these assumptions. For revealing certain assumptions is to be able to show 'why' people think in the way that they do; to reveal modes of thinking.

Assumptions tell us how to go on: what to look for, why to think about this and not that. Karl Popper once asked of a class of students simply to 'observe the room'. Before too long it became quite clear they had no idea as to what (specifically) to observe and why they were doing. They had, in simple terms, no assumptions with which to engage. Students often feel like this when asked to look at a text. It may well be viewed as 'interesting' in general terms, but without having a specific focus, students often find themselves at a loss to sort out what is most important. As teachers, we can sometimes, by providing questions about the text, allude to those

assumptions that will bring this focus. But, if not; if students must make explicit for themselves certain assumptions, then the writing of position papers can help to do this.

Position papers ask of students that they do their thinking on paper; that they show 'why' these two writers have said what they have said. The writing of position papers tries to reveal modes of thinking and, in doing so, makes explicit on paper what is often implicit in students' minds. Position papers steer us away from the simple imparting of information and moves us more towards a reflection of thinking on paper. Oakeshott will surely approve.

References

1. Language Teaching Centre (LTC), *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Budapest: CEU, 2001).

2. Oakeshott, M., *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991).

3. Roe, P. & Rooney, T., *The Position Paper* (Budapest, CEU, 2001). Available online at www.ceu.hu/ltc/position.html

WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER MADE SIMPLE

Dr. Mark Downes
University of Limerick Ireland

The purpose of this chapter is to take a practical approach on how to go about writing an academic paper. This chapter provides a holistic approach to writing an academic paper that is adaptable across all of the social science disciplines. The first step incorporates the planning of a research work, deciding which methodology to use and how the paper will be structured. Step two involves the actual writing of the first draft of the paper, how an introduction should engage the reader and the need for a consistent train of thought and a coherence in how to develop your argument. While the final step deals with the editing of your work, its presentation and formatting.

Phase One – Preparation

The starting point for writing an academic work, whether it is a term paper or a thesis, is to choose a topic area. If you are completing a research thesis than it is obviously preferable that you choose a topic that inspires you. This is because you will be

spending weeks, possibly months, with this subject and therefore you must have a passion for the area if you are to maintain your enthusiasm to complete your work. One should always begin the search for a topic with a general area/idea that will be narrowed down at a later stage. An example of a broad topic area might be 'The War on Terrorism' or it might be a country, event, ideal or institution such as the 'United Nations'. After completing some background reading, one might decide to focus on a specific aspect of this topic, such as 'The United Nations is unequipped to deal with modern conflict' or 'The balance of power in the Middle East post-September 11th'. For term papers students might not have as much choice as they would like and the decision regarding the topic will be based on other criteria, such as the availability of material and the scope of possible arguments that could be used.

The reason why it is necessary initially to keep the topic area as broad as possible is because your precise topic will be dictated by your ability to obtain the primary and secondary information that you will require to complete the assignment. For example, it might appear an interesting topic to evaluate how the perception of the European Union has changed in the eyes of the people of Eastern Europe over the past 10 years. That said, we might have no way of evaluating how people felt towards the EU 10 years ago, and to do so today might involve a large primary research endeavour. Therefore, such a topic while interesting might not be achievable due to the scale of the project and the

availability of resources and information. Therefore, before we narrow down our topic area, some preliminary research and reading must take place to see what resources are available to complete this project. Secondary sources of information include books, newspaper articles, journal articles and electronic sources (such as the internet and research databases). Primary research is where you go out and develop the information yourself, having people complete questionnaires or facilitating focus group discussions or indeed interviews. At this stage in the process, however, you should focus on what secondary sources are available and should complete some exploratory reading in order to narrow down your topic area. While you might note the possibility of primary sources of information (such as specialists in the topic area currently teaching or researching at your university, or the presence of diplomatic or civil society groups, NGOs, that may be able to provide additional information) at this stage you should take a broad overview of secondary sources to initially see if your study is feasible. At this initial stage you should hold no preconceived ideas of what your topic is going to be, you should be as flexible as possible. If you choose a topic and find there are no sources available on this area, then it is wise to abandon it and start the process again.

After doing preliminary reading, one should be ready to clarify and better define the topic area. Taking 'The United Nations' as an example of a subject area, below is one method identified by Barrass that you can use to develop a topic out of a subject area.

Who, what, where, when, why and how?*

- Who does the United Nations represent?
- What is its mandate?
- Where has it succeed in preventing conflict?
- When can the United Nations get involved in a conflict?
- Why is it accused of being ineffective?
- How could it possibly be reformed?

The above exercise should help narrow down the subject area to a number of possible topics. If time permits you should carry out steps two and three again. That is, from your initial reading you should be able to assess whether there are sufficient sources of information to fulfil the requirement of your chosen topic. A good researcher should also go through the process of asking the above questions again; to see what additional information might be required when writing a paper on the chosen topic. Some topics that could be developed from the subject area, 'The United Nations' could, for example, include the following: –

- The United Nations and conflict in the 21st Century
- The United Nations as an ineffective institution
- The limitations of the United Nations
- Is the United Nations a counterweight to a 'Clash of Civilisations'?

Once a topic has been developed, one should continue exploratory reading, but now in a more focused manner. Almost all academic writing re-

---

* See further Barrass R, Students Must Write (London: Methuen, 1982:42).

quirements below a research masters or a doctorate will not require you to extend current knowledge by developing a new theory or model of understanding. Most writing assignments ask you to analyse current thought, to substantiate or negate a certain idea. Therefore, most of your material will be obtained from other sources and should therefore be acknowledged as such. It is always important when doing your initial reading that you take good notes. It is especially crucial that you acknowledge the source of your notes, therefore when reading special care should be taken to note the author, publisher, date and place of publication, together with the page number of the book or issue/volume of the journal.

When taking notes you should avoid transcribing large chucks of texts. It is always better to write notes in your own words as it will be easier later to understand their relevance for your own work. That said, if a particular sentence is extremely relevant or can substantiate your argument, then by all means it should be transcribed in its original form. The more you read into a subject, the easier it is to recognise what is relevant and what is not for your arguments. I always find it easier to organise my notes around specific arguments or counter arguments. This acts as a form of cross-referencing between various sources and can be very useful when you finally come to write your first draft. Watching how others develop and organise their train of thought can also be of great use to you in your own work, and so note should be taken when reading texts of good substance.

With your exploratory reading completed and with your subject area now narrowed down to a

specific topic, you can begin to develop your research problem and objectives. The central idea of your paper is your research problem. It is an idea that you will prove or disprove through your research and writing. By developing a research problem and breaking it down into more manageable objectives, one should be able to provide some structure to ones writing and to give our research a more focused direction. In general you should aim to have one 'Main Objective', which is the central crux of your paper, together with a number of sub-objectives. In general five or six sub-objectives should be sufficient to ensure that the main objective is fulfilled whilst also ensuring that your work remains focused. The sub-objectives, when answered, should fulfil the main objective, which should go some way to answering your research problem. For example, let us take the theme of the enlargement process of the EU and the effects of this process on the ability of the Union to achieve political union and let us develop a research problem, main objective and sub-objectives from this topic.

Problem –

The current process of enlargement of the EU will inevitably led to the Union becoming a bastion of inter-governmentalism and undermine the ideal of a supra-national political Union.

Main Objective –

To examine whether European enlargement will lead to a more intergovernmental union, resulting in the abandoning of the ideal of political union.

Sub-objectives –

1) How would the current balance of power between the various institutions be described, supranational or intergovernmental?
2) What are the main driving forces of political union, is it the member states or the European Commission?
3) What are the factors that affect the level and scope of political integration?
4) What effect will the enlargement process have on the decision making process in the: –
   - Commission?
   - The Council of Ministers?
   - The European Council?
   - The Parliament?
5) Taking into account sub-objective one, how will the enlargement process affect the balance of power amongst the various institutions?

As can be seen, the above process assists in breaking down your work into more manageable parts and provides direction as regards the development of an outline or structure for your work.

The purpose of an outline is to provide a structure that will enable you to have a clear train of thought throughout your paper. In many ways it is the road map that you will follow to prove or disprove your thesis. It allows you to organise the information you have gathered into a logical sequence of arguments. It should detail the information that you will use in each section of your work. The table of contents of a book can be viewed as a basic example of an outline, as it shows the progres-

sion of thought of the writer that should lead logically to their conclusions. When writing a research paper you will have to develop your outline in more detail, to contain the various arguments that you will use as you progress through your paper. When complete your outline should give you a clear idea of the direction that your paper will take. It should also provide you with the opportunity to make sure that you have covered all relevant arguments and to ensure that there are no avenues of counter argument that have not been foreseen and covered. Once this is done you should be ready and in a position to begin writing your paper. Many students rush the preparation phase of the academic writing process and find at later stages that they have an inconsistent train of thought, or that they have developed arguments at a tangent to their main objective. These problems are difficult to correct once the writing and editing process has begun, so students must spend sufficient time in preparing their arguments and completing their research prior to starting to write.

Phase 2 – Don't get it right get it written!

A piece of advice I was given many years ago and which may sound odd, turned out to be very helpful when it comes to the process of putting pen to paper. This refers to the problem that many students face, actually getting down and writing their paper. You may have developed lengthy arguments, substantiated these arguments with pages of research, but when you sit down to write the first draft of your paper your mind is blank and you have

no idea of where to start. This usually stems from the desire to get the paper 'perfect' the first time you begin to write or put fingers to the keyboard. The first thing you have to understand is that such an idea is a fallacy. Good papers are drafted, re-drafted and if necessary re-drafted again and again. So when you sit down to write the first draft, it will inevitably be a rough outline, so just get an initial draft written, you can fine tune it later during the editing process.

The Introduction

Many people leave the writing of an introduction until after they have finished the first draft and even revise it again at the end of the writing process. There is a lot of merit to this method, after all your ideas and consequently your paper may change dramatically whilst you are writing it and, therefore, you can only truly introduce it properly after the paper is completed. This is especially true when you are dealing with a lengthy piece of research, such as a masters or a doctorate that might take months or even years to complete. That said, it is still a good idea to write a rough introduction as a guide for the rest of your text. At this stage one should remember what has been said previously about knowing your audience, because the introduction to your work should be specifically focused on explaining to your audience what your work is about, so knowing your audience and what level to pitch your work at is essential. How you would write when talking to experts in the field or to debutante in the area is significant. An introduction has two basic purposes;

to engage the reader so that they have a desire to read on and to explain succinctly what your paper is aiming to achieve. A good introduction usually begins in a broad manner, with general statements about the topic that lead naturally to the statement of your research problem, which should form the end of your introduction and fully engage the reader in your train of thought.

The Main Body of the Paper

Following your introduction, your next problem is how to develop your paper and organise your various thoughts and arguments. Do not be curtailed by your outline, use it as a guide and if new opportunities arise that will enhance your work do not be afraid to engage with them.

Many students face difficulties when it comes to organising their thoughts and putting them down on paper. Using the outline as a general guide, you should begin writing, the organisation and editing of your paper will be done at a later stage, at this point you should concentrate on developing your arguments and putting them into a written form. Knowing how to build an argument is vital for any type of academic writing. I will not go into much detail here on this topic, as Keane does an excellent job on how to build an argument later in chapter seven. Suffice to say at this stage that when viewing the text holistically, it is always better to have only four or five core arguments, which should be substantiated by additional minor comments or by examples. Any more than four or five core arguments and the reader will inevitably get confused as to the focus of

your overall purpose. Any less then this number and your overall argument may lack weight and credibility. Therefore, as a rule of thumb, four or five core arguments should be sufficient to maintain your overall focus, train of thought, while convincingly putting forward your case. For those of you for whom English is a foreign language, avoidance of complexity is always a good option. Keep your thoughts clear, sentences short and always keep in mind the main purpose of your paper, what you are trying to achieve.

A clear and consistent train of thought is a vital cornerstone of any research paper. Many students feel it necessary to put into the text all of what they know on the subject being dealt with. If the material does not add to your argument or parry a counter argument, then it should not be put into the text. The addition of irrelevant material to your work will lessen the impact on your audience. When deciding what is or is not relevant you should also keep in mind your audience. It can be a tricky issue, because arguments should always be placed in their correct context. Adding in additional information that is not relevant to your argument (even if it is well written) will unbalance your paper and take away from the strength of your arguments. Therefore, it is always better to keep your argument relevant, as it gives your paper coherence and provides your train of thought with a sense of clarity. Therefore, as you work through the outline, be sure that all the material included in the paper is related and relevant to your thesis. Your paper will have coherence if your reader can follow the progression of your arguments

and they should lead the reader naturally to draw the same conclusions from your paper as you do. It is sometimes helpful to draw out your line of argumentation, so as to see if your train of thought is clear and concise. There needs to be some tangible relationship between your various arguments, to maintain the clarity of your paper and the consistence of your train of thought. Therefore, you should make an attempt to link your arguments together, otherwise your paper will be viewed as segmented and incoherent.

The Conclusion

A conclusion entails one or two paragraphs that draw your paper to a close. No new arguments should be mentioned in this section of your paper. The conclusions should be relatively obvious from the arguments made previously and the reader should not be surprised by the conclusions drawn by the author. The conclusion should in essence restate your central research problem and summarise your major arguments. You should be careful not to be repeating yourself, but merely highlighting to the reader how your arguments have proven your research problem and why this conclusion is the inevitable outcome from this argument.

In many cases, if you are writing a term paper your professor or course director will give the title of your work and there is little opportunity to deviate from that. If, however, you are writing a thesis, it is advisable that only after you have completed your first draft should you even think of choosing a title for your work. That way your title can more

accurately reflect the true nature of your work. Needless to say the title should engage the reader and should leave no room for ambiguity as to what your paper is about.

Phase Three – The Editing Process

Once the first draft of your paper is completed, it is important that you spend time revising and editing it. In many cases, if you are writing a thesis, it may be worthwhile to leave some time between writing the initial text and editing it. The reason for this is that we all believe that our own writing is brilliant. It is understandable, after spending weeks or months researching and writing a text, you are too close to see any possible errors in your work. It is, /therefore/ difficult to objectively assess the strength of your arguments or the cohesiveness of your train of thought. Therefore, it is best to leave the text for a number of days and then return to it with an open mind and a critical demeanour.

When revising your paper, there are some points that you should be looking for to improve your work, its structure and overall quality. Firstly, you should ensure that the objectives of your work are clear and that they have been fulfilled through your research and argumentation. When assessing the strength of your argument, you should make sure that there is sufficient information to substantiate your point of view. That said, you should also check for irrelevant information and arguments that might side-track or confuse your reader. If there is any superfluous information in your text it should

be removed, so as to maintain a clear and concise train of thought. Having reviewed your paper, you should ask yourself whether your arguments progress in a logical manner and lead inevitably to your stated conclusion or can they be re-organised to highlight your train of thought in a more effective manner? Are your arguments consistent and have you utilised relevant examples where and when necessary? As mentioned previously, you should have written in a manner that takes into account your prescribed audience. If you are writing in the hope of getting your work published in a particular journal, it is always advisable to read previous issues of the particular publication, so that you can get a feel for the style and the format that is required.

One of the most important aspects of your work that you must ensure is right, is your mode of referencing other people's work that you have used or that have influenced your ideas.

It is imperative that you document honestly all the books and articles that you have used in preparing your paper. There are a number of methods of citation that you can use; no matter which one you choose to use it is important that you are consistent throughout your document. The two main modes of referencing are footnotes and in-text referencing. An example of footnote referencing is done in the following manner: –

Books

Author, Title, (Publisher, Place, Date: Page)

For Example: –

Rosamond, B., Theories of Integration, (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2000:12)

Articles

Author, Article Title, Journal Title, Volume, Number, Date

For Example: –

Anderson, J., 'Deconstructing the Uni-polar world', Alternatives, VII, 2 (1998)

Footnotes can also be used to provide additional explanations of a certain point, or to provide information that is not directly linked to your argument. While there are times when the use of footnotes in this regard is necessary, a general rule of thumb should be that if it does not fit into the text then it is not relevant enough to put it into a footnote. Students can sometimes make excessive use of footnotes, resulting in the text appearing disjointed. Whether you cite texts using footnotes or using in-text referencing can be a matter of style. Although business related subjects usually tend towards using in-text referencing while humanities and the social science usually prefer the use of footnotes.

There are two methods of in-text referencing, as follows: –

Bull is of the opinion that the 'European union suffers from a democratic deficit that affect its legitimacy in the yes of the people' (1996:12). While an alternative opinion is that the EU political structure is 'a new endeavour that attempts to overcome the

inadequacies of the concept of the Nation State' (Henderson: 200, 15).

A big task facing many students is the decision of what needs to be referenced and what does not. While it is always better to veer on the side of caution, information that is accepted as general knowledge does not need to be referenced. In general, common facts such as World War II starting in 1939 and ending in 1945 are well known and do not require a note to acknowledge where you read this. It is, however, better to err on the side of over-citation rather than under-citation. All and any material, which has assisted you, should be acknowledged. Direct quotation from another writer should be kept short and reserved for sentences that stand out because they are especially pertinent to your argument. If the author you are quoting has two books published in the same year, then you have to make a distinction when referencing by indicating, for example 1998a and 1998b. Where you are indebted to an author for an idea, a fact, an opinion or statistic, you should acknowledge this just as you would a direct quote.

The Bibliography

While you may have only directly used a number of texts, your bibliography should represent the whole host of sources that have been of assistance in developing your work. The works in the bibliography should be listed alphabetically according to the author's family name. Where more than one work by the same author is cited, earlier works are quoted

before later works and works co-authored with others are quoted after individual works.

Plagiarism in any academic environment is a serious offence. You must document your sources in order to make it clear where the evidence came from to support your assertions in the text of the essay. Failure to do so may leave you open to the charge of plagiarism. Plagiarism is dealt with in more detail in a later chapter by Ashworth, suffice to say at this stage that it will result in a serious reduction of your grade at the very least and receiving a failure grade in a more serious case.

Formatting your paper

Finally, how you format your paper is very important. No matter whether we agree with it or not, first impressions last, so handing in a tidy, organised and typed paper is always important. Presentation is always an integral part of the overall paper, no matter how good your material is, if it comes in an untidy manner it inevitably leaves a negative impression on the reader/examiner. All papers should, therefore, be typed where possible. Needless to say, whether you are typing the document or not, a separate title page should always accompany your paper. It should contain details such as the title of your paper, your name and your student number and course details. If typing your document then some simple formatting guidelines, as outlined below, should be followed: –

- Don't overcrowd your paper, always have your document double spaced or at least one and a half spaced throughout.

