



ENCOUNTERS WITH RESEARCH-UNDERSTANDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

DR. GUNASEKHARAN DHARMARAJA¹

Associate Professor of English
Tamil Nadu National Law School
Tirichirappalli (TN) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Quality research can only be achieved with continuous interrogation, detailed study, dedication to the field, interest in the topic and hard work. All academics need not necessarily be the researchers and vice versa. Unfortunately academics career advancement and earning potential are scaled according to the number of SAPSE accredited research article that they have published. The number of research articles that an academic publishes, will determine their position within an academic institution. This will also determine your financial value to the institution and the remuneration that you will be awarded. Research that must come out of one's own interest becomes a forced one and pre matured one due to the relationship between the research papers they published and their remuneration or their position in an academic institution. When publication is the yard stick for one's scholarship, research becomes a page filling exercise and a researcher needs to adopt a HR technique with existing publishers to ensure papers are published regularly in reputable journals. More over in post-colonial countries where the language of English is considered as knowledge, writing something in English becomes a research. This paper will concentrate on personal encounters with research undertakings and researchers that are faced with the looming threat of "publish or perish" in the hard-pressed academic environment.

Keywords: Research, Quality, Academicians, English & Post-Colonial countries

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

"A widely respected professor cum scientist hailed for his profound work with aquatic and amphibious life forms and known for his publications in various topmost journals was doing a novel experiment with frogs. The experiment went as follows.

He took a frog with all four legs, clapped his hands and said, "Frog, JUMP!" The frog jumped four feet, so in his notebook he wrote, Frogs with four legs jump four feet. Then he cut off

¹Former Post Doctoral Fellow, University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa

one of the legs leaving it with three, clapped his hands and said, "Frog, JUMP!" The frog jumped three feet, so in his notebook he wrote, Frogs with three legs jump three feet. Then he cut off one more leg leaving it with two, clapped his hands and said, "Frog, JUMP!" The frog jumped two feet, so in his notebook he wrote, Frogs with two legs jump two feet. Then he cut off one more leg leaving it with one, clapped his hands and said, "Frog, JUMP!" The frog jumped one foot, so in his notebook he wrote, Frogs with one leg jump one foot. He finally cut off the frog's last leg, leaving it with none. He clapped his hands and said, "Frog, JUMP!" Frog didn't budge. He clapped again. "Frog, JUMP!" Still nothing. So in his notebook he wrote, Frogs with no legs go deaf". (http://www.itchyflight.com/deaf_frog_syndrome.html)

The above given story may look like a tale, but in lighter senses, it may explain the real status of research system of the academics in the present day world. Especially research undertaken in post-colonial countries is altogether a different subject that has to be dealt with separately. In current academic environments, research functions alongside professional academic promotion, income, and rating of the researcher. Engaging in research invariably connects one's own mark of intellectuality. In order advance in the professional academic environment, he or she is forced to engage in research whether he or she is interested or not. Individuals in the teaching sector are expected to systematically pursue an unsystematic established structure that all teachers must be researchers. The dual dimensions are tied together polaristically by the present day higher education system, present in academic institutions. Teachers need not necessarily to be active researchers as researchers need not necessarily be teachers. Research emanates from an individual's interest in conducting empirical studies on new ideas. This type of quality research cannot be acquired by force whether internal or external. The global education system as related to higher education institutions demands that every academic has to be a researcher. It denotes the poverty-philosophy of education and academic superstition.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Common to structuralist social science research strategy was adopted. The theoretical, empirical and qualitative investigations done by me are co related through the extended informal interviews conducted among various people from the various social strata. The projects done by few student scholars and research scholars were taken into consideration. The personal interviews conducted with few scholars were also taken into consideration. This research is trying to point out the exceptional cases that may happen in the research papers and projects. Many supervisors of research projects were interviewed about their scholars' projects and the research problems they have been facing. The research scholars too were interviewed about the research problems and practical difficulties they have been facing.

PRESENT DAY EDUCATION SYSTEM:

Academics are regarded as well-educated and it is assumed they have a desire to constantly seek new knowledge. This assumption about academics in the higher education sector is a breeding ground for negative outcomes. Mahatma Gandhi, a world leader who played important roles in both India and South Africa addressed the education as a knowledge of letters.

