Strategies for Academic Writing

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ACADEMIC WRITING

I. Why discuss this? (benefits)

- **Shedding light on means and ways of speeding up the writing process in the effort to publish research-based findings**

- **Identifying mechanisms that could assist readers to grasp the gist of key contents/messages;**

II. Strategies for ensuring clear and quality writing

- **Synthesising information is crucial in conveying clear and solid messages to readers/end-users**

- **Chunking/breaking apart collected and analysed information in a manner that enables authors/readers to organise miscellaneous data by looking at a whole array of facts and perceptions in the report**

- **Setting up a coherent outline that meets expectations of the target reader/audience**

- **Developing a clear hierarchical structure of the report (sections, sub-sections, etc)**

- **Identifying target readers/audience by considering their expectations and interests (NOT fine-tuning)**

III. Approaches in Dialoguing with Readers

- **Provide clear <u>indication of the purpose</u> of the study/work (contribution to existing body of knowledge and/or policy; training /teaching, etc)**

- **Identify who the priority readers are (1-3 in order of importance)**

- **Envision what the priority readers know/ do not know/need to know**

- **Foresee the questions (main and derivative) that priority readers could pose and get prepared to respond to these**

- **Decide/determine the key messages to be conveyed and ensure that these are repeatedly reflected in the text**

IV. Dissecting sections/sub-sections and paragraphs

- **New sections should begin with a topical statement <u>that summarises the key message allowing readers to capture the key points in the argumentation</u>**

- **Sentences should be short (20 words or less whenever possible)**

- **Paragraphs should be limited to a maximum of 10 lines**

V. Writing Style: Making Sentences More Dynamic

- **Use verbs by placing them close to the beginning of sentences as much as possible (WHO DOES WHAT)**

- **Use Active Voice**

Tips on Publishing Articles

- Don't rush towards submitting manuscript in anticipation that improvements can be made later after receiving feedback from reviewers (involves high risk of outright rejection)

- Select appropriate publication outlet/target journal that is relevant to the major theme of the chapter (how?)

- Properly understand aims, scope, and author's guideline of the target journal

- Make a good first impression reflected in the title (catchy and attractive) and abstract of chapter - e.g. *Ant-Politics Machine)*

- Deploy a professional editor for technical and substantive copy-editing

- Address reviewers' comments carefully but retain your position firmly on justifiable/well-argued ground in case of disagreement

- Acknowledge support received in various forms

Authorship

- **Solo, co- and multiple**

- **Leveled and pro-rated apportionment of weight based on authors' contributions/inputs**

- **Undeserved entitlement as manifestation of unethical behaviour…**

- **Caution against predatory/bogus journals**

- **Distinguish between printing and publishing**

Reputable Publishing Houses and Journals (Parliament and Politics)

- *Parliamentary Affairs*
- *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law*
- *African Affairs*
- *Third World Quarterly*
- *Development Policy Review*
- *Review of African Political Economy*
- *Development and Change*
- *Pluto Press*
- *Palgrave Macmillan*
- *University Presses (several) including in Africa and Ethiopia*

Turning Manuscripts into Monographs

- **A monograph is a different body of work to manuscript**

- **It is developed by one author or co-authors on a single subject presenting primary research product/original work in peer reviewed publications**

- **In a monograph, the manuscript is appropriately chaptered, footnoted and indexed and thereby emerge as a published work that formally deals with the central research question in a focused manner**

- **Hence it is evidence-based report that results from rigorous research**

- **Producing monographs involves reducing longer manuscripts into clearly discernible versions that are different from the former**

- **Involves internal review followed by blind reviews engaging at least two professionals in the field**