- Margins on either side of the page should be consistent and aligned throughout the text.
- The first word of each paragraph should be indented five spaces or one tabbed space.
- Quotations longer than four sentences or more should also be indented.
- All pages should be numbered; page numbers are most commonly placed on the bottom right hand corner.

Summary

Some additional points that a student should take into account when preparing the final draft and overall when writing an academic paper

1) Your reader will not be in a position to ask you questions or to clarify what it was you were trying to say. Therefore, you need to be able to ask these questions of yourself and to be able to close off any possible avenues through which your arguments could be countered as unfounded or unsubstantiated.

2) You should supply sufficient information so that your audience can follow your argument. While there is a tight line to be followed here, between impressing the reader and overburdening them with basic information, the student should not undersell knowledge or grasp of a topic by just assuming that the reader will know what they are referring to. Always remember that the reader only has what you have written in your text through which to access your work.

3) When reviewing your final draft you should make sure that you have written grammatically and that

your spelling is correct. For those of you using a computer to type, at the very least you should do a spell check before printing your paper. There is nothing that annoys an examiner more than basic mistakes such as spelling and grammar. Such simple misdemeanours can hijack the examiner's attention and lead to them building an impression of your work before they have finished reading the paper.

Finally, writing is about practice. The more you write the better you will develop the skills to grasp the attention of your audience, to get your point across successfully and to have a consistent and strong train of thought throughout your work.

Chapter 3

WRITING FOR BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES

Dr. Yusaf Akbar
IMC Graduate School of Management
Central European University Budapest, Hungary

The aim of this chapter will be to develop approaches and strategies to producing academic writing in the context of the discipline of business and management studies (BMS). Its fundamental argument is that while academic writing in business studies requires the same level of quality of presentation (if not higher) than in more traditional disciplines, the main aims of business research are different from those of academic research in that business research's central aim is to offer both strategic and policymaking conclusions for the reader. Indeed, the chapter argues that there is an inherent paradox between the concept of "academic writing" and business and management studies related to the pedagogical and intellectual premises of academic writing in BMS.

This inevitably leads to an emphasis on the value of ideas in strategy and policy rather than theoretical rigor for its own sake. This is acutely linked to the reality that much leading business research is produced for a managerial audience rather than solely for fellow academics.

Having said this, more traditional academic writing and business studies writing have much to learn from each other. Business studies can benefit from traditional academic research's emphasis on theoretical rigor to raise standards of scholarly research within its own epistemic community while at the same time offering a salutary warning to more traditional academic writing of the dangers of losing relevance to the real world and empirical challenges ahead.

This chapter is organized as follows. In part 1, examine the contention that business research is not the same as academic research. In doing so, I briefly cover the development of BMS as a discipline. Part 2 consider presentational implications of business research. I offer seven 'axioms' or guidelines concerning academic writing in BMS. Part 3 calls for a synthesis of BMS methodologies and those of traditional academic disciplines. In this section, I offer examples of this emerging synthesis in the current academy. We include some reflections on the emerging synthesis of business academe and its more traditional counterpart in areas such as political risk analysis, business ethics, the global environment of business and the new field of critical management studies. Part 4 is a concluding section.

1. "Business Research is not the same as Academic Research"

At a recent conference in Slovenia in 2001, a leading academic at IMD Lausanne, a specialist in strategy and how it relates to operations manage-

ment argued forcefully that the aims of business research are distinctly different from those of academic research.[*] This was because business academics (if that is not an oxymoron) are seeking a broader audience than a traditional academic one. In particular, as business academics we should make our work accessible to both academics, but as importantly to business people, because we are in the 'business' of helping managers understand how they can improve the way in which they do their work.

This has two central implications. First, that our research should focus on big ideas rather than intellectual minutiae as expected in some more rarified social scientific disciplines such as theoretical economics. Second, the style in which we write should where possible be accessible to as broad as possible an audience. This second issue will be the main focus of this chapter and will provide the central challenge that is offered to readers. Before we turn to a discussion of the nuts and bolts of academic writing in business and management studies, it is worth expanding on this important debate.

It is interesting to consider the origins of business and management studies as an academic discipline. In many senses, it has taken a journey from being on the outside of the academy to being thrust into the centre of university research and reputation. For many years business and management studies (BMS), as a discipline, were regarded as a subject that were 'practical' in import and had little

---

[*]   Views of Professor Derek Abell, IMD Lausanne, at the International Management Teacher's Academy, IEDC Bled, Slovenia.

to offer in terms of pushing the boundaries of our intellectual world.

It was criticized for being 'lightweight' in conceptual and theoretical rigor. Few grand theories or methodological approaches have been developed in BMS. At times, traditional academics have accused the discipline of being taxonomic rather than being critical in its approach. Supporters of BMS argued, to the contrary, that its willingness to engage in 'real world' practical and policy-orientated questions was its very strength. The fact that it was able to communicate and have its prescriptions implemented in a context outside of the academy said much for its relevance in the 20th century.

This divide was epitomized at the very highest table of the academy where Oxford University did not have a business school until the 1990s and where Harvard University did not accept Harvard Business School (HBS) into the Harvard Colleges until many years after HBS came into being. By contrast, at the same time as the traditional bastions of academe were rejecting the inclusion of BMS into the ivory tower, the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) was becoming the fastest growing graduate degree to be offered in US universities. It seemed for all intents and purposes that the traditional academy was rejecting a discipline that was becoming increasingly popular among prospective students.

If anything, it was commercial pressures that ultimately invited BMS to the high table of the academy as university administrators eventually recognized that in an era in which public funding for

university education in North America and West Europe was not keeping pace with increasing demands for higher education and the costs associated with increasing student numbers, that BMS could become an important source of income and be used as a redistributive arm of the university funding schemes.

Due, in part, to the fact that the MBA qualification was predominantly aimed at managers with several years work experience, frequently sponsored by the companies where they worked, university management schools could charge significant fees to the new crop of MBA managers whose primary goal was to achieve a rise in salary and promotion at work.

A similar trend emerged in the UK university sector where the London Business School emerged as the pre-eminent school for MBA and other graduate degrees in management with specializations. Moreover, both in the UK and the US, undergraduate business studies emerged as another lucrative degree program in terms of revenue raising – especially for overseas students who were willing to pay a premium for an English language degree. At undergraduate level, entry requirements were not as high as some of the traditional academic disciplines and thus some observers regarded undergraduate business subjects as being not of the requisite quality as a traditional degree. Some even questioned the relevance of business studies as an undergraduate discipline at all.

The trend on continental west Europe was somewhat different from the Anglo-Saxon one. For

example, in France, business education at the undergraduate level has emerged as one of the 'crème de la crème' disciplines with the development of the *Grandes Ecoles de Commerce*. These highly selective and competitive institutions require both a high school diploma and entrance examinations. A similar situation emerged in Spain. Arguably, these privately run business schools were successful partly because the University systems in these countries were open to all with a high school diploma. This led to huge numbers of students attending Universities with the quality of the student learning experience declining.

Germany and the Netherlands, with notable exceptions, have kept the traditional academic disciplines at the high table of university education. Both the German Fachochschule and Dutch Hogeschool were regarded as lower than Universities and students with poorer high school diplomas were sent to the more 'practical' courses offered at these institutions.

By contrast, in east and central Europe, after the 1989 revolutions BMS blossomed as an academic discipline. The explanations for this development are complex and interrelated. To distill these explanations, we can locate it in the collapse in credibility of traditional Marxist political economy in universities and the ideological shift in social science education towards neo-liberal theories. Moreover, the collapse of public funding in state universities meant that new sources of funding came from private sector sources from the West. A number of these new

institutions set up BMS as a core feature of their degree portfolio.

Also in contrast to the West, in Hungary for example, the demand for undergraduate business education is so high that the entrance requirements for business degrees are higher than for engineering and the natural sciences.

These changes in the academic landscape have had two primary effects. First, other academic disciplines have had to develop awareness of the importance of BMS as a discipline and how it may impact on their own field. Second, BMS has come under greater scrutiny in terms of its academic rigor – universities are now more keenly monitoring the 'quality' of academic research in the field and business schools now participate in national research assessment exercises. Finally and probably most important for this chapter is the realization that academic writing in BMS now has developed its own methodology and structure that is worthy of exploration further – an issue that we take up in Section 2.

Before we move on to this issue, it is worth further exploring the claim that academic research is different from business research. It is certainly the case that an additional criterion in the recruitment and promotion process at business schools is the experience that candidates have in doing consultancy based research. This is different from a traditional academic position. One of the challenges for the business school academic is to somehow turn commercial based work into a more suitable format for the purposes of academic research and teaching.

Probably one of the most obvious applications of consultancy work is in the generation of company case studies – themselves a challenge in academic writing style. Case study teaching is now an essential part of the teaching and learning process in business schools. The case study itself is written in an accessible non-technical style in order to enable students from all subfields within the discipline to understand the work. Once again, HBS has led the way with the development of case studies with specific formats. In case study teaching today, the debate over the use of formal cases and journalistic sources such as magazine articles or newspaper articles is also vigorous. While the benefits of using formal cases are clear, the use of unstructured sources requires more preparation. However, it does allow for more up to date analyses and cases.

2. "Business Writing requires an especially high level of presentational clarity"

Arguably one of the single biggest criticisms leveled at academic writing is that it is poorly structured, Byzantine in its linguistic and grammatical constructions and not relevant for the majority of people of work outside of the academy. As with any criticism, there is an element of both exaggeration and a measure of truth in the above claim. One of the sources of intellectual power is in the use of a language that not everyone has access to. It creates power-distance between the reader and the author thereby granting the latter a superior position.

Sadly, one of the most commonly asserted realities is that academic work is read rarely in the academy and hardly ever heard of outside. Part of the problem is that the work is not clearly designed for a broader audience as the authors are seeking recognition from their often highly specialized and limited peer group. This therefore does not require them to use a more accessible language as they can reliably assume that their readership is able to understand the use of technical or esoteric language.

BMS as a discipline, due to its self-proclaimed aims to be accessible to a broader community must therefore build a language and a style which is more 'readable' and which tackles broader ideas. Thus, it is often the case that BMS academic writing appears somewhat superficial, makes use of broad generalized claims and at times errs on the side of prescription too liberally for some more traditional academic scholars.

We can consider a spectrum of academic writing in BMS that is widely accepted as a legitimate form. On one end of the spectrum is the writing of solicited pieces in business newspapers and magazines such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times* and the *Economist*. Given the space constraints in this kind of writing, BMS academics tend to offer opinion pieces or brief summaries of issues and debates. At the other end of the spectrum is work published in refereed journals such as the *Journal of International Business Studies* and *Academy of Management Journal*. These outlets publish research which is as precise, theoretically and empiri-

cally robust as many other journals in the social sciences. The ratio of acceptances to submission is low and the refereeing process is thorough. In the middle of this spectrum are journals that are interested in publishing original research but often with more of a direct policy focus; a stronger normative angle on the ideas or a paper that emphasizes the 'importance of the big idea'. Probably the most famous of this brand of journal is the *Harvard Business Review*. Most, if not all, articles are solicited – often on the basis of a previous book or article published elsewhere.

Just to reemphasize the key point in this part of our chapter: successful academic writing in BMS requires a high degree of presentational clarity. Thus, while it is acceptable in other disciplines to present data in table form, it is often the case that in BMS work, we rely upon the presentation of data in graphical or bar chart form. Again, the main reason for this is to enable the reader to gain a quick insight and feedback on the data presented rather than having to trawl through a table of data in order to discern the main trends among the data.

A similar demand is placed on the BMS scholar in the summary of ideas of the research. This often requires the use of executive summaries in published work. Executive summaries differ from 'abstracts' in that they offer as complete an overview of the material as possible for an 'executive reader' who does not have the time to read the entire piece. One of the key success factors in writing a good executive summary is the ability to get the 'big idea' across to the reader and offer some policy and strategic impli-

cations of the idea. In particular, the BMS scholar should ask: 'how does this affect how we manage a business?'

In this context, we will now aim to develop some guidelines for producing BMS academic writing. In doing so, we aim to develop rules of thumb rather than cast iron principles.

#1: Academic Writing in BMS should address a debatable but concrete phenomenon or a dilemma for business activity and/or strategy.

In BMS, we are directly interested in issues that can help solve real problems or investigate real issues. Examples of the former would be developing a strategy for entry in a new market or resolving dilemmas of human resource allocation within a business organization. Examples of the latter would be explaining corporate failure or comparing the effectiveness of models of corporate governance around the world. Thus, students should be encouraged to investigate predominantly empirical issues or conceptual issues that lead to directly investigable empirical phenomena.

#2: Conceptual arguments should follow from a set of questions or dilemmas that are grounded in *a priori* empirical observation.

One potential criticism of research in the social sciences is that the researcher/student already assumes the data in order to 'prove' the theory. In other words, they seek data not to develop questions but to confirm their conceptual hunches. Examples

abound. For example, scholars choose case studies that confirm their hypothesis and then go on to make general claims about their theories. In BMS, it is possible to use just one case study to illustrate an argument but that case should not be used to infer a general claim.

#3: Where possible, BMS academic writing should be written in an accessible style, avoiding jargon and exclusive language.

This is not to claim that BMS should 'dumb down' the intellectual rigor of the work but students and scholars should be encouraged (in fact beseeched) to write and re-write work until the 'educated but unacquainted' reader can access the ideas at hand. Critics of BMS scholarship may argue that this approach may dilute the intellectual purity of the work but it is vital that, as BMS scholars, we address the real concerns of policymakers and managers while not seeking to reconfirm their own hunches and prejudices. Of special note here is the executive summary. Students should be required to write crystal clear executive summaries – focus on how they can ensure that the uninitiated reader can understand the work produced. One exercise for this could be to require students to write executive summaries for other student's work. This tests two skills. First, it tests the student's ability to read and understand someone else's work and second it evaluates their capability to summarize arguments in a clear, precise and accessible way.

#4: BMS Scholarship should avoid proselytizing and romanticizing a given company's performance or strategy.

It is often the case that students write dissertations and theses on a given company with which they have direct experience of working in. This places the student in a difficult position: can they be genuinely objective about an organization with which they have worked? If it is clear that the student cannot do this, then they should be encouraged to choose other companies or industries to focus on. This problem is especially dangerous where the research is based on compensated consultancy – there is a direct danger that the scholar is seeking to confirm their client's own views and fears criticizing them.

#5: BMS scholarship should provide clear and unambiguous strategic or policymaking implications in its work.

Whether the scholarship is investigating a controversy in BMS or directly addressing a question of strategy or policymaking, it is crucial that the student be encouraged to develop direct and cogent strategic or policymaking implications of the work. This does not imply that students should 'pick out of the air' policy implications that clearly do not flow from what they have sought to demonstrate in their work. However, one reasonably common occurrence in research writing in BMS is that a well-crafted paper ends on a weak note leaving the reader wondering what they have to learn from the work done.

Research for its own sake is therefore of little use in BMS given our preoccupation with problem-solving.

#6: BMS scholarship should seek to think 'outside the box'.

A legitimate criticism of BMS as an academic discipline is that it tends to rely upon a given and sometimes narrow set of models. Moreover, these sets of models sometimes represent the 'flavor of the month' – BMS is fickle. This blend of 'trendy conservatism' can sometimes be held as a criticism of the discipline: "The King is dead! Long Live the King!" Students thus should be encouraged to question this phenomenon. While at the doctoral level, this can be a risky strategy, especially when the search for employment is concerned, surely one of the greatest lessons we can learn from the natural or 'hard' sciences is the need to constantly question our understanding of how things work – it is this way that we can push the boundaries of our field. A related point is the need for BMS to reach outside its own established field to encompass concepts from other disciplines. In recent years, some of the most important developments in BMS research have involved the embracing of sociology and social psychology in organizational theories, economics in strategy and corporate governance, history in business history, mathematical and statistical methods for quantitative research in finance and political science theories in our understanding of political risk. This inter-disciplinary conversation can be extremely fruitful and help BMS gain 'credibility' among other disciplines.

#7: BMS academic writing is uniquely placed to profit from other academic disciplines methodologies – consequently, BMS should open these approaches to a management and policymaking community.

In the social science academy, there are few disciplines that are as fortunate as BMS. Not only do we have an array of disciplinary methodologies to learn from ranging from social psychology to political science, we have a wonderful 'testing ground' for the invaluable insights offered by these other disciplines. Students of BMS should be encouraged to explore these other approaches and integrate them in their own writing and see how the work of some of the greatest thinkers in other disciplines can impact our understanding and resolution of contemporary management dilemmas. For example, it may be a useful exercise for our students, having explored the work of Michael Porter and competitive advantage to be sent off to read the work of Joe Bain and other industrial economists. In that way, they may recognize the epistemological origins of 'Five Forces' and also may find a way to think outside Porter's 'box' (or diamond!). It was after all, Porter's foresight in taking the structure-conduct-performance paradigm further that generated his seminal contributions.

Students of marketing and consumer behavior may find looking at Thorsten Veblen's "Theory of the Leisure Class" as an interesting interpretation of consumer capitalism and may help them generate marketing strategy implications for further analysis. Last and certainly not least, the path breaking work

of Susan Strange[*] and her critical analysis of changing political power relations between business and government would significantly inform a strategist's analysis of business lobbying and public affairs management.

Not only can students and scholars in our field benefit from casting our intellectual net wider, one of our key stakeholders: the strategy and policymaking community could benefit too. Thus, we should encourage fellow scholars and students when offering policy implications of their work to expose these prescriptions to the other disciplines and methodologies mentioned above. This may help policymakers and strategists see their problems and decision-making dilemmas in a different broader light. The least that being catholic in our approach can offer is to broaden the range of policy options available. At best, it could offer new horizons to policymakers.[**]

3. "The Best of both worlds? Towards a synthesis of academic research writing and business research writing"

In this section, we aim to demonstrate why, in the coming years, we could expect a convergence of traditional academic disciplines and BMS. We be-

---

[*] See references for specific titles.