What is the meaning of education? It simply means a knowledge of letters. It is merely an instrument, and an instrument may be well used or abused. The same instrument that may be used to cure a patient may be used to take his life, and so may a knowledge of letters. We daily observe that many men abuse it and very few make good use of it; and if this is a correct statement, we have proved that more harm has been done by it than good. The ordinary meaning of education is a knowledge of letters. To teach boys reading, writing and arithmetic is called primary education. A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality, but he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need such an education. Carried away by the flood of western thought we came to conclusion, without weighing pros and cons, that we should give this kind of education to the people. (82-83)

The present day education system is designed in a way, which it can set up the mentality of those who completed this mode of education into upper middle class livelihoods. This education system will train one to move to urban areas and live upper middle class or rich class life styles. This western education system is not self satisfied nor is it home grown. It educates and encourages students to expose themselves to western modes of life and practices. Before delineating the area of research and problems therein that are encountered, one must understand the background set in their minds. The notions of western impacted minds cannot analyze the problems of researchers in post-colonial countries scientifically. Post-colonial countries need to utilize resources and local ways of thinking that are age old in these countries.

RESEARCH IN ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:

Researchers in the sciences have a key unanswered question that weighs on their minds. What research are scholars from the liberal arts and social sciences engaging in and why are they engaging in research? Research is defined as the systematic investigation and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/research>). Unfortunately most of the



research that emanates from the liberal arts and social sciences are not studies that adhere to the above definition of research. The fundamental aim of a research undertaking is to generate new knowledge and invent/or discover new things. The unanswered questions of researchers from the science stream holds some weight as there is no possibility of physical invention in the liberal arts and social sciences; which would show evidence of invention, like scientists. However the social scientists develop new knowledge and develop new theories of understanding at all levels in societies both locally and globally. Social scientists have different challenges guided by the number of publications that they produce as academics. Clearly there is no possibility of a physical invention as is evident with inventions, researchers from the liberal arts and social sciences do not do engage in research appropriately. However, perspectives based on historical materialism will lead researchers to scientific thinking with the attributes of dialectics on human development. As Mao Tse-tung, social scientist of twentieth century outlined in his speech titled “On Education – Conversation with the Nepalese Delegation of Educationists” refers the researchers of the social sciences and liberal arts do not study reality. He opines:

Generally speaking, the intellectuals specializing in engineering are better, because they are in touch with reality. Scientists, pure scientists, are worse, but they are still better than those who specialize in art subjects. [Liberal] art subjects are completely detached from reality. Students of history, philosophy, and economics have no concern with studying reality; they are the most ignorant of things of this world.

Against this background one can understand the present situation of research undertakings in the liberal arts and social sciences. An academics position is scaled and graded by the number of research publications he or she has to their individual credit. So the academic is forced to publish or perish in a competitive academic environment. In the countries such as India and South Africa publications in accredited and peer refereed journals with ISBN and ISSN numbers valued when engaged in a job interview; applying for promotion, or applying to be rated as a researcher among peers. In the period prior to technological advancement, the publication of journals, bulletins, academic texts and books were controlled by the wealthy. Printing costs were high and adversely affected those that did not have access to the resources.

Publication was not the common business; it was a luxury of rich which highlighted their height of western wealthy snobbery and intellectuality. Technological advances and the world wide breaks down these previously protected barriers for publication of ideas and thoughts. Technology makes publishing possible for anyone that has access to a computer. The development and establishment of an e-journal is cheap and can be very easily established. Publishers have grown and e-journals are on the increase. Of course it becomes a good business. In India, anyone with a few dollars to spare can make an application for the ISBN and ISSN number and their journals are published as INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED



and PEER REFEREED JOURNALS WITH ISSN numbers. Most journals globally have begun to see financial rewards from publications. This is especially true of journals that request page fees of hundreds of United States dollars in the name of publication charges.

