

# Writing, Editing and Publishing an Article in a Scientific Journal<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this article is to discuss some important aspects involved while writing an article to publish in a scientific journal. This is a review article. I argue that writing an article is technical as well as creative art of an author which facilitates acceptance of article for publication in a scientific journal. Academicians are obliged to conduct research and publish articles to demonstrate their job efficiency. To publish an article in a scientific journal is the first necessary condition to meet standard norms i.e. journal's guideline for authors and the next is to follow the editing processes of the journal. Writing an article for printed version is becoming an old fashion. Therefore, authors need to learn how to submit a scholarly written article online and follow review processes. Writing and publishing of a scientific article is not only important for individuals and specific scientific community, it is also*

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*important to the wider society which helps to enhance stock of knowledge, and sharing and learning culture.*

**Key words:** Online publication, author aid, open access, copy editing, peer review

## 1. Introduction

Academic or scholarly writing in general includes various categories such as an article, a review paper, dissertation/thesis, and essays. Writing and publishing an article is linked to increasing academic visibility of idea and works within academic networks. This paper discusses about mechanics of writing and editing processes associated with publication of an article in a scientific journal.

Writing an article is a difficult job even for professionals. By publishing articles in a journal author can disseminate research findings and can reach to the wider audience. In this regards online publication in directory of open access journal (<http://www.doaj.org/www.nepjol.info>) has much benefit. At the same time all writings are not published due to many problems relating to technicalities of the publication or standard norms of publishers. I think it is always important to keep in mind that original research must be published in a relevant journal; then only can new scientific knowledge be authenticated (Day, 1999:IV). Most important thing is that every scientist must feel importance publishing their research work.

The editors of any journal are facilitating authors to bring out scientific work in scientific manner as gatekeeper, which does not require much energy for readers to read and understand. Furthermore, known authors are able to analyze data and qualify them in such a way that readers highly appreciate their scientific work. We must consider

involvement of art of presentation in language and structure. Editors also can play a vital role to attract good authors and readers. Therefore, it is always important to understand interrelationship of authors, editors, readers and publishers. The authors and editors should work to maintain standard following argument or statement logical, clear, and precise as much as possible in order to bring it easy readability.

## 2. Writing a scientific article

Writing is a formal and indirect expression of ideas, information, and mode of thinking to reach audience, who are particularly interested on the topics. Another aspect of writing is to document author's ideas which might be used in a different time periods. For academic scholars writing and publishing a certain number of articles, papers and books is becoming necessary condition as efficiency for their job, promotion, and assignment for special task offered by government, university, research institutes etc. More important thing is academic institutions differentiate quality of paper by looking at where they are published; higher value is given to those which are published in an internationally known journals. This is understandable that because of the paper is outreach to international community of fellow scholar, papers are peer reviewed and many people work to improve quality of paper before publication. Academics write scientific papers not to impress people, but to communicate precise information, idea, concepts in a standard format. Another goal of writing is to persuade audience on the conclusions. I agree with Neil James (2008:3-4) as criteria for effective writing are: precision, clarity, readability, efficiency, usability and persuasiveness. Furthermore, there are different stages of the writing process from research, planning, drafting, structure review, expression review and proofing (James, 2008:7).

New information technology today is really helpful. Internet can be used as reference library, there are sites for example author aid (<http://www.authoraid.info/>) from INASP, software technologies and email which is also very good for communication in relation to revision or suggestions. The computer is itself great helpful to write and revise while writing. We cannot finish our writing at once, therefore, I agree that "good writing comes from knowing how to revise, how to tug on words and adjust them until they say what you want them to say" (Venolia, 2004:3). Writing and revising are two parts of a coin as Venolia (2004:7) said, 'you revise as you write, and write as you revise'.

Authors have difficulties to publish an article, due to consideration with the ideas, politics of ideas, as well as depth of ideas or weight of thought, grounded ideas. This is because journals have their own policy towards matter and perspectives. Despite politics of ideas there are two major aspects of scientific writing and publication: organization of article and the use of language. It is important, "a scientific paper is, or should be, highly stylized, with distinctive and clearly evident component parts...*in the structure of introduction, materials and methods, result and discussion* (Day, 1999:3 italics is mine)". One important aspect is to choose language for writing article. At the same time it is important to have command in the language. Other important thing is to communicate effectively, clearly, in words of certain meaning (Day, 1999:5).

### 2.1 Structure

Readers, peer reviewers and editors prefer a scientific structure of an article. Authors have their own way of communicating their ideas and facts, but it is part of scientific publication that every journal likes to have own or more or less similar structure of article. It is necessary for the author

to read, consult, and check the author's instruction before submitting article to any journal. Many structural problems can be addressed by author's conscious working before sending to the desk of editors. Instruction should focus on length of paper, language, section in which paper to be published, figure, table acknowledgement, citation and references, copy right issues etc.