[**] Worthy of note is the Lancaster Business School at Lancaster University in the UK which offers a Masters for Practicing Managers and a doctoral program in Critical Management. The aim of the program is to expose managers to new and heterodox approaches to understanding BMS and their associated practical dilemmas. BAe Systems is one the companies that sends managers to these programs.

lieve that this is largely a positive change for BMS in three ways. First, it will allow our discipline to learn from other approaches in the social sciences. Second, interdisciplinary dialog will also hopefully continue to erode the largely erroneous view held by some scholars in other academic disciplines that BMS is intellectually 'lightweight'. Third, we may be able to aid other disciplines in becoming more capable at spreading their word to a broader community and in the classroom we may help to raise presentational standards among faculty and students.

As the demand for business education continues to rise, the number of teaching positions in BMS will also rise. This creates employment opportunities for the growing number of scholars achieving a doctorate at business schools. Moreover, this increase in demand for BMS has not been matched by a commensurate increase in other disciplines in the social sciences. With budgetary austerity affecting a large number of public universities around the world, faculty recruitment in other social sciences has not grown as quickly. However, the number of doctorates awarded in these other disciplines continues to grow.[*] This means that a number of non-DBA scholars are applying to teach at business schools. These faculty candidates come from a range of disciplines such as sociology, economics, mathematics and political science. While they may not have the DBA training, they can offer a BMS faculty a number of

---

[*] One, unintended consequence of this is that faculty have to take on more doctoral students both reducing the amount available to each student and increasing the workload of faculty.

advantages. This section will explore this issue. It argues for an interdisciplinary convergence in BMS academic writing and research in order to achieve the three benefits forwarded at the start of this paper.

The Richard Ivey School of Management at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, Haas School of Management at UC Berkeley, the Thunderbird Graduate School of Management in Arizona and the IMC Graduate School of Management, Central European University, Budapest all have attempted to introduce interdisciplinary approaches to BMS.[*] All of these schools have faculty trained in a broad range of disciplines all of whom bring with a richness of methodologies and analytical approaches. This is reflected in the courses they offer. For example, at the Ivey School, there is a core course on the MBA program entitled "The Global Environment of Business" (GEOB) in which students are required to take a range of topics on the economic, political, cultural and sociological environment underpinning global business. In a similar vein, the IMC MBA program has its signature International Strategic Management: Operations and International Strategic Management: The Business Environment courses which are required core modules in which students are exposed to a similar range of issues across disciplines such as economics, political science, business law and sociology in addition to marketing, operations management and information

---

[*] This list is not exhaustive. These schools' programs are familiar to the author.

systems management. The course lasts two semesters.

The implications of these kinds of approaches have meant that students are encouraged to produce academically broad writing that is subject to a higher level of more traditional academic scrutiny while at the same time benefiting from the constant demands of a business school education for relevance and application to real world problems and dilemmas. Students cannot simply produce theoretical work for its own sake and at the same time, they are exposed to a broad range of disciplinary approaches that they may not necessarily get at a more conventional business and management school.

This is reflected, and thereby promoted through research collaboration between business school faculty and other faculty in other disciplines. The intellectual overlap created by the work of scholars from other disciplines provides an excellent example to students of BMS in their own academic writing. A number of journals exist to promote cross-faculty research collaboration. Notable among these are the *California Management Review, Business and Politics* and the *Journal of International Business Studies*. These journals rigorously review work submitted and they have generated a reputation for producing internationally excellent cross-faculty research as well as publishing cutting-edge research in narrower sub-fields of BMS. The growth of 'special issues' of journals in BMS has also facilitated the development of interdisciplinary research and writing. Based around a specific topic, these special issues solicit papers from a broad range of viewpoints

and methods and thus provide an excellent breeding ground for ideas on policy and strategy. They also are excellent examples of academic writing on which students can seek to base their own work. They expose the student to a broader range of methodologies than a textbook and can help build an awareness of the seven rules of thumb we outlined in section two above.

Thus to summarize our main arguments in this section, we strongly believe that through cross-faculty, interdisciplinary collaboration and approaches, we can better prepare our students in their academic writing endeavors. Not only can we as BMS scholars benefit from this collaboration in the generation of more theoretically rigorous research, we can aid both our non-BMS faculty in broadening their research into more directly related policy and strategy fields and we will most importantly encourage our students to produce more intellectually rigorous work while remaining true to our wider community of policymakers and strategists in industry and public policy.

4. Conclusions

This chapter has sought to discuss issues in academic writing in the discipline of business and management studies. Rather than offering rules for academic writing, this chapter has sought to emphasize the importance of strategic and policy relevant research and the concomitant need for clarity in presentation. In particular, the use of esoteric and exclusive language is one of the biggest pitfalls of

traditional academic research and scholars in BMS should avoid this writing style where possible.

This chapter has also highlighted the development of BMS as an academic discipline: on its journey outside the hallowed halls of academe to its current position of budgetary and financial centrality in university funding. This has put BMS writing under the academic microscope in terms of its intellectual rigor. A range of BMS journals now publish research of comparable academic rigor as the leading journals in other academic disciplines.

Lastly, this chapter emphasized that academic writing in BMS, because of its fundamentally interdisciplinary context is in a fortunate position in that it can benefit from other academic sources in its own writing: economics, political science, sociology and social psychology are all among the social science disciplines that can help us understand the business world that is central to our academic concerns.

5. References

1. Stopford, John & Strange, Susan, *Rival States, Rival Firms: Competition for World Market Shares* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2. Strange, Susan, *Casino Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986).

3. Strange, Susan, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

4. Strange, Susan, "Globaloney?", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 1998), pp. 704–11.

5. Strange, Susan, *Mad Money*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

6. Veblen, Thorstein, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (London: Penguin, 1995).

CHAPTER 4

Creating Knowledge: Designing an Empirical Research Project

Dr. Annette Freyberg-Inan
Civic Education Project Visiting Faculty Fellow
University of Bucharest, Faculty of Political Science

This chapter is meant to introduce you to the logic of an empirical research project. It should be useful especially to students in the social sciences, at both the undergraduate and the graduate level, who don't yet know much about this kind of work. I explain, first of all, what empirical research is all about. I then try to give you guidance on how you can design and carry out your own empirical research project. I explain the practical steps you have to take and warn you about the main problems, which might confront you at each stage of the process. The chapter concludes with some advice on where you can find more information on this subject.

1. Learning About Empirical Research

Before you get started on your empirical research project, it's important to know a little bit about what it actually is that you will, or should, be doing. First you should have some idea about what empirical research is all about. You'll find out that the goal of this kind of research is to teach us

something about how things are in the world, and why they are this way. Empirical research is all about creating factual knowledge. And so the second question will be: What can you do to create such knowledge? You will find out that it is very much within your means to make a real contribution to science.

1.1. What Is Empirical Research?

If you've heard anything about the philosophy of science before, or about methodology in any of the social sciences, then you've probably come across the distinction between normative and empirical research. This section of the chapter will introduce this distinction to you, and explain what is so special about empirical research.

Normative Research

To put it in a nutshell, normative research tries to answer questions about how things should be or how we should judge them. For example, what is the ideal kind of government, democracy or enlightened dictatorship? Should we be more liberal in our social lives, or more conservative? Is it morally acceptable to take the lives of other human beings, under some circumstances, or is it always morally wrong? These are the kinds of questions about which one can debate, seemingly without end, because the answers have a lot to do with personal judgments. Maybe they really have no "true" or "false" answers. But still we feel we have to debate these kinds of questions, because they are important, and the answers we decide to give to them have a lot of influence on

our lives. For example, you probably have a pretty strong opinion about whether you want to live in a democracy or not, or whether you should be allowed to lead a "liberal" social life, or not. Well, if you feel strongly about these things, then you'll want others to share your opinions, so you can make sure that the world around you is organized in a way you like. Normative research basically does exactly that: It answers a question about how things should be and tries to persuade other people to share this judgment.

When you are trying to persuade someone to share in the conclusions of your normative research, you try to do so by, first of all, starting off with reasonable assumptions about the world we live in. To assume that all people are angels, for example, or that without any kind of government we would be able to live in perpetual peace and harmony, is a bit risky, because people might think from the very start of your argument that you are making ridiculous judgments about the world, and so they won't believe your conclusions either. But let's say that your assumptions make sense to most people who will read your research. The way you get to your conclusions if you are conducting normative research is by reasoned argument. Basically, you have to make sure that your argument follows the rules of logic, meaning that you don't jump from one point to the next without connecting them in a way that makes the reader follow what you are saying. You also have to make sure that any new assumptions you introduce on the way are either commonsensical or that you defend them well. If you are good at arguing in this way, chances are that you can per-

suade your audience that your conclusions have some merit. At least they deserve consideration. And this would mean that you have succeeded with your normative research project.*

You can take as an example the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote in the 18th century about human nature and the way we should organize ourselves. He had made some observations about how people are, and the one thing that struck him most was that every one of us has so much potential to make something special of him– or herself. He thought that this potential for self-development or self-realization was a precious gift, and therefore we should make sure that we organize our lives in such a way that we can make the best of this gift. He then thought about what kind of political organization would be best to allow people to develop themselves, and this led him to the ideal of a small direct democracy, where everyone could be involved in making decisions which concerned everybody. He also gave his own hometown, the city of Geneva, as an example of how this might work. Basically, he did three things right, and that is probably why we still talk about his ideas today and haven't just thrown them on the dust-pile of history. First, while he had his own ideas about human nature, he said things with which many people could agree, and which were also kind of fashionable at the time and still are today: Individuals are unique, and we all have a potential to make something of ourselves and should be allowed to try. This is an

---

*   On the strategy of persuasion of normative research see also the chapter by Yusaf Akbar.

example for how his assumptions were acceptable, and didn't seem too outrageous to most. Then he made a logical and elegant argument that such human nature could best flourish in the kind of ideal political system he described. And finally, he made reference to reality and supported his argument with examples. This is how his normative research became so successful.

Empirical Research

But what we are really concerned about in this chapter is the other kind of research, which is called empirical. Empirical research, in a nutshell, asks questions about what is. In other words, empirical researchers are primarily trying to find out what is going on in the world, and not to judge whether what goes on is good or bad, or should be different. For example, the question whether Russia is a democracy or not is an empirical question, because once we define what we mean by a democracy we can look at Russia to see whether those characteristics are in place there. If they are, we conclude that Russia is indeed a democracy. If not, we conclude that it is not. We are not interested in whether it would be bad if Russia were not a democracy, or in what the Russian government should look like. Those are normative questions.

Let me give you another example: Let's say we observe that people often kill other people even though their religions might teach them that they should not kill. We might argue that this is wrong, and that would be a normative argument. We might also argue that it is o.k., and that would be a normative argument, too. But we might also simply try to

study how often it happens, and under what circumstances. And that would be empirical research.

The simplest kind of empirical research tries to come up with a description of a particular aspect of reality. What kind of government does Russia have? How does the constitution of France compare with the constitution of the United States of America? These kinds of questions are relatively easy to answer, because all it takes is to collect information about your topic of study, the government of Russia or the constitutions of France and the US, and summarize it. The second example is a little more complicated because it asks you to compare, and to compare means that you also have to develop criteria for your comparison. But it's still quite easy, because you can usually rely on what other people have found out about the topic, and you don't really have to study it directly yourself. This means that you are not doing what is called original research. While you are still an undergraduate student, you might get away with always writing descriptive non-original papers like these, but you are not going to get away with it as a graduate student, much less if you want to become a successful researcher or academic in your own right. In order to become such an expert in your field, you have to learn how to create knowledge yourself. The next section will tell you how you can do this.

1.2. How Can You Create Knowledge?

Description

I just told you that descriptive empirical research is relatively easy, but of course that doesn't

mean that it is worthless. In fact, descriptive empirical research can also be original. This happens when you describe something that nobody has described before, or at least not in the way that you do. Of course this can be very important. Think, for example, that you are living in a country in which an ethnic conflict is developing. You can observe the tension first hand and see how the conflict progresses. If you then write about what you observe, even if you are just describing, you are doing something very useful for your field of study, because you are letting others know what is happening, so that, together, everyone who cares can think about how to explain the conflict and how perhaps to prevent things from getting worse.

Explanation

However, generally speaking, when you are trying to create new knowledge, a type of research that is both more challenging and usually more interesting is explanatory empirical research. As the name tells you, in this kind of research you are trying to explain something. For example, you might observe that many people in your country stay home on election day. Why do they not use their right to vote? Or, you might wonder, how come that Pakistan and India can't seem to get along since they became independent countries? In a way, the most important quality of any scientist is curiosity. If you don't like to wonder why things are the way they are, if you don't like to ask lots of "why" questions, then you're better off doing something else.

Most scientific discoveries begin with mysteries, large or small. These mysteries we call puzzles. When something is puzzling to us that means we find it worth explaining. Maybe we didn't expect this thing to happen. For example, many people were puzzled in 1989, when the Soviet Union began to come apart. They hadn't expected that to happen. And immediately many social scientists, historians, economists, and anybody else interested began to try and come up with some explanations. Sometimes we don't only not expect something to happen, but we actually feel we had a right to expect something else. Then we are even more puzzled. For example, a psychologist might feel more need to explain why a young person who grew up in pleasant and supportive circumstances became a violent criminal because we don't normally expect that to happen. The bottom line is that we seek explanations for the things that puzzle us. And explanations always link causes and effects.

If I am interested in explaining why many people in, say, Bulgaria, didn't vote in the last elections, then this non-voting that I am observing is the effect I am trying to explain. For this effect, there might be many causes: Maybe it rained on election day, and people didn't want to get wet. Maybe they didn't like the parties or the candidates that they could choose from. Maybe they simply have no enthusiasm for the democratic process or don't believe that their vote matters. Any number of possible causes could be important, and if I want to be thorough it is important that I try to think of all of them. But of course I would consider some causes

more important than others, and the most important task of explanatory empirical research is exactly to find out the most important cause or causes of a particular effect. This search for the most important causes is related to a traditional ambition of science: The ambition to create knowledge that should be as general as possible. Generality is a central objective of science.

To explain, let me return to our example: Someone could write a book about the last general elections in Bulgaria, and in this book explain one by one all the possible reasons for why people might have stayed home on that particular election day in that particular country. Such a book might be interesting to read, at least for people who have a particular interest in Bulgaria, but, chances are, we would not consider such a book particularly "scientific." Why? Because the author did not do any of the hard work of trying to figure out what were the most important causes for non-voting in Bulgaria, and he did not tell us anything about whether these same causes might make people stay home on election day at other times or in other countries as well. Along comes the prototypical social scientist, and you may be able to imagine what kind of book she might write on the subject. She would probably first think of the various causes that may generally make people disinclined to vote. Then she would draw on the expertise of people who have studied the issue of non-voting to suggest which of those might be the most important causes. Then she would study the last elections in Bulgaria to see, first, if those causes indeed existed in that place and in that time, second,

if they really made people stay home on election day, and, third, if there were not some other important reasons why people didn't vote. Finally, she would write about what the results of her research on this particular election in Bulgaria might mean for non-voting in general, meaning in other times and places as well.

See the difference? Explanatory empirical research tries to come up with general explanations for things which we are interested in explaining. In order to be general, we have to decide what's important and what is not so important. You may hear this principle referred to as the ideal of parsimony. An explanation is parsimonious if it can explain a lot with a little, meaning if it can explain a whole class of events by suggesting as few causes as possible. For example, if I explain that everywhere in the world people vote or do not vote depending solely on the weather, that would be a parsimonious explanation. (Of course it would also be wrong, so keep in mind that parsimonious is not the same as correct!) What the first author did in the example above, was the opposite of being parsimonious, because he gave very many reasons for only one case of low voter turnout. The second author, on the other hand, was striving for the scientific ideal of parsimony.

Prediction

Another traditional goal of science is prediction. Ideally, we don't only want to know what has been going on in the world so far, and what is happening now, but we also want to be able to predict what might happen in the future. The idea is that if we know the likely effects of things, we can have more

control over what happens to us. For example, if we know something about how a conflict between two states can turn into war, we would know better how to prevent war from happening, at least as long as we have control over some of its causes. This desire to have more control over our lives also helps explain the need for parsimonious explanation. This is because only if we know the most important links between causes, such as diplomatic postures, and effects, such as war, will we be able to correctly predict which effects are likely to follow which causes. And only then can the social sciences be useful in actually controlling our fates.

The Problem of Many Causes

If you've read carefully up to this point, you should have a question in your mind right now. I wrote earlier about how our social scientist came to suggest which might be the most important causes for non-voting: She relied on the expertise of people who had studied non-voting before. But this doesn't tell us anything about how this kind of expertise is created in the first place. How are we supposed to know which causes to link to which effects, and which of these links are more important than others? It seems rather like having to draw a route for a hiking trip while either not knowing where you are right now or not knowing where you want to go. Is it possible?

Earlier you learned that if you do normative research the way to persuade others of your expertise is to use a logical line of argument which relies on defensible assumptions. In empirical research, the way to persuade others that your conclusions

are correct is by referring to observation, by showing them evidence out there in the real world which they can see with their own eyes if they only look. What you are trying to observe, if you look at the world with the eyes of a scientist, are patterns. And it is these patterns which can help you, if you observe them often enough and in enough different contexts, to make the links from effects to their most important causes.

Let's think again of the phenomenon of people having the right to vote but not using it. If I take a look at different elections in different democratic countries I might see that people vote in fewer numbers whenever the ideological differences between the political parties are quite small. I might also see that wherever the ideological differences between parties are great, voting participation is quite high. What I have observed here is a pattern which links ideological difference between parties (as a cause) and voting (as an effect) in a particular way: When ideological differences between parties are greater, voting participation is higher. Perhaps without even knowing it, you have now arrived at a hypothesis, a proposed relationship between a cause and an effect. The development and the testing of hypotheses are the everyday stuff of explanatory empirical research, and they will be explained in more detail in the next section of the chapter. But before we get there, I should give you some background on the role of theory in empirical research.[*]

---

[*] If you are interested in the role of theory in research you might also want to read the chapter by Paul Roe.

The Role of Theory

Theory is usually defined as a set of related statements about a particular aspect of reality. It is possible to make a distinction between normative theory and empirical theory, where the first is more strongly concerned with judging something and the second with explaining something. But for our purposes that distinction is not really relevant, because any useful theory does something to explain how a number of causes and effects are linked to produce a particular outcome.

I told you that scientists are always on the lookout for patterns. This is true for all of them, whether they are natural or social scientists. A scientific discovery is really the discovery of a pattern which we believe might hold the solution to a puzzle. We can often stumble upon such patterns just by walking around with our eyes open. For example, we observe that people have a tendency to smile back at us if we smile at them first. Most of us live our lives knowing about this pattern without ever really thinking about it. But sometimes patterns are not so obvious. We have to search for them, and in order to search successfully, we should know something about where to look. That is the first task of theory: To tell us where we might go to search for patterns. But there is more: A pattern is not the same as an explanation, and we don't just want to find out that two things are linked in a certain way. We also want to know why. How come people smile back if you smile at them? What is the mechanism at work here? The second task of theory is to provide the

explanation for why things are linked together in patterns the way they are.

Some people don't see much point in theory, because, they say, it's just about people inventing ideas and has little to do with reality and practical affairs. But it wouldn't be fair to say that theorists don't contribute to the creation of real knowledge, because they do. For example, important thinkers in the social sciences, like Max Weber or Emile Durkheim, not only collected an enormous amount of knowledge about our world but also taught us new ways of interpreting this information, new ways of understanding what is going on, and even new ways of changing the world and maybe improving it. Basically, they have told entire generations of social scientists where to look for patterns and how to explain them. You don't have to be an empiricist, that is someone primarily concerned with discovering patterns in the real world, in order to contribute to the creation of knowledge. In fact, the empiricist would really be a nobody without the theorist, because, without theory, how would she make sense of the patterns she sees in the world around, even if she stumbles upon them by accident?

We cannot really think without theorizing, even when it comes to the most mundane aspects of our lives. For example, if you think that your brother doesn't do his fair share of work in the house because your parents have always let him get away with not doing it and now he doesn't even feel bad anymore for being lazy, you have a theory linking educational practices, communal orientation, and work ethics. People who think that they can learn

about the real world without using theory are sometimes called "barefoot empiricists" in jest. You don't want to be barefoot on the rocky path of science, and this means that you should keep asking those "why" questions all the way through, from the selection of your topic to the interpretation of your results.

2. Learning How to Do Empirical Research

This part of the chapter is meant to give you concrete advice on how you can actually plan an empirical research project of your own. It starts with some advice on how you can find a topic to study. You will find that, even if you start with a vague interest, it is important that you narrow your topic down until you have a specific hypothesis that you can put to the test. How to design and carry out such a test is the topic of the second sub-section below. The final sub-section is dedicated to a discussion of how to draw legitimate conclusions from the work you have done.

2.1. How Can You Find a Topic?

General Rules

For many students, maybe one of the most agonizing parts of carrying out an empirical research project is coming up with a suitable topic. But it shouldn't really be all that difficult, because there are only two main rules to keep in mind: The first rule is: The topic must be something that really interests you. Original empirical research, if you

want to do it right, will consume much of your time and energy, and if you have a topic which you are not really passionate about, you will most probably hate the assignment and, as a result, do less well than you could otherwise. The second rule to keep in mind is that your topic should be manageable. This sounds commonsensical, but I have seen it happen again and again that students chose topics which were vastly too complex to be researched with the very limited means which students typically have, in terms of time as well as methodological expertise. If you stick with an overly ambitious topic, you'll most probably enter a state of panic in the middle of your research, when you find out you can't really do what you set out to do, and the quality of your work will suffer accordingly. The general rule is: It's better to complete a modest task well than do try something ambitious and fail! Especially if you are a newcomer to this kind of work, what you really need is practice. You can read a thousand books like this one, they will never make up for what you'll learn by doing research of your own, putting all the theory into practice, and learning from your own mistakes. If your goal is to become really good at this kind of work, then it's important that you work your way up slowly, starting with small and uncomplicated projects, and taking on more only once you are really ready to do so.

Developing a Hypothesis

The way to start small, and usually a good way to begin your project even if you are already an expert in empirical research, is to come up with a hypothesis which you would like to test. A hypothe-

sis, if you remember, is a statement that suggests a particular relationship between a cause and an effect. To find a hypothesis which you might like to test, you can start in one of three ways: You can start with an effect; you can start with a cause; or you can start with a pattern. The first is probably the most common way. Ask yourself: Is there something which I would like to be able to explain? Maybe there is something which I find so bad that I would like to know how to stop it from happening, like, for example, war breaking out between my people and our neighbors. Or maybe there is something which I find so good that I would like to be able to help it to happen, like, for example, democracy to succeed in my country. In such a case, you start with an effect, like the breakout of war between neighbors or the success of democracy, and then you go looking for the probable causes. Maybe you can think of some probable causes by yourself, but it's better if you do a bit of research on your topic of interest in the very beginning, to draw on the expertise of people with more experience in the field and thereby to make sure that the causes you will end up suggesting will seem plausible to your audience. So this would be the stage when you first have to search the libraries and the internet, to come up with the probable causes for what you are interested in explaining.

You should take note of all the important causes you come across, but you have to decide on only one to put into your hypothesis. This should be the one you consider the most important or the most interesting to study. Sometimes a hypothesis can mention

more than one cause or more than one effect. An example for such a so-called compound hypothesis is the following: Poverty tends to increase in cities as a result of economic decline combined with population growth. Here you have only one effect, the increase of poverty, but two causes, economic decline and population growth. Compound hypotheses are more difficult to test than simple ones, so I strongly suggest you stay away from them for the time being. There are methods to test more than one relationship at a time, even whole sets of causes and effects, but they are extremely complicated methods. It is very much in your interest for the time being to stick with testing simple relationships between one cause and one effect.

This you should also keep in mind when you begin your quest for a hypothesis from the opposite end, namely with a cause. Ask yourself, is there something which I can observe happening and I wonder what effects it might have? For example, maybe you know that most of the students in your department have jobs. This might make you wonder whether perhaps their grades suffer because they don't only have to study but also to work. And you could end up with the hypothesis: Having a job makes students' grades suffer. Finally, the third way to come up with a hypothesis is to stumble upon an entire pattern that interest you. This way you come up with the cause and the effect at the same time. For example, if you realize that all of your male friends who are really into computers have no girlfriends, whereas those who don't care so much about computers have girlfriends, the following hypothesis

suggests itself to you: A strong interest in computers makes it less likely for young men to be involved in romantic relationships. (Of course, as part of your research, you'll also want to think about why this might be the case!)

Formulating Your Hypothesis

You are finished with finding a topic once you have formulated a hypothesis which can be tested. Your hypothesis must fulfill the following formal criteria:

Rule No. 1: You need an independent and a dependent variable

The first rule for your hypothesis is that it must contain a cause and an effect. That sounds simple, but in order to write your hypothesis correctly you must pay very close attention to some details of technical language. In your hypothesis, both the cause and the effect will be called variables. What we have called the cause so far will be called the independent variable now. What we have called the effect will be called the dependent variable.

The definition of a variable is almost absurdly commonsensical: A variable is a characteristic (sometimes called a property of an object) that varies. But to identify variables is not quite as easy as it sounds. To identify the variables in your hypothesis you have to ask yourself: What exactly is it that varies in my hypothesis? Let's take the following example: Crime rates tend to increase in cities as a result of population growth. What varies here? Crime rates, first of all. They can go up or down.

They are also what we are interested in explaining, so they must be the dependent variable. The other thing that varies is what? Be very careful here! It is not population growth that varies, but it is the size of the population. That is what gets bigger or smaller. If it gets bigger, we believe that crime rates will also get higher. Therefore, size of population is our independent variable.

Rule No. 2: You must specify the relationship between the variables

Your hypothesis must also give a very clear idea about the exact relationship between your independent and your dependent variable. How does one affect the other? Often, variables will be quantitative, meaning that their value can be expressed in numbers and they can grow larger or smaller, just like in the above example. In such a case, if the independent variable grows, does the dependent also grow, or does it shrink? Or maybe you expect it to do nothing at all (in which case you would suggest that there is in fact no relationship at all between your variables of interest). In any case, what you have to say in your hypothesis is how you expect the dependent variable to change if the independent one grows.

At other times, however, variables will be qualitative by nature. This means that their value can not be expressed in numbers. They can't grow bigger or smaller, but only "different." An example for such a variable is religion. People can be Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, etc., so their religion can vary, but you can't say that one type of religion is somehow higher

than the other, since that would make no sense. In such a case, the basic rule is the same: You must say how you expect the dependent variable to change if the independent one changes in a particular way. An example is the simple hypothesis: Buddhists are more likely to practice meditation than Christians. This suggests, and you should not take this technical language too literally, that as people move from being Christian to being Buddhist (changing the value of the independent variable) they become more likely to meditate (increasing the value of the quantitative dependent variable "amount of meditation").

A variable, whether quantitative or qualitative, that is expressed in such a way that it can take on only one of two values is called a dichotomous variable. Dichotomous variables are easier to handle than others, partly because some of the statistical techniques which can be used to analyze them are quite simple. So another recommendation for beginners might be to write your hypothesis in such a way that either one or both variables are dichotomous. Changing the above example slightly, you could say simply that Christians are less likely to meditate than non-Christians. In that case, the independent variable can only take on the value of Christian or non-Christian, and the dependent one can only take on the value of presence or absence of meditation. However, if you determine that the relationship you are interested in cannot really be tested by forcing the cause or the effect into the form of a dichotomous variable, it's better if you follow your real interests.

Rule No. 3: You must specify your population

The third rule for your hypothesis is that it should say exactly where you suspect this relationship you are suggesting to exist. In other words, what are the objects which "own" the relationship? For example, when you say "wealth increases happiness," you are being unclear about whether you are making a suggestion about nations or individuals. What you should say instead is: "When comparing nations, more wealthy ones also tend to have more happier populations;" or: "When comparing individuals, we find that as they grow more wealthy they also become happier." The technical literature calls this specifying your theoretical population. The things that make up your theoretical population, the individual countries or people, are your objects of analysis. It's important to be clear about what they are, because if you are not you also won't know how to properly test your hypothesis!

Rule No. 4: Try to find the right level of generality

Another rule is that your hypothesis should be general as opposed to referring to a specific case. This is because of the scientific goal of generality which I mentioned before. However, when you get down to the hard work of designing a test for your hypothesis, you will find that you will have to restrict yourself quite a bit. You can't study the whole world in detail to find out whether your general hypothesis is correct or not, but your observations will always be limited. That's why in your conclusions you have to be careful about the extent to which you can generalize from what you have ob-

served. To find the ideal level of generality of your hypothesis is a bit like walking on a tight rope. On the one side, you don't want to be so general that you can't possibly find enough evidence to test your claim. On the other hand, you don't want to be so specific that no general lessons can be drawn from your research.

I can give you an example: If you are interested in the effect of economic welfare on the success of democracy, you could come up with a very general hypothesis: The success of democracy depends on economic welfare. But that would be such a general statement that it might be very hard to collect enough evidence for a proper test. On the other hand, the following hypothesis might be easy to test but is probably too specific: The success of Polish democracy between 1990 and 1992 depended on the economic welfare of the nation. An in-between level of generality, which makes the topic interesting but also keeps the need for evidence manageable is provided by the following hypothesis: When comparing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the last decade of the 20th century, we find that the success of democracy depended on the economic welfare of the nation.

2.2. How Can You Develop a Test For Your Hypothesis?

What's the Point of Your Test?

You already know that a very important part of making scientific discoveries and thereby creating new knowledge is to discover a pattern. Up to this

point, you have learned how to suggest such a pattern and how to formulate it in such a way that it can be put to the test. You may have found this pattern in the literature on your topic, or you may have seen evidence of it yourself. But you don't really know yet whether this pattern you have suggested is real. The point of putting it to the test is to collect evidence, either for or against the existence of this pattern. Based on the evidence you collect in your test, you will conclude whether it makes sense to continue believing in it, or not.

It is very important for you to realize that the point of testing your hypothesis is not to prove yourself right. You may find that the hypothesis you suggested can be confirmed by the evidence which you have collected. You may find that it cannot. Both results are equally valuable. From the point of view of someone who is trying to learn about the real world, to learn that something is not true can be just as relevant as to learn that something is true. And in either case you will have created knowledge. If you find that you have not been able to solve a puzzle all by yourself, this should not be a major disappointment, because our knowledge about the world really grows only as the result of the efforts of many people, and even the few lucky ones who become known for their discoveries get to that point only because many others before them have handed them information on where to look, and on where not to look. If you think of yourself as part of that community of scientists, you will also understand better both why you should read so much about your topic before you really begin your research and why

you should place great emphasis on explaining the larger implications of what you have found to your audience.

Steps to Follow When Testing Your Hypothesis

So how can you put your idea to the test? If you have written down your hypothesis correctly, the way it was explained in the previous section, you have already put your idea into a testable form. Testing now simply means to compare your idea with what you can observe in the real world. If the idea corresponds with what you find out there, you can consider it confirmed. If not, you must reject it. In order to test your hypothesis you follow the steps outlined below:

Step 1: Sampling

As the first step in your test of your hypothesis, you must select a sample of your theoretical population, that means, that part of your theoretical population which you will actually study. It is extremely uncommon for a researcher to be able to study the entire population for which her hypothesis is supposed to be true. Sampling means choosing part of that population, a part which is small enough to test with your limited means, but which must also be in some way representative, so that you can later generalize from the results of our test of the sample back to the whole population.

Let's return to our earlier hypothesis: When comparing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the last decade of the 20th century, we find that the success of democracy depended on the

economic welfare of the nation. If you have a lot of time and a lot of information on all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, you are of course welcome to study them all, meaning your whole theoretical population. But if, for example, you are supposed to test for this hypothesis for a class, chances are you don't have that much time, and that means you have to choose a sample.

To tell the truth, researchers often choose their samples on the basis of convenience. This means that if they already know something or have better access to information about Poland, Slovenia, and Romania, then they might just choose those countries as a sample for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. But this is only legitimate if the countries you choose on the basis of convenience can also be considered representative, in their important characteristics, for all the countries of the region. What are the important characteristics? They are those characteristics of your objects of analysis which might play a role in the relationship which you propose. If there is something that sets your sample apart, something which is different about your sample than the rest of the population, and if this something might have to do with the pattern you note in your hypothesis, then your sample is not well-chosen. If, for example, a researcher chooses Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as the sample to test the above hypothesis, he will be accused of having picked the westernmost countries with some of the most successful post-communist transitions in the region. As you might imagine, the location of countries as well as the success of their

transitions are likely to have something to do with our hypothesis, and therefore others will say that his results can probably not be considered representative for the region as a whole.

If you have come across the issue of sampling before, then it was probably in relation to research not about whole countries but about individuals. A very common way of collecting information about individuals, their opinions and their behavior, is through surveys, or polls. You know that when someone does a survey of public opinion in your country, they don't ask everybody. Instead, they draw a sample of the population, and they ask the people in that sample. How do they make sure that that sample is representative for the whole population and, therefore, that what they find out from the people they ask is true for the people as a whole?

There are three basic strategies one can use to choose a proper sample. The first tries to create what is called a random sample. In random sampling, researchers pick the objects of analysis which they will include in their sample at random, meaning that nothing but chance should play a role in their selection. Usually they have a computer program which randomly picks names out of all the country's phone books, until they have as many names as they want. The idea behind random sampling is that we trust chance to come up with a very varied sample, which includes all different kinds of people. This variation means that any characteristics of people which might influence the relationship we want to study are just as widely distributed in

the sample as they are in the whole population, and this makes the sample representative.

Usually, as a student you don't have the option to use random sampling, because, first, you don't have the necessary data bases and technology and, second, even if you did, you can't travel the whole country to survey everybody whose name the computer spits out. For other types of research, like research on whole countries or regions, random sampling doesn't work anyway, because your theoretical population does not include a large enough number of objects of analysis, while the number of their characteristics which are relevant for sampling might still be large. Then you use a different method to create your sample, which leaves less up to chance and more up to you: Before you choose your sample you think about what might be those characteristics of your objects of analysis which can somehow influence or explain the relationship you propose in your hypothesis. In order to think about this in an informed manner, you will once again have to consult the literature on your topic. The relationship between economic welfare and the success of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe could, for example, be influenced by help from western countries or international organizations, or by the efficiency of the countries' governments. If you believe that this might be the case, than you make sure that your sample includes variation on these characteristics. In other words, you include countries in your sample which have received more help from western countries and international organizations and those which have received less, and you include countries

with more efficient and ones with less efficient governments. If this sounds difficult, that's because it is. But the reward is great, for this way you are creating what survey researchers call a stratified sample, and if you can do this well, you are half way to being an expert in original empirical research.

The third way of choosing a proper sample pays less attention to which objects you include in the sample and more to what information you collect about them. In order to use this sampling strategy, you have to know more about statistics than for the other two, because in this strategy the way to show how well you can generalize from your sample to the theoretical population relies on statistical demonstrations. You would use this strategy if you have little control over the composition of your sample, for example, if you want to do a survey but you can only ask the people you meet in the street in the two days you have time to collect your data. That way you can't create either a random or a stratified sample, but that doesn't mean you have to give up the research. Instead, once again you have to think beforehand about what characteristics of people might have something to do with the hypothesis you want to test. And then you have to collect information from the people about those characteristics. For example, let's say you want to test the following hypothesis: Rich people are more likely to vote than poor people. But you suspect that education might also have something to do with whether people vote, and perhaps also with how rich they are, then you ask people not only about their wealth and their voting habits, but also about their level of education.

The point of doing this is that later, at the stage where you analyze the data you have collected, you can use statistical techniques to see what kind of impact people's education has on the relationship which you proposed. And if you can show that that relationship exists in your data in spite of the impact of education or any other important characteristic of people which you have measured, then you have support for your hypothesis.

Step 2: Measurement

As the second step of your test you must measure both your variables for each of your objects of analysis. Let's take a simple hypothesis: Women are more intelligent than men. Your independent variable here is gender. It is a dichotomous qualitative variable. Qualitative because you can't count gender, and dichotomous because it can only take on two values, male or female (if we leave hermaphrodites out of the picture for the moment). Measuring gender now simply means that for each of the people in your sample you find out whether they are male or female, and you make a note of it. Your dependent variable is intelligence, and it is a quantitative variable because intelligence can be measure in the form of what is called the intelligence quotient (IQ). People can have more or less of it. Now, how could you measure how intelligent each of the people in your sample is? The simplest way to find this out for yourself is to give them a simple intelligence test to complete. You can then calculate the IQ for each, and make a note of that, too, and you have measured your dependent variable.

You can only test your hypothesis if both of your variables are observable and can be measured. Most things you would be interested in can probably be observed and measured in some way, but not all. For example, you might have a hypothesis like: The more religious people are, the more access they have to the real truth about life. It's a hypothesis alright, but it doesn't seem testable to me, because how in the world are you going to find out how much access to the real truth about life people have? This "truth about life" is not directly observable, and neither is our access to it. In order to be fit for testing, your hypothesis has to relate variables which can in principle be measured, even if that way is not immediately obvious.