Authors should work closely with editor and possibly manuscript requires revision due to inconsistencies, missing information, and ambiguities. Promote respond with complete information regarding to authors and article helps editorial job and timely publication of journal.

The structure of the article can be categorized as preliminaries, main text and end matter. The preliminaries includes, title of article, name of author (s), cover letter to the editors, address of contact person during the editorial process, information about table, figures, words, pages etc. The main text includes introduction, main body and conclusion of the article. The end matters are list of reference cited and annexes, if there are any. The editorial board of Dhaulagiri Journal of sociology and anthropology appreciates article with title, author(s), abstract, keywords, introduction, main text/body, conclusion, acknowledgement and references.

**Title:** title should be short enough, attractive and that smells content of article. Sometimes title become very long and readers find difficulties on what author is going to discuss. According to Day (1999:8), "the title should be the fewest possible words that adequately describe the content of the paper". Furthermore, title should be chosen with great care, specific and as a label (Ibid:8-11).

**Author(s):** Writing full name of author is always important, if there is more than one author everyone should be listed

accordingly from the greatest contribution to the least, not on the basis of alphabetical order of first name or surname, and position in the department or research institute. Most important consideration should be author's substantial contribution in article.

**Abstract:** Abstract should reflect the brief summary or informative of the article including objectives, methods, and result and discussion in maximum 250 words.

**Keywords:** It is important to have keywords maximum 5 words which do not represent in the title of article, but it must be key terms which are used in the article and helpful for online search.

**Introduction:** It is written to gain the reader's attention and provides clear aim of focus or thesis that is developed in the main part (body) of the article. The style can be with series of questions, presenting unusual facts, quoting highly debated or well known statement of the related field. It should be short and discussion should be excluded.

**Main text/body:** This is the main part of article. It should have sufficient depth and new results. Readers will read it after reading title and abstract. Therefore, it is important to formulate title and abstract with great care. Authors elaborate, contrast or assimilates ideas of previous study, describe and analyze to develop theses or statement, many illustrations for example figures, tables, photographs are included. It includes many subtitles and sub-sub-titles. The paragraphs should flow smoothly from one to the next, e.g. the first sentence in each new paragraph serves as an effective link to the preceding paragraph. In addition, minor supporting ideas are linked together within the paragraphs in a smooth manner. It should be long enough to formulate concrete statements and draw conclusions. It is important to

keep short, simple, sweet, chose right word in right place, leading thought, coherence, clarity, brevity, accuracy and completeness, unity of ideas.

**Conclusion:** The conclusion is the summary paragraphs. It should be tied together all of the important points of article in a way a summary and a final conclusion drawn for readers. Conclusion must be short and specific.

**End matters:** The end matters include reference cited and annexes. Reference documenting is followed by different formats and complete. In Nepal especially in sociology and anthropology we follow APA style of citing and documenting references. Annexes should be placed after references.

## **2.2. Language**

First important aspect of scientific publication requires selection of language. Language is not only means of expression of ideas and information; it is also linked to identity, visibility and target of audience or readability as well. Some journals demands specific language, which might be native, national or international such as English. It is also to focus and attract certain range and level of readers. The most important thing of consideration in language are the craft of writing, selection of right words, avoiding jargons and redundant.

## **3. Editing manuscript**

Editorial process starts after submission of article by author(s). Editors first read and assessed by themselves to decide further review by expert or reject without review. Peer reviewers' suggestions help editor further process for editing manuscript. Authors are informed about the status of their article. First, editor informs author the status of acceptance,

rejection or revised submission of article. It is important that the peer review process be as objective as possible, because it is crucial aspect of relation between author, editor and readers. Purpose of editing and peer review of article is to improve quality.

### **3.1 Editor**

Editors are called gatekeeper, midwives, and guardians of the scholarly work. Editor-in-Chief or Editor has main role to play in editorial office. Editor-in-Chief has more independent right to decide. Editors work in co-ordination. An editor plays two vital roles, first, to designate peer reviewer, and second to decide whether to accept or reject author's manuscript. A journal might have different positions according to the job allocation, for instance editor-in-chief, editor, managing editor, section or subject editor, advisory editor, editorial assistant etc. Record keeping is very important in a good editorial office, record can be submission of article, name of peer reviewers, decision, communication to authors are most important.