The way to transform your variables into something that can be measured directly is called operationalization. Operationalizing your variable usually involves two steps: First you have to express your variable in such a way that it refers to something measurable, and, second, you have to find indicators for the variable you are trying to measure. These indicators are what tell you what value of the variable is present. In the above example, the independent variable, gender, is already something directly observable, but you have to find indicators which tell you which category people should be put into, male or female. In this case, the indicator for gender would be the way people answer the question whether they are male or female. The way they answer this question is not the same as the truth. Some of the people who fill out your survey might be lying about their gender. But you take their answers to indicate the truth to you, and that is why you call them the indicator for your variable.

The dependent variable, intelligence, is not by nature something directly observable. For better or for worse, people don't have their level of intelligence written on their foreheads or in their passports. The most common way of operationalizing the idea of intelligence is through the IQ, which is not the same as the general idea of intelligence but is a particular version of that idea that can be measured. So IQ is the operationalized version of the variable "intelligence." But how do we measure the IQ? Here is where things get a bit complicated because any intelligence test combines many different indicators for the IQ, which comes out as the end result of adding up all those different indicators. How well do people do math? How well can they write? How much do they know about the world? All these and many more questions could provide indicators for the IQ and, thereby, for intelligence. Luckily, you wouldn't have to design your own intelligence test if you wanted to test this hypothesis. And that's another good part about taking the time to study the literature on your topic: You can save yourself a lot of work!

Step 3: Analyzing the Relationship

Once you have measured the value of the dependent as well as the independent variable for each unit in your sample (and have written them down in what you call your data set), the third step in your test is to check whether the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable, in your sample, is actually like what you had suggested in your hypothesis. Your hypothesis doesn't have to be true for every single comparison you can make be-

tween the units in your sample. Looking at our earlier example, this means that not every single woman in your data set has to be more intelligent than every single man in your data set for your hypothesis to be confirmed. But generally, across your whole sample, there has to be tendency for women to be smarter than man.

In order to find out about such tendencies, you can use a wide variety of statistical methods. Some are very simple and you could use them right now if you wanted to. For example, you could calculate the average IQ of all the women in your sample, and the average IQ for men, and if the first is higher you could claim that you have found support for your hypothesis. Or you could say that to be really intelligent means to have an IQ over 120, and you could calculate the percentage of women who have an IQ over 120 and the percentage of men, and, again, if the first is higher you can claim to have found support for your hypothesis.

There are also many more complicated methods to study the relationship between variables, but since the point of this chapter is not to teach you statistics (and anyhow this would take many more pages and even more of your patience) I will just give you some general advice: For the majority of us, statistics is a rather unattractive field of study. It has a lot to do with math, which many of us think we'll never be able to learn anyway, it seems dry and technical, and we tend to have a vague general fear of never being able to understand the sense of it all. The thing is, if you want to be able to do any kind of empirical research, you should get over that inse-

curity and try to get your head around statistics, because you cannot really do without them. This doesn't mean that you have to become an expert in every statistical method there is. There are many, and some are so obscure that you can live very well without them. But you should at least learn the basics, and that is not really all that difficult.

In order to do quantitative empirical research, the type in which you actually measure variables and the relationships they have with each other, you simply must know some statistics because they are the measurement instruments. Trying to do without them would be much like trying to find the north pole without a compass. But even if you decide to specialize in qualitative empirical research, which tries to assess the correctness of hypotheses without using numbers, you have to rely on the same logic when trying to determine the values of your variables for each unit of analysis and the nature of the relationship between them.* Knowing how statistics work will help you understand the logic of scientific testing, and it will help you make your own research, no matter what kind, more rigorous.

Let's say you have the idea that living in a democracy makes people happier than living under any other type of regime. Your independent variable is anyway a qualitative variable (type of regime), expressed here in dichotomous form (democracy vs. non-democracy). Let's say you think happiness is something that can't possibly be measured, but that

---

* On the nature of qualitative research see also the chapter by Lynn Christine Alice.

you can observe it by looking at how people look and act. In other words, you can't put it into numbers but you know it when you see it. Well, if you are serious about testing your idea you will still have to think of indicators for happiness, to know when you are actually seeing happiness and when not, and you still have to have criteria for what kind of evidence and how much of it you need in order to confirm, or reject, your hypothesis. Learning about statistics will help you learn to develop such criteria, and that is vitally important. Why? Because if you do not know what you can really conclude from the evidence you have found, you have done all the work for nothing!

2.3. How to Draw Conclusions

About Causality

There is one very important rule to drawing conclusions and that is: Be very careful! If in the end of your empirical research paper you write something like "I have now proven that X causes Y" you are most probably wrong. If you have been able to show that, in your sample, the dependent variable changes in the expected direction when the independent does, what you have been able to show is that the two variables are correlated in the way you have suggested. Correlation simply means that the dependent variable is related to the independent. It varies along with it. But if you find correlation in the expected direction that does not yet mean that your independent variable actually causes the dependent. Let's say you find that the success of democracy is indeed more likely in countries with bet-

ter-to-do economies. This does not mean that the economy is actually responsible for the success of the democracy. Why? Simply put, because there might be other reasons for this pattern!

To show a causal relationship between your variables is quite an ambitious task. If you want to do it, you have to show three things:

1. Your dependent variable varies with the independent. In other words, there is some kind of connection between them (the correlation).

2. Your dependent variable "happens" after the independent. (Clearly, otherwise it couldn't be caused by it, could it?)

3. The relationship between your variables is not caused by some other variable. And this is the tricky part. Do you remember the earlier sections about the problem of many causes and about sampling? Now you know why I put so much emphasis on thinking about other causes for the effect which interests you, and about things which might interfere with the relationship you propose in your hypothesis.

If you pay no attention to other factors which might have an influence on the pattern in which you are interested, then you cannot claim to have discovered a causal relationship. The more attention you have paid to such other factors in your research design and in your data analysis, the closer you can come to demonstrating that your independent and dependent variables are causally related, meaning that the first is the cause, or at least one important cause, of the second.

Other factors which interfere with the relationship proposed in your hypothesis are usually called confounding variables, and there are three basic types of them: Alternative variables are simply other possible causes which may have an independent impact on the effect you wish to explain. They are like rivals to your independent variable. Antecedent variables are things that come before your independent variable. They have an effect on your independent variable and through that they also affect your dependent. Finally, intervening variables come in between your independent and your dependent variable. They are affected by your independent and then in turn go on to affect your dependent.

Let's think again about that hypothesis: The success of democracy depends on the economic welfare of the nation. An alternative variable might be the attitude of the population. You might think that the way people view democracy, even as it has nothing to do with their level of economic well-being, has an independent effect on how well democracy will succeed in their country. But this is not the cause you are really interested in studying. So what do you do? The way to deal with alternative variables at this point in your careers as researchers is to learn about them and to explain, before you set out to test your own hypothesis, why you are choosing not to study them.

The other two types of confounding variables are more problematic, because they have the nasty habit of making causal relationships appear to exist, when they really aren't there. Such fake relationships are called spurious, and to be accused of having discovered a spurious relationship is not some-

thing flattering. It is those two types of confounding variables you really have to have dealt with if you want to claim that you have discovered a causal relationship. An antecedent variable in our example might be one we thought about earlier: help from foreign countries or international institutions. Such help might very well affect the economic well-being of a nation and through it the success of democracy. The idea here is that maybe it is this kind of help which really determines the success or failure of democracy, and that the relationship between economic well-being and the success of democracy is spurious because it appears only because of the connection of both those variables to a third: help from outside.

An example for an intervening variable in our case might be popular contentment, and by now you should realize the logic of all this: It may be that the success of democracy really depends on people being content. Their contentment depends at least partly on their economic well-being, but the point is that this contentment might be the real cause of democracy's success, and the relationship of the latter with economic well-being thus, again, spurious.

There are two basic ways of dealing with confounding variables: You make an argument explaining why you don't measure them, or you measure them. The more important they seem to be, from a theoretical point of view, the more difficult it will be to argue that you don't have to take them into account. If you do want to take them into account, you can do so by means of your sampling strategy, as discussed earlier.

The bottom line is, when you draw your conclusions, you should make sure not to claim more than you have been able to achieve. This means not to

claim causality if you have not been able to demonstrate it empirically or at the very least argue it persuasively. It also means being careful about how much you can generalize from the observations which you have made about your sample to a larger theoretical population.

About Trusting Our Ability to Observe

I should not conclude this chapter without warning you that the approach to creating knowledge which I have sketched above relies on some assumptions which are not shared by everybody. There are many people who do not agree with the idea of empirical social science as it has been explained here, although a majority probably do. The assumptions which underlie empirical social science in the rather traditional and mainstream way in which it has been explained here are the following: First, we assume that there actually is a real world out there. In other words, we don't think it's all in our heads. Second, we assume that we as people have the ability to observe what goes on in that world out there. Even if we are not infallible, at least we have some capacity of perceiving things as being more or less real. Third, we assume that we can usefully communicate our observations about the world to others and thereby advance science.* You may find these assumptions referred to as being

---

* Our work is indeed quite meaningless if we cannot successfully communicate our observations to others. On how to successfully communicate your own ideas and findings in the form of research papers or reports see the chapters by Downes and Keane.

part of the epistemology of positivism, a particular set of ideas about how we can come to know things.

Positivism is quite an old-fashioned epistemology today, and it has come under more and more criticism from so-called post-positivist approaches, which are critical of our ability to accurately observe, meaningfully communicate, or smoothly advance science, and may even be critical of the very idea of a real world out there. They are right to be critical, because in the past scientists tended to think much too highly of themselves with respect to how objective they were in their judgments and how their expertise should not be questioned. They also tended to have a rather naive view of science as the accumulation of ever more knowledge until one day we would have the whole world figured out. I can only encourage you to take these kinds of criticisms seriously, because the ability to be critical is indeed the cornerstone of science.

Critical voices teach us to be aware of our limitations and our human fallibility. We are, after all, not some kind of gods in laboratory coats. However, I am not willing to go so far as to say that we have to give up the idea of science altogether, even though the social sciences may be particularly problematic ones. I think we can try to approach those ideals of science which we find defensible, including the goals of finding out how things work and letting other people know about it. The reason I am not willing to give up those goals is that I think having so many people put so much effort into studying something should bring some benefit to the world and to other people. There are, after all, lots of problems to be

solved all around us.[*] Certainly, we can make things worse by being wrongly sure of ourselves. But we definitely can't make things better by just assuming to be helpless. I suppose the ideal scientists would be the ones with just the right mix of ambition and modesty. The way you can approach this ideal is to study something you consider important, and at the same time learn to be aware of the many problems you are facing in actually creating knowledge about your topic. If you are serious about both these things, you are on the way to doing excellent research.

3. Where to Find More Information

On the Internet

There is an enormous amount of information available to you through the internet and, while it always takes some time to find what is really important and reliable and relevant to you, it's usually worth the effort. One problem with making recommendations about things published on the internet is that the contents of internet sites and pages change rapidly, and what I write about now might not be there anymore by the time you read this. But still, here are some places that are there right now, free to access, and good points to start your (re-)search:

The California State University Social Sciences Research and Instructional Council (http://www.

---

[*] On the idea that academic researchers should strive for their work to be relevant to the real world see also the chapter by Akbar.

csubak.edu/ssric/) has a web-site on teaching resources which links to many other sites and documents that can help you in your own studies and work. A document accessible through there which is closely related to what I wrote about in this chapter is a very useful text called "How to Write Research Designs and Research Reports" by Charles McCall. You can find it at http://www.csubak.edu/ssric/Modules/Other/mccall.htm.

The Internet Public Library (http://www.ipl.org) is, just like the name tells you, an on-line library that makes all kinds of publications available to the public. One of the most useful things students can find there is a simple Step-by-Step Guide to Researching and Writing a Paper. Start following the steps at http://www.ipl.org/teen/aplus/stepfirst.htm.

The Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has done students everywhere a great favor by publishing on-line a detailed Writer's Handbook (http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/handbook.html).This handbook has chapters on all sorts of writing but also a special section on Academic Writing, which you should definitely take a look at sometime. You can find it at http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/AcademicWriting.html.

A professor at Cornell University, William M. K. Trochim, has published an on-line book called The Research Methods Knowledge Base. It is presently available in its second edition at http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/index.htm. This book gives you a lot of useful background on research methodology. In it, you can find chapters on many of the topics I touched upon in this chapter, such as the role of

theory or the difference between normative and empirical research.

In Books

Sadly, there are few books I can generally recommend as introductions to empirical social science, because I find most of the ones out there too difficult for beginners, too narrowly focused on specific methods, or too much targeted to specific audiences. A laudable exception is a little book by Kenneth R. Hoover called *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 6th ed. 1994). It's a highly recommendable read if you are interested in learning about empirical social science, no matter what discipline you are in.

Somewhat more difficult to read but also useful is a book by the sociologist Sheldon Goldenberg, *Thinking Methodologically* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992). It provides detailed discussions of the problems encountered in different kinds of social scientific research and also gives many illustrative examples, mostly drawn from sociology. If you are studying sociology, you might also want to take a look at the same author's book *Thinking Sociologically* (OUP Canada, 1997).

Something targeted more specifically to students of political science is *Methods for Political Inquiry: The Discipline, Philosophy, and Analysis of Politics*, edited by Stella Z. Theodoulou and Rory O'Brian (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999). This book has chapters which give background information on the discipline of political sci-

ence but also some which give practical advice on how to write research papers.

Another such book targeted to political science students is *An Introduction to Political Science Methods* by Robert A. Bernstein and James A. Dyer (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 3rd ed. 1997). It is useful if you are interested specifically in quantitative empirical research in political science and want to acquire the methodological and computer expertise necessary for it. Unfortunately, the examples in this book are all drawn from US politics and the authors assume that you have access to computers, statistics programs, and library data bases.

If you are interested in the philosophical underpinnings of social science and the more theoretical sorts of issues raised in this chapter, you might take a look at Norman Blaikie's *Approaches to Social Enquiry* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993). That book is not an easy one to read if you have no background in scientific theory, but it does a very good job of showing how differently different schools of thought judge what social scientists can and should be doing, and it gives you a bird's eye vision of the philosophy of the social sciences.

Last but not least, Norman Blaikie has recently published another book, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (Blackwell, 1999). It should be very useful for learning about exactly the sorts of things covered in this chapter.

Chapter 5

Writing And The Law: a New Philosophy

By Dr. Jack Anderson L.L.M
School of Law, University of Canberra, Australia

"The law student should consider his course as a general map of the law making out the shape of the country, its connections and boundaries, its greater divisions and principal cities: it is not his business to describe minutely the subordinate limits or to fix the longitude and latitude of every inconsiderable hamlet!"

Blackstone, Comm I, 35

"The first duty of a competent teacher is to impress upon himself and his pupils that law can be digested into a set of rules and exceptions, and to make his hearers feel that general, common and normal principles are far more important that that which is excepted, uncommon or abnormal."

Dicey, "Can English Law be taught at the Universities?", 1883, p. 18.

"The study of law is of its very nature exposed to a double danger: that of soaring through theory unto the empty abstractions of a fancied law of nature, and that of sinking through practice into a soulless, unsatisfying handicraft."

Savigny, "System des heutigen römischen Rechts"

Introduction

The above quotes concerning the law student, the law teacher and the general study of law can equally be applied, with little adjustment, to legal writing skills. Legal writing, as it so often is, should not be a soulless review of basic principles filled with terminology and jargon. The key to this piece is that any written presentation of law should be a clear, concise and informative blend of principles, cases and jurisprudence that both educates and informs the reader.

Even though a basic summary of legal writing skills will be provided for at the end of this paper, the primary aim of this review is not to provide a manual for legal writing skills. Many practical texts exist on this subject. In fact, it can be quite a dull and staid process to discuss the minutiae of legal writing. In any event, legal writing techniques and approaches will differ as the law differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In contrast, this paper will take a broader view of legal writing; in essence this paper will take a philosophical approach. At its heart this paper will argue that the law, as taught in modern faculties, has for too long obsequiously bowed to "sound-bite" coverage of the latest case to the detriment of more fundamental concepts and contexts such as the socio-economic and historical background to which law is interminably linked. In forwarding this opinion, it is suggested to initially explain and give examples of the above obsequiousness and its detrimental effect on the quality of legal education and writing. Secondly, it is hoped to dem-

onstrate how a law programme/module can be redirected to prepare the law student for a more holistic experience of the law without losing the certain practical element necessary for a good educational foundation in law.

Is academic law just that... academic?

Academic legal education is a relatively recent phenomenon in many European countries, not least the country from which this author hails from, Ireland. Goode, R. "The European Law School" 13 Legal Studies (1) 1, 2 (March 1993) attributes this lateness as having: ".... resulted from the procedural and practitioner-oriented approach to the development of the common law. This led to a lack of system and a level of technicality and specificity, which inhibited the development of the academic treatise. .... A major consequence of the ill-ordered structure of the common law was the superiority in status of the reported case over the textbook, and judges over the academic writers, a superiority which has continued to this day."

It follows that the legal system of which this author is familiar with i.e., the common law system, is essentially a case-based system, where facts are considered of critical importance and feature prominently in the judgement. Law derives primarily from the binding precedent of previous cases. The primary effect of this case-orientated approach is that in the teaching and writing of common law, and increasingly civil law, the vast bulk of time is spent examining the particular facts of a case in order to

arrive at an identification of the *ratio decidendi*, i.e., the part of the judgement that is deemed binding. Thus, in a traditional law module, students are invariably required to read copious quantities of full law reports on appropriate cases *inter alia* wasting much time trawling through facts which in no way influence the actual statement of principle.

Indeed, this approach to legal education and writing often turns into nothing more than a chronological voyage or written summary of all relevant cases from early medieval citations to present day statute. It is suggested that this is like teaching a course in history by concentrating solely on specific names and dates without explaining the socio-economic, historical and political background that initiated the events of these particular years. Similarly, law does not exist in a vacuum and must be explained vis-à-vis its overall place and function in an ever-changing society.

This author has always endeavoured in lectures to place legal developments in their wider context. For example, this author always attempts to explain that company law in common law jurisdictions owes its existence and development to the desire among the newly enriched British industrialists of the nineteenth century to legally protect and promote investment. This desire prompted the law making authorities to create the limited liability company, which encouraged entrepreneurship by protecting investors against personal liability in the event of subsequent losses. To this end, the author can explain and contextualise recent legislation in Irish company law as being the direct product of abuse of

the above limited liability mechanism by reckless and fraudulent business traders.

This thematic approach can also be applied to legal writing. If, for example, a student is asked to consider the key jurisdictional difference in the common law world i.e., between the traditional English system and the American model, the student should first give a broad review. In other words, explain the differences between the traditional system and that of the United States in terms of the US's revolutionary history, its federalist political structure and the racial and ethnic mosaic of its society. The student will then see that the heavy emphasis in the US constitution on the legal rights of the separate states of the Union is related to the political and historical origins of the United States itself.

In brief, the law must be explained in its wider context and not in the minutiae of case law. That being said the broad sweep of a thematic scope must not brush over the fundamentals of any legal issue. The study of law is more than an intellectual discipline it is also about equipping the student and reader with a range of intellectual skills as well. These skills include legal analysis; research methods; written expression and oral argument.

A thematic approach originating from the lecturer alone will not provide the above nor will a mastery of the very transitory minutiae of law and procedure earnestly remembered by the student. What is needed in any legal education is a thorough grasp of both the practical and abstract aspects of the law.

Legal theory and vocational relevance

In this author's opinion any written presentation concerning a legal issue should not be a series of independent points but a seamless web with one single theme flowing throughout. The presentation should be read as one long but persuasive speech. Like any speech, the essential elements are three-fold – explaining, informing and inspiring. A good speech, hence in my opinion a good written presentation, should employ Aristotle's three categories of persuasion: ethos (as based on the trustworthiness of the author), logos (the drawing of reasonable conclusions according to the weight of different arguments), and pathos (an appeal to the emotions of the reader). In short, a presentation must gain the confidence of the reader via the depth of knowledge and preparation, it must present the issues in an understandable and convincing fashion and it must involve the reader in a learning process. How is this done?

Ethos

Whether lawyers like its superficiality or not, first impressions on a reader last. It is suggested to always place great emphasis on the introduction in order to gain the confidence of the reader. As any sales person will tell you, you have got to impress the customer immediately, grab their attention and hold it. The best manner in which to do this is to present the reader with a concise introduction, an outline that will determine and document the direction of the presentation as a whole. An effective

introduction for any legal presentation should be more than simply a list of individual areas of the law that are to be addressed.

To recap, this writer places vital importance on identifying a basic and consistent theme of the module. I garnished this single theme approach from an incident again recounted by Goode when he spoke of the teaching practices of the great scholar Karl Llewellyn. Llewellyn, in attempting to explain his approach to commercial law said that you must take a practical view of the law and build slowly upon one single premise, adding layer upon layer of principle and case law as appropriate. He likened this approach to asking your bank manager: "I am a cheque which has just arrived at your branch. What happens to me now?"

If for example, a student in a common law jurisdiction such as England or Ireland was asked to generally discuss company law, it is suggested that they should approach this task in the following manner. First, ask a similar question to that asked by Llewellyn: "I wish to incorporate my business. What do I do?" In elaborating on this basic theme, the presentation on company law can be divided into the following series of questions: "Why form a company and not another type of business association? How do I go about legal incorporation of my business? What are the legal repercussions of incorporation? What are the financial repercussions? What are the administrative repercussions? What if the venture fails?"

Thus, the reader gets a highly structured presentation, which they can clearly follow with each issue linking seamlessly into the following one.

Logos

As stated earlier a key component of any written presentation is the introduction wherein that the basic principles of the legal issue, its various facets and its contexts are outlined. For the next stage i.e., the principal part of the presentation, it is suggested that students should operate in "study groups". In other words, before the final draft a designated group of students (usually 2–4 per group) should read a certain number of judicial decisions or extracts from legal writings or other materials; then attempt to explain to the group the meaning of what they have read, the problems that they have identified/encountered and the interest of these decisions. A general discussion, directed i.e. chaired, by the most experienced student can then take place. In this approach, all members of the group are expected to take part and each is encouraged to ask questions and express their own opinion. In this, the students enter a voyage of discovery between the question that needs to be addressed and connected problems. Moreover, slightly modified facts or other considerations can be invoked in order to test the students developing skill in legal reasoning and the application of legal principles.

The undoubted advantage of this American "case-method" approach is that students are obliged to fend for themselves, they must prepare the material, present it to others and defend it to their peers. It is classic legal professional training. Moreover, it compliments the more abstract principled learning process of the formal lecture hours and gives the student a more rounded legal education and better

legal writing skills. This author has had a largely positive practical experience of this type of system.

However, one point in particular is worth noting. As in all group dynamics some members contribute more than others, hence it is important to have some mechanism in place to ensure that all members contribute constructively. The easiest manner in which to do this is to delegate specific areas of the presentation to each member, a process that I describe below. Accordingly, the key point to note about this "case-method" approach is that again one does not want it to turn into a passive experience. Each group member has got to be reminded that they will be expected to contribute and that their opinion will be asked and valued.

American "Case-Method": Example

We will now apply the above method in a practical example. The student and their study group are asked to give a written presentation on the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution which states that all citizens are to be treated equally in the eyes of the law. In this, the students should immediately recognise that the written presentation should concentrate on the issue of racial (in)equality in the United States. It is suggested that this task could be broken down into four constituent parts.

Person A to discuss the celebrated case, Plessy v Ferguson (1896), which stated that the 14th Amendment would allow segregation under a policy of "separate but equal". Person B to discuss how in Brown v Board of Education (1954) the Supreme Court of the United States declared this policy un-

constitutional. Person C to discuss how desegregation was legally implemented in the United States in the 1960s and the manner in which it was resisted in the courts and defended by the various civil rights groups of the era. Person D would then discuss the modern use of the 14th Amendment; for example how it has been used in the debates on affirmative action programmes and the death penalty.

In composing their written presentation, the students will inevitably concentrate on the fact that the legal judgments, which they read, cannot be taken in isolation but are a direct reflection of the era in which they were made. So, for example, they would clearly recognise the manner in which the liberalness of the 1960s (the civil rights movements) contributed to the reinterpretation of the 14th Amendment in favour of minorities and how the politically correct backlash of the 1990s has questioned such a process. This process will ensure not only that students employ the legal research and analysis skills of practice but it will also teach them a very important concept of US constitutional law i.e., that the US Supreme Court like all superior law courts is as much driven by political theory as by legal desires.

Pathos

It is this writer's opinion that this balanced approach between the abstract of principle and the solidity of practice will win over and emotionally engage the target audience. In short, this system of legal writing follows the classic trinity of teaching. First, the writer tells the reader what they are going

to do; second, the writer shows them how it is done; and third, the writer reminds them of what has been covered and alerts the reader as to any possible future developments in the area. It is suggested that this approach rewards the hardworking student who attends and participates in all group activities but it also distinguishes the creative lawyer from the mere technician. Such a lawyer will not be afraid, and will have the skills to tackle, entirely novel situations using both a sound theoretical grasp of what the exact principle of the issue should be and a good practical base of what the courts are actually doing.

Variables

The above paper applies to the typical scenario of a student or students confronted with a written presentation. But such as straightforward task is not always at issue and there may be many variables, which affect the performance of the above approach. This writer identifies two in particular:

The constituency of the reader

The student should always be aware of their target audience. The student may have to target their writing towards their peers; non-law students; professionals; academics etc. This means that the pace and pitch of the presentation as a whole will have to be considerably modified to reflect the target audience.

The content of the subject

Some law subjects present themselves to the single thematic approach outlined above, however, some do not. Thus, depending on the subject area, it may be better to write in independent units or blocks, instead of the one seamless web approach.

Summary

To conclude this paper, it is suggested that the law student should keep in mind three basic principles in approaching any written task:

First, general or miscellaneous observations on a topic are not enough to make an accomplished academic essay. An essay should have an argument. It should answer the question asked, not the question that the student would have liked to have been set. In short, it should try to prove something. In technical terms, the presentation should attempt to develop a single "thesis" or a short set of closely related points. Of critical importance here is that the student uses clear reasoning and evidence in developing their thesis. Accordingly, the student should include appropriate examples and confirm citations and references from the particular texts or sources your argument involves. Evidently, the gathering and researching of such evidence will entails some re-reading of the texts or sources with a question or provisional thesis in mind.

Second, it is usually the case that the task that is set for the student will not lend itself so readily to a single, identifiable thesis. Thus, the student's (or study group's) first task will be to assess as far

as is practicable the key points that need to be addressed. Through this process provisional thesis or hypothesis may emerge. By definition this hypothesis is a dynamic, ever changing, even temporary concept, which will evolve along with the depth of your knowledge of the subject. In other words, the student should be ready and accept major changes to their initial hypothesis, and the student should not be disappointed or frustrated by this process.

Third, there are many ways in which any particular argument may be well presented, in other words how it begins, develops, and ends, should be designed to present the argument clearly and persuasively.

Finally, successful methods of composing an essay are various, but some practices of good writers are almost ever present. They start writing early, even before they think they are "ready" to write, because they use writing not simply to transcribe what they have already discovered but as a means of exploration and discovery. They do not try to write an essay from beginning to end, but rather write what seems most accessible to be written, even if they are not sure whether or how it will fit in. Despite writing so freely, they keep the essay's overall purpose and organisation in mind, amending them as drafting proceeds. Something like an "outline" constantly and consciously evolves, although it may never take any written form beyond scattered, sketchy and personally coded reminders

Good writers revise extensively. Rather than writing a single draft and then merely editing its sentences one by one, they attend to the whole essay

and draft and redraft; rearranging the sequence of its larger parts, adding and deleting sections to take account of what they discover in the course of composition. Such revision often involves putting the essay aside for a few days, allowing the mind to work indirectly or subconsciously in the meantime and making it possible to see the work-in-progress more objectively when they return to it.

Once they have a fairly complete and well-organised draft, they revise sentences, with special attention to transitions i.e., checking to be sure that a reader will be able to follow the sequences of ideas within sentences, from sentence to sentence, and from paragraph to paragraph. Two other important considerations in revising sentences are diction (exactness and aptness of words) and economy (the fewest words without loss of clear expression and full thought). Lastly, they proof-read the final copy.

In short, it is this writer's opinion that if these steps are followed one will have gone a long way into producing what the Germans call the *Volljurist*, i.e., a law student that has a holistic impression of both the principles and practices of law – of legal analysis, rigorous detailed interpretation of legislation, legal writing and oral argument; a law student that possesses the range of intellectual skills necessary to survive in the competitive and unforgiving world of law; a law student that can appreciate and understand the intricacies, inadequacies and delights of the profession and use them to their advantage and their clients' satisfaction.

Checklist for effective legal writing skills

- Do you have advanced English language writing skills – grammar, vocabulary and referencing?
- Are you familiar with the required "in-house" writing style?
- Are you familiar with the required legal terminology and definitions?
- Can you take an overall perspective on the subject/issue?
- Have you developed critical thinking skills?
- Do you know how to approach problem questions?
- Do you know how to approach essay questions?
- Do you know how to write short essays?
- Are you aware of what examiners and/or the target audience are looking for?

Useful Texts

1. Bast and Hawkins, *Foundations of Legal Research and Writing, Second Edition*, (West Publishing, 2001).
2. Campell, E., *Students' Guide to Legal Writing*, (Sydney: The Federation Press, 1998).
3. Costanzo, M., *Legal Writing*, (London: Cavendish, 1993).
4. Dworsky, A., *The Little Book on Legal Writing*, Second Edition, (Rothman Publishers, 1992).
5. Neumann, R., *Legal Reasoning and Legal Writing*, Fourth Edition, (Aspen Publishers, 2001).
6. O'Malley, T., *An Introduction to Legal Research and Writing*, (Dublin: Round Hall Press, 1993).

7. Plain English Campaign, *Language on Trial: The Plain English Guide to Legal Writing*, (London: Robson, 1996).
8. Ray, M., *Getting it Right and Getting it Written*, Third Edition, (West Publishing, 2000).
9. Stark, S., *Writing to Win/The Legal Writer* (Main Street Books, 1999).
10. Wydick, R., *Plain English for Lawyers*, Fourth Edition, (Carolina Academic Press, 1998).

Useful Websites

www.hut.fi/črvilmi/LangHelp/Writing/

www.mantex.co.uk/samples/bib1.htm

www.ecac.unimelb.edu.au/write/writing/

www.quintcareers.com/writing/skills.html

bubl.ac.uk/link/w/writingskills.htm

www.britcoun.or.th/english/writing.htm

www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/ learnres/researchwrite/acadwriting.htm

w3.arizona.edu/čwsip/

www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhlp.html

www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/ecowww/study.html

grad.admin.arizona.edu/multi/wsip.html

www.tasp.nesinc.com

www.britishcouncil.or.th/th/english/writing.htm

CHAPTER 6
Plagiarism!

Dr. Lucian M. Ashworth
University of Limerick, Ireland

Plagiarism is academic theft. It is the stealing of other people's ideas, and then claiming those ideas as your own. Perhaps a gauge of how serious an offence it is considered can be taken from the origin of the word. Originally a plagiary was a kidnapper, the word coming from the Latin *plagiare*, meaning to kidnap. Thus, plagiarism is the act of kidnapping, in this case kidnapping someone else's work. The most common form of plagiarism is the copying out of whole sections of someone else's written work into an essay. Another form of plagiarism ('auto-plagiarism') is the submission of the same essay to two different modules. In both cases the student is trying to get academic credit without doing the work required. Plagiarism is a form of academic cheating (along with cheating in an exam), and consequently it is deemed a major offence by most university authorities.

Interestingly, while current definitions are clear, many activities that now constitute plagiarism were seen as perfectly respectable in the past. One of my favourite cases comes from Immanuel Kant's essay *To Perpetual Peace*, published in 1795. Kant begins his discussion with a reference to a Dutch

inn-keeper, who hung out a sign with the words "Perpetual Peace" under a picture of a graveyard. What Kant did not mention was that he had taken this story, not quite verbatim but very close, from a short piece by the philosopher Leibniz. Earlier in the same century the French diplomat, and often-quoted father of the modern study of diplomacy, François de Callieres published his *On the Manner of Negotiating with Princes*. What he conveniently left out of his book was any acknowledgement of the Dutch seventeenth century writer and diplomat Abraham de Wicquefort. This was a pity considering that de Callieres had lifted ideas and examples directly from de Wicquefort's own book on diplomacy. While this would be considered plagiarism today (indeed, both authors, if they had published today, might even have found themselves in a law court!) it was not at the time when they wrote. The important point for us, living at the beginning of the twenty-first century is, however, that we need to obey the rules of plagiarism as they exist today. In short, quoting the cases of Kant and de Callieres is not going to get you off a charge of plagiarism (even if it is certainly true that Kant and de Callieres wrote and put forward their ideas so much better than the likes of Leibniz and Wicquefort!).

From my own experiences with plagiarism my favourite was an essay, handed in to me by a student quite recently. The essay was on anarchism, and I had no problem agreeing with the student's arguments. Indeed, I recognised some of the phrases he used. They were ones that I liked to use myself. Looking closer I found that over half the essay had

been taken from an article I had written in the early nineties. Although the student had put my article in his bibliography, he had used large sections of my article without acknowledging that they were direct quotes (he even managed to copy one part out wrongly). In short, he had tried to pass off some of my work as his own. Stealing your own lecturer's work for an essay that you are submitting to him or her is perhaps the most stupid form of plagiarism going. Any student caught doing it deserves to be punished, not just for the theft, but also for the accompanying stupidity.

Having said all of this, however, plagiarism is easily avoided. Always use speech marks when using a direct quote, and always cite an author when using someone else's ideas. Facts in the common domain need not be cited, however. Here are a few examples of what is and is not plagiarism:

Example I:
stealing a text word for word.

Submitting whole sections of someone else's text as your own work is the most serious, and most easily proved, form of plagiarism. In most universities this form of plagiarism can result in the failing of the course for which it was submitted, and even to suspension from the university. It is the one form of plagiarism where the student's intention to steal is clear and obvious. It remains the most common form of plagiarism amongst students, as well as the most easily spotted.

The following is a quote from David Held:

There is nothing more central to political and social theory than the nature of the state, and nothing more contested.

The correct ways to incorporate this into your essay is either to quote it directly, or to put the idea in your own words while making reference to the author:

According to David Held there "is nothing more central to political and social theory than the nature of the state, and nothing more contested." (Held, 1983, 1).

Or

David Held believes that, while the nature of the state is central to the theory of politics, it is also the most contested concept in the discipline. (See, for example, Held, 1983, 1).

This, however, would be plagiarism:

I believe that there is nothing more central to political and social theory than the nature of the state, and nothing more contested.

It is not just great writers who are victims of plagiarism. A few years back a lecturer who I know by reputation, but not personally, had a student burst into his office to complain about a mark he had got. The exchange went something like this: the student was upset that he had only got a mediocre mark for the paper. The lecturer pointed out that that was what the essay was worth. The indignant student the blurted out that "when my girlfriend handed in this essay to you last year you gave her a 70%!" The student, combining laziness with stupid-

ity, had just admitted to plagiarism. He had handed in a piece of work that was, verbatim, someone else's. That the lecturer had been inconsistent in his marking is beside the point. The essay was not the student's, and as a consequence his mark was lowered to an automatic fail. If his girlfriend had knowingly given him the paper (she had not, as it turned out), then she would also have been implicated in the offence.

Note: it is still plagiarism if you have the author's permission to use their work word for word! Copying out a friend's essay and submitting it as your own work is still plagiarism, and can get both of you into serious trouble.

Example II:
stealing someone else's idea.

The anarchist writer Pierre-Joseph Proudhon believed that there was a difference between property and possession. Something was your possession when you made use of it. By contrast, something was your property when you owned it, but someone else made use of it and you raked in the profit from its use. This led him to declare that property was theft. Stealing Proudhon's idea would look something like this:

It is possible to make a distinction between property and possession. A possession is something that someone owns and uses. Property is something that someone owns, but does not use. Instead they rent it out to someone else to use. An example of

this would be a factory, in which the owner does not work in it, but hires workers to work it for him. The factory owner then lives off the work of the factory workers. This is theft.

To avoid plagiarism this passage should read:

Proudhon made a distinction between property and possession. A possession is something that someone owns and uses. Property is something that someone owns, but does not use. Instead they rent it out to someone else to use. An example of this would be a factory, in which the owner does not work in it, but hires workers to work it for him. The factory owner then lives off the work of the factory workers. This, according to Proudhon, is theft. (see Proudhon, 1890, ch. 5).