Record keeping becomes more important when many articles are submitted to the journal. Editors should define scope of journal clearly and follow it. Editors should work to increase the number of manuscript submission and check manuscript with title, abstract, key words, appropriate structure of paper to flow the ideas. It is always important that author submit manuscript very little work for the editors (Day, 1999). We must be aware of the fact that we have many users such as readers, authors, reviewers, copy editors, proofreaders, layout editors, section editors, editors, journal managers (INASP 2007). To maintain confidentiality is another important job for editors. In order to attract good authors and reviewers to organize workshops, seminars, discussion forums should be another major job of editors. Marketing of the journal, search

for funding for publication can be important job depending upon journal's status.

In online publication system every type of records are recorded automatically. If we are able to follow online submitting system it is easy to track all the details. Editors must work to develop peer review form to facilitate peer reviewers. Communication with authors and reviewers to acknowledge manuscript receipt to corresponding author, co-authors, perform midwife role between, author, reviewer, and copy editors.

Editors must build their own capacity, and try to publish journal regularly. It facilitates to maintain recognition, rewards with attraction of highly qualified and renowned scholars of the country/world on the issue of journal. One good method can be that journal must publish on the basis of current issues, which general people also can read and participate on discussion. Editors' endeavor should be to make journal scientific following peer review, which is universally practiced by scientific journals.

### **3.2 Peer Review**

Peer review is the critical assessment of manuscripts submitted to journals by experts, who are not part of the editorial staff' (Hames, 2007:1). Peer review is needed because editors are not subject specialist, they mostly play a role being in between author and peer reviews. Peer reviewers are the subject experts and suggest to editors on the basis of areas, scope and focus of the issue of journal. There are various types of peer review on the basis of anonymity.

Peer review policies is another important aspect, some terms used like single blind (reviewers name is hidden from author), double blind (both reviewers and author names hidden), open (both author and reviewer names are given)

(INASP, 2006:5). Peer reviewer should read article very carefully, making notes, and make detailed and constructive comments.

Peer review is a fundamental element of the learned journal. It helps to maintain high standard of quality control. The review process should be clear, objective, fair, and courteous (INASP, 2006:7). Peer review prevents the publication of bad work, maintains originality of the articles, ensures work is reported correctly and unambiguously, helps editors for judgment for publication, but peer review does not, and cannot, ensure perfection.

### **3.3 Copy Editing**

Copy editing is done to ensure that the text is clear, consistent, unambiguous, well organized, and easy to understand. Copy editing is not rewriting entire section, adding or deleting text, figure or table, and not checking references in the library to ensure that they are correct. Copy editor should read text particularly checking, reference cited in text against the reference list and their completeness, compare the tables and figures to text citation, ensuring they have title (which accurately represent the table/figure) that numbers add up, etc, ensure adherence to the journal style, ensure consistency (e.g. in units of measurements), check the copy is complete (e.g. has a title, full author details, no obviously missing sections, etc.). The purpose of copy editing is to improve the content-making article more readable and understandable, which is polished and more professional (INASP 2006:34).

Efficiency in editing comes not from a single all purpose reading, but from several readings, each with a different focus (Venolia, 2004:15). It is good, easier and clear to do at least two levels editing. The first level editing includes, focus

on audience, logical or not, interest for further reading article, clarity of words and sentences, keeping brevity and conciseness by avoiding too many words, redundancies, uses of word which gives you a desired meaning, forms of verbs, use of active voice, avoid lifeless verbs, try to use picturiose words, correct and necessary use of articles and contraction are the main tasks for first editing. The second level of editing is to correct language such as punctuation marks, grammar, mechanics etc. (Venolia, 2004:19-22). Copy editing is the craft of language and format of the journal publication.

#### **4. Publication**

Publication of article is important. Authors can decide where to submit their research work. Author's interests might be focused on reward, recognition and acceptability of their work. Currently, journals are published in print as well as online system. Online publication has wider visibility. Author might consider copy flow, timely publication and the impact of their publication. Online publication demands at least computer know how and process of article submission and flow review processes.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Writing is a science and art. It should be combined properly in article so it is likely to be published in a scientific journal. Scientific structure of writing is important to publish an article in a scientific or scholarly journal. Craft of language in article helps to build positive response toward acceptance by editors. Authors should be familiar with editorial processes such as peer review, copy editing, different role of editors. Publication does not only benefit to the authors, it also benefits editors, readers, and publisher. Publication is the co-operative work and demands close work of author, editors

and publisher. In general they have no conflict of interest which contradicts their work. Editors help authors in different aspects, where possible errors and mistakes, inconsistency can be avoided. Open access online publication should be the target of many authors. It is also good for publisher because it is cheaper and has wider visibility.

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