Sometimes students (and academics) accidentally leave out a reference in an essay or paper. As a result, it is more difficult to prove that this form of plagiarism was intentional. When it comes to published works, however, it is assumed that the work has been properly proof-read, and so claiming that the plagiarism was accidental is not so readily accepted. In any case, it is better to make sure that you have properly referenced all ideas that are not your own or in the public domain.

Example III:
information in the common domain.

It is *not* plagiarism if you quote a commonly known idea or argument that is not specific to any writer or set of writers. You may, for example, read in a book on Irish politics that the Irish flag is a

tricolour consisting of green, white and orange vertical stripes. **Obviously you do not need to reference this as this is something that is in the common domain.** You would only need to add a reference here if you decided to take a direct quote. For example:

According to article 7 of the Irish constitution the "national flag is the tricolour of green, white and orange".

It would also be fine to write, without any reference:

The Irish flag consists of green, white and orange vertical stripes.

Similarly, there are certain words and phrases, invented by writers in the past, that have passed into the language and do not need to be referenced (mainly because they have become commonly used expressions, or because people already know where they come from). This is particularly true of many expressions from Shakespeare's plays or from common translations of the Bible (especially from the Anglican King James Bible). So you would *not* need to reference Shakespeare in this passage:

The prevailing attitude at the government meeting could be summarised as neither a borrower nor a lender be.

Even though the phrase "neither a borrower nor a lender be" comes from a speech by Polonius in *Hamlet*, it is now considered common domain. Similarly:

It is easy to criticise with the benefit of hindsight. The people who advocated and executed the

government's economic policy saw the problems of the country through a glass, darkly.

The phrase "through a glass, darkly" is a quote from the King James translation of I. Corinthians 13.12. It has entered the language as a common expression, and *does not need to be referenced*.

In sum, you do not need to reference everything you read, but only those quotes or ideas that are clearly the intellectual property of another. If you are not sure it is wisest to err on the side of caution and add a reference anyway. No one is going to penalise you for being over-cautious. On the other hand, it would be absurd to reference *every* point you make just in case.

Example IV:
Coming up with the same idea independently.

Human history is full of examples of people who came up with similar or the same ideas without realising it. The theory of evolution, for example, was developed by a number of researchers independent of each other, and a debate still rages about whether or not it originates with Charles Darwin. It is *not* plagiarism if you come up with an idea, only to find out later that someone else has already written it down. It is only plagiarism if you knowingly steal it. Having said this, if a student was to submit an essay in which they claimed the whole of Karl Marx's theory of surplus value as their own the lecturer would obviously not believe it!

The bottom line here is that you do not have to worry, when making claims in your essay, that someone else may have already said it. If you write an essay claiming that the power of the state is necessary to control our violent natures, only to find out later that Thomas Hobbes had already said it in the seventeenth century, this is not plagiarism. It would, of course, be plagiarism if you had read Hobbes previously, or if you quoted directly from Hobbes without referencing him. So if Hobbes' *Leviathan* was in your reading list, and you had used ideas found in Hobbes in your essay without referencing them it *would* be a clear case of plagiarism.

Example V:
Auto-plagiarism

Finally, under certain conditions even using your own work a second time around can be a form of plagiarism. Certainly, it is obviously *not* plagiarism is repeat some of your own ideas in another paper, nor is it plagiarism to have the same piece of work published separately, as long as the proper acknowledgements are made, and in some cases permission is sought. It is plagiarism, however, to hand in the same essay for different courses. In effect, what the student would be trying to do is to get academic credit twice over. There have been many cases of this kind of plagiarism in university courses, and when discovered they are often punished quite severely. The safest thing to do is to, even if you are using the same ideas for two differ-

ent essays, is to rewrite one of them so that they are clearly two different pieces of work.

Summary:
a checklist for avoiding plagiarism.

1. Always put direct quotes (sections of text that you are quoting word for word) in inverted commas, and always add an appropriate reference to the work cited at the end of the quote.

2. If you are using someone else's idea in an essay, and that idea is not in the common domain, always add a reference to the author of the idea. It is also often helpful to point out, in your text, that the idea is someone else's (e.g.: "Marx believed that...")

3. Never copy out a piece of text from a book or article and hand it in as your own work. It is too easy to get caught. The writing style of the plagiarised text may give you away, and also there is a good chance that the lecturer already knows the passage that has been stolen. There have even been cases of students trying to steal passages from their lecturer's own published work (see above). Lecturers usually find it easy to recognise their own style.

4. Never, never, never hand in the same essay for two different modules. Lecturers have a habit of talking to each other when not in class, and if you are discovered they are likely to show little mercy.

5. Never, never, never allow another student to take one of your essays and hand it in as his or her own work. If this is discovered both of you will face disciplinary action.

6. Students have been known to download whole sections of text from the web, and to hand it in as their own work. Remember, lecturers also have web access...

7. At the end of the day, the work necessary *to get away* with plagiarism (setting aside the risks involved) adds up to the amount of work you would need to write your own non-plagiarised piece of work in the first place! In addition, you have come to University in order to learn. Writing your own essays is part of the learning process. Plagiarism disrupts that learning process.

8. Finally, if you are in doubt about whether something is plagiarism or not you can always consult your lecturer or the university authorities. There is no harm in making sure.

While plagiarism is rare, it is well to be aware of what it is, and how to avoid it!

CHAPTER 7
Writing a Report

Dr. Rory Keane
Belgrade Open School, Yugoslavia

1.1 The purpose of writing a report:

There may be many purposes to writing a report. On a macro level, the purpose of writing a report is to communicate. Keep this generic requirement in the back of your mind when writing. The motto is "writing equals communication". Therefore your words should not alienate, confuse or bemuse. This is quite a difficult task, as report writers often understand the subject matter inherently and may forget that the audience may not possess such an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Therefore, the report writer should utilize two approaches.

- Provide a relevant holistic background analysis of the situation being discussed
- Evaluate if technical detail needs to be part of the report, perhaps such technicalities may simply confuse.

Keeping in mind that the purpose of the report is to communicate, the report writer must consider who exactly will be involved in such communication. Looking at it from another perspective, who is the audience? It is important to know your audience, as

the report you write should be conditioned to the needs and requirements of your audience. Ask yourself why the report is being written. The answer may incorporate the following:

- to legitimise a project
- to evaluate a project
- to explain a project
- to critique a project
- to coordinate a project

Now you must begin to communicate in accordance to the needs of the audience.

1.2 Before you write – think:

Think about what you intend to write. Why have you decided upon a specific subject matter? How are you going to structure your work? What type of writing style are you going to use? If you use an informative style, it may convey the message, but also may bore your audience. If you write in a holistic manner it may convey the essence of the project without providing information on the particularities. It must be remembered that thinking about writing can improve your writing ability.

Judgement of what the audience needs to know, tact in assessing which way to present the information to them most usefully, and the resources of language to do the job exist in everyone. The first step is to develop the proper attitude to writing reports. Reports should not been seen as a Friday afternoon chore, put rather as your opportunity to convey to the respective audience the means and manner which you have used to instil the objectives

of your organization. In addition, the process of reporting in itself may be utilized as a means of evaluation. By undertaking the process of reporting, you may find that your project is actually more successful than you had considered it to be. Perhaps when writing, new ideas of how greater coordination could be developed may come to mind. Thirdly, and most importantly, the process of reporting will allow you place your work and your developments within a broader picture.

2.1 Poor writing syndrome:

Poor writing syndrome has seldom anything to do with a lack of ability, but is more probably caused by a lack of priority. Therefore, prioritise your report writing. Decide upon a period of time, substantial time each week, which you will devote to report writing. Friday afternoon may not be the most suitable time to develop a quality writing style! In addition to providing a substantial amount of quality time for writing, it is also hugely important to write incrementally. In other words, keep a notebook account of your weekly activities. In this way you will find that reporting is much easier, as you already have a notebook account of events. When writing your report, you then may concentrate on style and structure, rather than consuming most of your writing periods trying to remember what you did during the week and where did you leave those contact details or statistics.

Writing is often poor because writers are frequently not given enough information for the job. Asked to write a report on elections, they may not

be told for whom, why, and for what purpose. Without this information, only an approximate and confusing report can be written. Vague and inadequate specifications invite poor reports. I suggest that you discuss a synopsis with the person who coordinates the report, before drafting the full text.

Another fundamental mistake – to be avoided by the report writer – is the so-called "verbose tradition". Too many modern political scientists seem to need to wrap up their meaning. Perhaps this is done in order to camouflage a lack of substance; but every writer knows how depressingly easy it is to write (not to mention how meaningless it is to read) in such a verbose style. Always remember the purpose of report writing is to communicate effectively to your audience.

Particularly those in the political arena also sometimes do not want their style to be transparent, or their meaning to be easily understood. It must be remembered, however, that report writing is not the most suitable medium for such nuance.

2.2 Before you write think about the objectives:

Rule number one: What genre of report am I writing?

The type of report you write will determine your structure, writing style, lexicon and detail.

Rule number two: Narrowing the subject into a topic

You have been asked to write a report upon security in the Balkans. This topic is simply too large and open to hugely different interpretation. It will be impossible to write a structured piece of work, unless you firstly narrow down the question. This process of 'operationalising' the question can be made simple by asking the following questions:

- What is the purpose of the report?
- Why must it be written at this time?
- When is the report to be completed?
- Who is the audience?

After going through this process see what has emerged. What should have emerged at this stage is a tight, narrow question.

Rule number three: Developing a thesis

A thesis can usually be expressed in one sentence, by thinking about the following

- Subject
- Topic
- Question
- Thesis

A thesis is an idea that you will prove or disprove while writing the report

Next Step
- Make an outline
- Write first draft

Structure of work should consist of Introduction, Main body, Conclusion.

Revisiting Your Paper.

3.1 Identifying the aim:

A report writer must have a clear comprehension of the aim(s) of the report. You must ask yourself, "what am I trying to achieve?" If you only focus on the subject of the report without concentrating upon the aim, there is strong possibility that your report will simply be descriptive. While it is important that a report should be descriptive, the purpose of a report is also to advocate and contextualize. When 'operationalising' the aim of your report, ask the following questions. Such the report:

- Describe
- Explain
- Instruct
- Specify

Of course in adopting the aims of the report, one must once again think about the audience. For example, if you are writing a report on Balkan security for an organization or personal with little Balkan knowledge, it will be necessary to describe and explain before specifying. However, if your report is for a Balkan security expert, there is less need to describe, explain or instruct. In such a circumstance, the report writer should concentrate upon specifications. Specifications may be broken-down into the following categories:

- Evaluation and Recommendation
- Debate Provoking
- Persuade
- Concede
- Protest
- Reject

Which category you describe to utilize in the report will depend largely on whether you want the reader to understand or remember. If understanding is your objective, evaluation and recommendation would seem the more appropriate path.

3.2 Identifying your reader's aims:

It is important to know your aims, however it is perhaps equally important to know the aims of your reader. It is easy for report writers to assume that readers are mirror images of themselves, with matching interests and needs. This is highly unlikely and in fact in most circumstances your readers will want to use the information to meet needs different from yours. In particularly in large organizations the amount of detail required will differ as information rises through the management hierarchy. In general, the higher the managerial level of your readers, the more their interests move from the technical *how* and *why* to the more commercial *to what purpose* and *at what cost*. It is often helpful to sit and consider just what your reader will do after reading your paper: file it, reach for the phone, write a memorandum, sigh deeply! Ask yourself why the reader requires the report. Think about some of the following categories:

- To understand
- To legitimize
- To critique
- To write a larger more holistic report
- To formulate future policy

In addition to the above it is also necessary to attempt to understand the attitudes of the readers towards the topics and presentation techniques. The shrewd communicator must identify the positions that readers are most likely to adopt and either meet potential difficulties or make use of potential support.

4.1 Psychological and physical contexts:

We must ask: what is the intellectual span of attention of the audience? What is their capacity to absorb technical information? It is important neither to unload information too quickly nor too slowly.

Failure to select information appropriately is a common weakness in report writing. Think about reports you have read in the past, how many of them gave too much irrelevant information. It must be kept in mind that the purpose of a report is not to document the information you have gathered, but rather to *select* appropriate information. Appropriate information can be termed as information that is contextual and serves to explain in accordance to the theme being reported on.

Regarding the physical context, keep in mind, image may not be everything, but it accounts for a lot! The report must be logical. This means that the paper must have connection and sequence. Too many report writers interpret the word logical to mean chronological and it has become habitual for report writers to write in a chronological fashion. Particularly is you are working in an organization with a political context, a chronological report may

very well be tactfully weak. The interesting, progressive information should, in some cases, be presented initially. Thereafter an overview or backdrop may be provided. Readers usually find reports much more attractive if information is in order of importance *from their point of view*. Unless the essential point of the paper is to outline the chronological sequence, readers usually find reports much more attractive if information is in order of importance. It is most effective to start with the new arresting information, preferably in outline form in a summary. The summary may be detached as a separate unit with a heading or it may be simply a summarizing opening paragraph. But, however it is presented, it should serve the same purpose: giving the reader a quick, clear version of the essence of the report.

5.1 Starting to write the report – Stages 1–7:

Stage one: Analyze your aims – Write them down in thematic order

Stage two: Consider your audience – Thinking about their needs will condition both your thought and writing process.

Stage three: Make a plan – To make a plan one helpful method is to take a large sheet of paper and write the major headings spaced out along the page. Then go systematically through your notes, using a system of numbering to note each point on the sheet. Thus the first point in your notes might be best placed in the fourth section, the next point might be for the conclusion, the next the introduction, and so on.

Stage four: Develop a synopsis – After completing a plan or indeed a fair copy, it is very useful to develop a synopsis of your report. Perhaps you could discuss this synopsis with colleagues in order to get their advice and ideas, which you may have unintentionally forgotten.

Stage five: Draft the text – You now have a written plan and an evaluated synopsis, so writing should come quite naturally. Remember there is no imperative to start writing at the beginning. Often it is more appropriate to write the main body text before the introduction.

Stage six: Forget it – Try to leave the draft for a few days, or at least overnight. Then, when you look at it again, you will have forgotten the precise line of thought that was in your mind on the day you wrote it – what you *meant* to say! You will be obliged to look more closely at what the words on the page actually *do say*.

Stage seven: Revise and edit – Firstly it is useful to read through the text and highlight mistakes and syntax errors. Thereafter you can deal with each error specifically.

5.2 Layout of information:

The very appearance of a report should begin the campaign to win the attention of the reader. Consider introducing factors that add emphasis to the paper. The position of information on the page, the area located to information and the typefaces used will all have an effect on the layout and ulti-

160

mately on the readability of the report. Also take the title of the report into account. Titles should be short, preferably on one line only; and they should specify exactly what the report is talking about. Titles have two jobs to do. First, they have to inform the readers about what is in the document. Second, they have to distinguish one document from another. If readers are flicking through piles of documents, they want a brief title which can be taken in at a single glance.

Most reports require a summary on the title page or on the pages immediately following. Since the main aim of the summary is to emphasize what is new and interesting to potential readers, the principal emphasis in the summary should be on findings, conclusions, and recommendations. If your report is to be only one or two pages long, a separate title page and summary will seem over-elaborate. But even in such circumstances, ensure that your paper incorporates a sharp, focused title and bring your attention-catching information forward into a summarizing opening paragraph.

The main body of the report comes directly after the title page and the summary. The main body of the report should incorporate the following:
- Table of contents
- List of symbols, abbreviations, and definitions
- Introductory material
- Report of the work done
- Results/findings
- Discussion/analysis/argument, leading to conclusion
- Conclusion

161

- Recommendations
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Appendix for tables, figures and graphs

Each of the above categories will now be explained in more detail.

Table of content:

It is sensible to begin with a table of content so as to enable readers to chart the structure and emphasis of the report. A well-designed table of contents, showing main headings and all sub-headings, and showing the relationship of those parts by indentation and a clear numbering system, provides readers with an overview if the document. At a more practical level the table of contacts will also allow the people to find page numbers more easily.

List of symbols, abbreviations and definition:

Such a glossary can prove to be most useful, especially for technical reports. Such a glossary is best placed at the beginning of the report, not at the end.

Introductory material:

Introductory material will usually incorporate background information. The degree of background information must be decided upon in relations to the needs and knowledge of your audience. Other aspects that the introduction should include are; why was the work undertaken? What scope was given? What were the limitations? What are the aims and objectives of the report?

Account of the work done:

This will form the largest section of the report. When writing this section think about what new information you have to report upon. Also discuss problems and solutions which you experienced. This section may be very descriptive and/or explanatory. Again take the needs of the audience and the aims of the report into account when deciding upon the depth of description and explanation.

Results and findings:

In deciding what information to put into the results and findings section, two issues must be kept in mind. Firstly, not all results and findings will be appropriate for the report in question. In this sense, you must ask yourself which results are directly related to the title of the report. Secondly, it must be kept in mind that the results and finding must be adequate to support the discussion and analysis in the folowing section.

Discussion and analysis:

This section will allow you place the findings of your report into a largely more complex and multi-faceted analysis. Particularly in report writing, it is important that such analysis be constructive. Therefore, if criticisms are being voiced, possible solutions must also be expanded upon. Always keep in mind that the discussion and analysis must be directly related top the results from previous sections.

Conclusion:

A conclusion does not mean that one simply provides concluding remarks, but rather means that

one provides succinct statements outlining the process that was undertaken and the results that were found. It is important not to analyze in the conclusion; this should be achieved in the previous section. The golden rule is that one should never introduce new information into a conclusion, rather one should efficiently round off the report

Recommendations:

Recommendations should be clear-cut. There should be no discussion within a recommendation section: discussion should have been completed in the Discussion section.

Acknowledgements:

Acknowledgements can serve an important function in a report as they can signify to the reader the breath of contacts that were consulted in the drafting of the report.

References:

In the reference section give details of any sources of primary and/or secondary information that you used in compiling the report. There are numerous different referencing styles, which may be used. Unless a specific format is suggested use the format you find easiest. The golden rule is "keep referencing consistent in style."

Appendices:

Include in this section all information which is indirectly related/significant to the report, but

which you felt, did not directly respond to the aims of the report or the needs of the audience.

6.1 Making your report readable:

In looking at the factors that influence how readable your report is, the writer, the text and the reader must be kept in consideration. Regarding the report writer, it is important to clearly signpost your work (i.e. headings, sub-headings, structure). Think about how you wish to emphasis more significant aspects of the report (i.e. italics, separate paragraph, underlining etc.). When thinking about the text itself, ask yourself if the vocabulary is suitable. There is little point in writing that "the axiomatic of unipolarity is considered ontological", if your reader is not going to understand what you are saying. Also think about spacing, font size and indentation, as all such techniques can have the effect of making your report look 'friendly', if used properly. Finally, know your reader. Know what the reader finds interesting, know the report style/structure which the reader prefers.

Where possible attempt to avoid long sentences. Take up a James Joyce book and you will understand why long sentences simply do not work, particularly in reports. Remember you do not want to irritate the reader, and research shows that long sentences nearly always irritate the reader. Many writers feel that long sentences are inevitable if complex interactions have to be expressed. This is a mistake. Any subject can be broken down into shorter sentences, without loosing the essence of communication. In addition, where the information

is complex, there are many other techniques of presentation available to the writer. Paragraph breaks, headings, indentation and other devices of layout can also be used to make information more readable.

Before using obscure vocabulary, ask yourself if the report will benefit from such elevated lexicon. The answer is most often no! Why do report writers use long and unfamiliar words? Clearly, it is not in order to contribute to the convenience and comfort of their readers; readers find simple writing more readable. I have formed the opinion, from talking to many report writers, that writers use long words for two reasons: to confuse and to impress. It must be remembered that a report should never confuse. Secondly, the reader will most certainly not be impressed by elevated lexicon, but rather by results and progress.

Another issue related to language is the use of jargon. Jargon should be used with caution. For example, when does a clever and efficient phrase become jargon? The answer is when it is used inappropriately. For example the phrase "capacity-building" has by now become a piece of jargon within the discourse of international relations. However, when the term is used appropriately, it makes the report writer sound knowledgeable, for instance: "The development of a functional municipal structure should in time promote the process of local capacity building." When used inappropriately, it sounds like jargon, for example: "We believe capacity building is the best way to promote development." This sentence is likely to annoy the reader, as it tells the reader nothing about the plan of action to create

development, but rather relies upon vague jargon. Also attempt to avoid unnecessary and redundant words. Phrases as well as words are often chosen for their impressive sound and massive weight rather than for brevity.

The use of the passive voice, is yet another device that the report writer must take into account when considering readability. Passive structures reverse the most common order of a sentence. Instead of saying "the analyzer tested the sample" (the active form), writers can say, "The sample was tested by the analyzer" (passive voice). When deciding to use the passive voice keep the following in mind. The passive voice at times can cause a sentence to sound more complex and therefore less readable. The passive voice does have the effect of making the information sound more objective and disassociated from the report writer. Because the passive voice disassociates the information from the reporter, the report may come across as lacking in personality. As evident, there are advantages and disadvantages in using the passive voice. As a device it is most suitable when reporting on sensitive issues, as it symbolises a degree of objectivity.

The personal versus impersonal debate is another factor that can determine readability. Should the report writer use "one" or "I", when formulating a report? Readers are often made uncomfortable by the rather pompous "one" instead of "I". For example, the sentence "One must work intensely to defeat corruption", sounds overly detached. However, it would be ridiculous for the report writer to use "I", as the report writer is merely reporting on

the activities of a larger organization. Therefore perhaps the most suitable device to use is the personal "we".

7.1 Writing an executive summary:

This is the most important task for the report writer, as it is often the only part of the report that is read. What is an executive summary?:

- A summary acts as an extended title. It helps readers to see if the report contains the information they need.
- A summary is a short version for people who do not have time to read the whole paper.
- A summary should act as a map for those who are going to read the whole report.
- A summary helps the reader to remember the main pints of the report, a form of reinforced learning.
- A report summary should be informative rather than descriptive.
- Present the results logically rather than chronologically. When deciding what is a 'logical' form of presentation, ask yourself what issues are most important to the reader, as such issues should be highlighted first.

8.1 Writing minutes:

One crucial auxiliary of report writing, is the writing of minutes. Minutes are most often informal, sometimes handwritten documents, which report on issues relating to internal processes within an organization, or between organizations. They often form the basis of future reports. As the minute

reporter, must enter relevant information arising from a meeting into the minute reports, they are often written in a cryptic, abbreviated style. It is most advisable that the minute reporter should return to the document within 24 hours after initially compiling it, in order that the document may be proofread and structured appropriately. It is important to remember that the minute sheet becomes an official record and therefore the record must be comprehensible not only while the topic is current, but also five years down the line. In this case it may be necessary to revise the minute sheet, explaining abbreviations and contexts.

When taking a minute report, the reporter must decide upon a minimalist or detailed approach. Time commitments and the importance of the subject will dictate which approach is used. A minimalist approach would involve only accounting decisions that were reached at a meeting. A detailed report would have full verbatim transcripts of everything that was said at the meeting. In most cases reporters tend towards something in the middle, in essence statements of the decisions, accompanied by a summary of the main points made in discussions at the meeting, with information about who supported the varying points of view.

In a generic sense minute reporting should entail the following elements:

- A number and subject heading
- Date, time and place of meeting
- Names of Chairperson and Secretary
- Names and organization affiliation of those present

- A sentence or short paragraph describing any document(s) on which discussion was based, and perhaps mentioning who made the introductory statement

?A statement of the resolution(s) or decision (s) on the subject

?A reminder of when and where the next meeting will take place

9.1 Applying the finishing touches:

Within this document, I have outlined the various procedures and thought processes, which the report writer must apply, in order to write a good report. When you have completed your report in accordance to the structures and procedures outlined, you are (finally I here you say!) only one step away from a good report. The final step is simply in fact a revision exercise and involves the following procedure:

- Read your report aloud: Using this technique you will quickly pick up on typos and misspelled words
- Work backwards: Reading your paper backwards (conclusion first, introduction last) will prevent you from getting lost in the story and allow you rather to concentrate on the spelling, phrasing and structure
- Use your computer spell-check
- Ask someone else to read your report

CHAPTER 8

How to Write a Qualitative Research Proposal

Lynne Christine Alice
University of Prishtine

Most students and first-time researchers underestimate what is involved in writing a research proposal, not because proposal writing is especially difficult or esoteric, but because aspects of the proposal are very specific to the intended research. It is often said that "one's research is only as a good as one's proposal" and certainly the research process and report that follows from the proposal will reflect its strengths or inadequacies. For this reason it is best to be as clear as possible, from the beginning, about just what is required and desirable in your proposal.

Your research proposal has to convince its readers that you know what you are talking about, have appropriate objectives and the necessary skills to complete the research. The form and contents of the proposal will depend on the method chosen for the project. For this reason, it is a good idea to begin by taking notes about the information you will need as well as notes about your intentions for the research, before you shape the proposal into its official form. All proposals have some generic content, such as:

- An introduction, explaining your aims and objectives for the proposed research.
- An explanation of the methods you want to use, with some reference to the methodology, (or theoretical explanation of the methods).
- A costing of the research or outline of what equipment and expenses may be incurred (sometimes the finance office of your organisation, school or university does this part of the research planning and you won't need to).

Your research proposal has to demonstrate whether you are capable of doing what you are planning. Those who read your proposal will also be looking for explanations of the key aspects of each stage of the research project. Therefore, your proposal must also show that you and your team have the necessary competencies sufficient to complete the project successfully. Early in the proposal when you are introducing the topic and your methodology, you should concentrate on the following points regardless of your specific research focus, because all proposals need to explicitly answer the following questions:

- What do you plan to accomplish?
- Why do you want to do it?
- How you are going to do it?

Throughout your proposal you need to persuade your reader that you have an important and interesting research idea, an adequate understanding of the relevant literature, are familiar with the major issues, and that your methodology is suitable. It is easier to convince readers of your point of view if your writing is coherent and decisive. It is a good

idea to use sub-headings to organise your text. The use of sub-headings is not just for the benefit of the assessors reading the proposal, it will help you prioritise your arguments and analysis and give the proposal clarity and cohesion.

The proposal should have the following sections, which are described below in terms of their required content. You may need to adapt the order of the following contents if your proposal is required to conform to an official format:

Title

The title must inform, so that the reader can know 'at a glance' the intention of the proposed research.

Abstract

The abstract is a succinctly stated, brief summary of a few hundred words. The abstract should include succinct sentences about each of the following:

- The research question,
- The rationale for the study,
- The hypothesis (in quantitative research),
- The method(s) used,
- The main findings.

Do not write your abstract in cryptic or abbreviated language, aim for clarity and brevity

Introduction

Your introduction should begin with a statement of your the aims and objectives in the proposed research. The aim should be written as a single statement about what your research is trying to achieve. The objectives should be a short list of statements about how you intend to achieve your overall aim. Your introduction should describe the background or context of your research problem.

Be careful about how you state the research problem; it needs to be convincing and keep the reader's attention. There are no rules about how you should describe your research problem, but if you rely entirely on a lengthy literature review to first convince the reader of its significance, they will probably lose the point. Your statement of the problem needs to be couched in a brief overview of the topic. You should give a brief overview of the historical basis of your research problem but also discuss its relevance in the context of current research concerns. Identify who are the main people who have written on the topic and are currently researching it. Briefly refer to key publications in the topic area.

To summarise, your introduction should begin with a general statement of the topic area, followed by a focus on your intended research problem, and then you should give the rationale or justification for the proposed study. Generally, the introduction should contain the following:

- Statement of the research problem; the purpose of the study.

- Background information; the context for your research question
- The rationale of your proposed study, showing why it is worth doing. You should also describe the intended audience for your research that is, who do you think will be most interested in your research report?
- Description of issues and problems to be addressed by your research.
- Identify and describe the phenomenon you will study.
- State your hypothesis or theory, (usually in quantitative research only, in exploratory, ethnographic or phenomenological research, you may not have hypotheses but rather more elaborate research questions).
- Describe the limits or boundaries of your proposed research. This gives your proposed topic focus by describing what you are and are not going to address.
- Give definitions of key concepts. (This may not be required.)

Literature Review

You will need to check whether you are required to incorporate this section into the Introduction or keep it separate. Basically it is a thorough discussion of the literature that is relevant and topical. Your review will demonstrate that you have a viable topic and that you are familiar with all the necessary foundations of your study, both theoretical and empirical. The literature review should also show that

you can critically evaluate and integrate synthesize the existing literature into your proposed topic area. Your assessors will be reading the review to determine how well you are able to develop and adapt the existing literature into a model for your own study. Your review should also try to convince your reader that your research might contribute to the literature on the topic area.

Your literature reviews should have the following elements:

- Clear organization and structure
- Focus and coherence
- Succinct and concise language
- Citations of relevant literature
- Offer some critical evaluation of cited papers
- Descriptions of recent developments

Organise your literature review so that it is stimulating to read. Try to convey your enthusiasm for the project. You might use sub-headings and sub-sections to give order and coherence. Try to guide the reader from your succinct statement of the topic area to related issues and other research perspectives, as in this outline for example:

Literature review: Abandonment of babies in South Eastern Europe.

a. *Statement of the topic*
b. *Current research findings in the area*
  i. *Local research teams*
  ii. *Research funded by international donors*
  iii. *Key researchers on this topic*

c. *Current research findings in other parts of the world*
d. *Issues about socio-economic status in relation to the topic*
  i. *'Material' causes*
  ii. *Evaluation of pre– and post-conflict causes of the phenomenon.*
e. *Issues about cultural perspectives on the topic*
  i. *Ethnic differences and cultural mores*
  ii. *Assumptions in international research findings*
f. *Issues about gender differences*
  i. *Competing explanations*
g. *Ongoing research on this topic*
  i. *Issues and concerns*
  ii. *Where the proposed research fits in.*

Methods

The methods section is very important because it tells your advisor or Research Committee just how you plan to address your research problem. This section should describe both your work plan and all the activities necessary to complete your project. Sometimes you are expected to write a separate 'methodology' section in which you demonstrate your understanding of the theoretical basis of the methods you intend to use. If a separate is not required, it should be included in the methods section. The methods section should show that your methodology is appropriate, that your chosen methods are suitable and that you understand *how* to do the research. A clear and well-written methods section will also have enough information to enable another researcher to duplicate or build upon the

methods and approach you have used. In some research proposals, you may also need to show how you could have done the proposed research using different or alternative methods, in order to justify the methods you are proposing.

Ethics

You must think about the ethical implications of your research. Most universities and research institutions require researchers to submit an application showing they have considered possible ethical issues in their work, whether or not it involves the interviewing or 'experimentation' with living subjects. The main issues for you to think about are how to protect the confidentiality and privacy of both yourself and your research subjects. In textual research, you must show that you have followed and conformed to any copyright and other legal requirements that may determine your access to and use of research materials. You must determine whether peoples' rights or welfare will be affected by your research. If your research may affect others in any way, this must be discussed and plans to safeguard their interests should be made. You should not avoid research topics that seem at first to be riven with ethical considerations. Use the opportunity of an ethics application to learn about dealing with such conundrums, because they are very common in qualitative empirical research. If you need to get approval from an ethics committee, you should include the documentation with your proposal.

If your research involves human subjects, you will need to devise an information form and a consent form for your participants. The information sheet is a succinct statement about the research and usually includes information about your supervisor, funder, or sponsor. A typical consent form will include the following elements:

- An explanation of the objectives of the research
- The name of the researcher and whoever has authorised the research
- An explanation of how the subject was selected for the study
- The expected duration of the subject's participation
- A description of the research process and procedures to be followed
- Identification of any procedures which are experimental
- A description of any benefits to the subject or to others which may reasonably be expected from the research
- A description of any risks to the subjects
- A statement that the subject's participation is voluntary
- A statement that the subject can withdraw at any time and will not affect any benefits that they would normally receive or they will not be penalized for withdrawing from the study
- A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subjects will be maintained
- An explanation of whom to contact for information about the research study

- Contact details for the researcher or whoever authorises the study

The language of the consent form must be understandable and written at the level of the subject's comprehension. You may need to consider providing copies in each language that is relevant to the research topic.

Timeline

Although it is often not required to write a timeline for your research, it is a good idea to do this. If you include it in your proposal, it will demonstrate how organised you are, at least at the beginning! You should be prepared to update your timeline regularly, in consultation with your supervisor or fellow researchers. It is never possible to foresee all the circumstances that will happen during your research process, so a timeline helps you feel and looked as prepared as possible. Begin your timeline from the proposed completion date and work backwards to the date you start the project. For example:

Timeline:
A Three-Month Participant Observation Study
Of A Prishtine Neighbourhood

16–30 September 2002 Proposal and ethics clearance written and approved.

1–15th October. Begin 1 hour observations from 3 selected balconies three times each week. Note taking and photographs.

16–31st October 2002. Visits to open air markets and shops in three sites, three times a week (about 9 hours in total). Continue balcony observations.

1–16 November 2002. Visits to school yard and entrances (observation point in cafe) each day. Continue balcony and market observations.

16 December 2002 Completion of study. Write-up begins.

16 January 2003 Completion and submission of project.

The timeline shown above shows only the proposed activities, location, and times of each part of the study.

Limitations

To convince your assessors of the potential of your proposed research, you need to write confidently and without exaggerating the value of the project. In order to do this well, you should discuss the limitations and weaknesses of the proposed research. The limitations are what you do and do not intend to cover in the research and you should also include time and financial constraints and any other restrictions placed on the work.

Conclusion and references

Conclude the proposal with an overview and summary, which re-states the research problem, describes who is doing the research, what you hope to discover and how you will do it. Your proposal

should end with a list of the references you have used and you should include copies of documents such as the questionnaire, or the ethics application, if you plan to use these.

Here is a checklist to help you avoid common mistakes in proposal writing

- Conformed to the order and contents required by my department or professor?
- Are the aims and objectives clearly stated?
- Is there adequate focus on the research question?
- Have I provided an adequate context to frame the research question?
- Is the literature review coherent and systematic?
- Have I discussed the limits of the research?
- Have I cited landmark studies?
- Discussed all existing relevant theoretical and empirical contributions?
- Developed a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research?
- Sufficient detail on all relevant issues, including ethics, the research timeline and the research budget?
- Have I included the proposed questionnaire?
- Is the reference list correct and adequate?

Finally, it is always a good idea to discuss your research proposal with your supervisor or with a friend or colleague who is experienced in writing proposals. Although, as I said at the beginning, your proposal format will depends on the topic and perhaps on who is funding your research, all research

proposals share most of the contents and all of the concerns I have discussed in this brief introduction. Good luck!

Further reading suggestions

Your first step should be to find out whether your proposal is required to follow a format determined by your supervisor or university. Most good textbooks on qualitative research will have all the information you need to plan the outline of your proposal. The following books give more specialised information:

1. Punch, Keith, *Developing effective research proposals* (London: Sage, 2000).

2. Locke, Lawrence F., *Proposals that work: a guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2000).

3. Robson, Colin, *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers* (Oxford, UK; Madden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

4. Ogden, Thomas E., *Research proposals: a guide to success* (San Diego, California: Academic Press, 2002).

The Civic Education Project, an international voluntary organization, works to enhance the development of higher and professional education in societies engaged in political and economic transition. CEP is leading the wave of change by supporting academics and professionals in the social sciences to teach and do community outreach. Unlike other programs that only focus on supporting short-term visits by Western lecturers, CEP is one of the first organizations to support dynamic young educators who are native to the region. With cultural and linguistic skills that their Western counterparts do not have, coupled with a desire to return home to make a difference, these young indigenous scholars are a critical component of sustainable education reform.

www.cep.org.hu

The Belgrade Open School (BOS) is a non-governmental, non-for-profit educational organization committed to the dissemination of knowledge and improvement of research in social sciences and humanities and civic education.

BOS aims to attract, educate, gather and organize talented university students and other participants from Serbia and Montenegro and South Eastern Europe in order to network future leaders in various sectors of society.

The School enhances the traditional education by contributing to the re-examination of its basic premises.

BOS offers various profiles of educational programs, all based on inter-active teaching methods.

The goal of the School is to enable its beneficiaries to become autonomous, self-confident and respectable citizens, competent to act with positive distinction to the complexities faced by the transition-process to democracy.

10 years
BELGRADE OPEN SCHOOL
1993 - 2003
www.bos.org.yu

CEP

Civic Education Project

BOS®

10 years
BELGRADE OPEN SCHOOL
1993 - 2003