When the publication of journals was the domain of the rich the poor could not publish their articles or even create their own journals. Wealthy publishing companies have measures in place to ensure that their publications are based on existing networks, irrespective of the quality of the research. If a publisher wants to promote a specific author for economic or political reasons, an unspoken agreement between author and publisher is developed. This agreement advances the interest of both the publisher and the author. There after the academic becomes a well-known established academic author who has numerous articles to his or her credit. The profile of the academic is raised and other journals use the academic to review articles, or invite them to publish in their journals. Presently, wherein publishing is far easier than before, an author must write an article and send this along with the required publication charges to an INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED and PEER REFEREED JOURNAL. The quality herein is compromised at an academic level; the objective is to increase profit. Neither the state, higher education institutions nor the individual academics fully understand that writing research papers should not be related to academic achievement or advancement. In South Africa, the number of publications to an academic credit is the yard stick for his or her official promotion and position within the University structure. This forces academics to submit several publications at any cost, in any journal that will accept their papers. This is more especially so in the free internet age wherein authors only require minimal financial input for publication charges which ultimately include a paper full of English sentences, strung together about a topic. Now days, most of the academicians are themselves publishers and they publish their works and they can be the top most researchers with more number of articles published. Perhaps the prevailing system is to blame. More relevant here are the academic values and practices are at fault blotted with studied hypocrisy and elitist sordidness.

POST COLONIAL LINGUISTIC HANGOVERS:

As for as the research articles in post-colonial countries are the composure of two abilities, they constitute research ability and linguistic ability. A researcher though he or she has tremendous research ability is certainly in need of English language skills required to write a research paper for a journal. Post-colonial countries consider research papers written in English as research papers, the papers written in the mother tongue of the researchers are not highly rated. English language papers appear to be the highest benchmark against which research is presented. The research papers that are not written in English considered as low quality research papers-speaking openly-not a research paper at all. This is nothing but the post-colonial linguistic hang over as Gandhi correctly points it. When answering a question on English, he says:



To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he has any such intention, but that has been the result. Is it not a sad commentary that we should have to speak of Home Rule in a foreign tongue? And it is worthy of note that the systems which the Europeans have discarded are the systems in vogue among us. Their learned men continually make changes. We ignorantly adhere to their cast-off systems. They are trying each division to improve its own status. Wales is a small portion of England. Great efforts are being made to revive a knowledge of Welsh among Welshmen. The English Chancellor, Mr. Llyod George is taking a leading part in the movement to make Welsh children speak Welsh. And what is our condition? We write to each other in faulty English, and from this even our M.A.s are not free; our best thoughts are expressed in English; the proceedings of our Congress are conducted in English; our best newspapers are printed in English. If this state of things continues for a long time, posterity will—it is my firm opinion—condemn and curse us. It is worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc., have increased. (84-85)

This post-colonial practice yields negative results for the researcher in the liberal arts and social sciences. The research of outstanding academics and their papers are sidelined for the single and simple fault that they do not master the art of writing in English. A famous professor from Tamil Nadu who wrote monumental works on Anthropology is not known outside of his community, because of his lack of linguistic skills in English. In 2013, an international conference on English language and Research was organized by the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association, the halls wherein English native speakers presented papers were full with large audiences. The halls, wherein Nepalese, Bhutanese and Indians presented papers in their mother tongue saw very few people in the audience. A session wherein a young Bangladeshi professor presented a paper, was attended by only three people this included his student, the organizer of the event and one of the researchers of this paper. His paper was one of the best papers presented at the conference. This existing post-colonial linguistic hang over compromised the research paper, while whatever one writes in English becomes the research paper. So what one must do to endeavor to do to become a rated researcher, it is clearly, to master his or her English writing skills and linguistic style in English. The editors in place, who are ideally expected to correct grammatical errors, choose not to accept the papers with grammatical errors; without even considering the quality of the research in the paper. Language stands as the main barrier between high quality research papers and publication of them in internationally recognized and credited journals. Publishers in these post-colonial countries do not have the fundamental quality of understanding the nuances of research papers from non-English speakers and thinkers. Last year when one of the best institutions of India where I worked as assistant professor brought out a research journal, all papers were written with impeccable English, but not even single paper carried



the basic quality of research paper. For the publishers, English Language is synonymous with knowledge for excellence.

THE PROBLEMS OF RESEARCHES:

Researchers in the social sciences and liberal arts do not fully understand the difference among the type of research, book reviews and report writing. The challenge for these researchers is the inability to present a physical invention or product. Researchers have failed to be innovative, they present book reviews or report writing in the name of research papers. In the social sciences fieldwork is critical, without which their research do not have any specific aim or objective in terms of research findings. However we see that they become a collection of bits and pieces of information from other articles about the subject they have been writing on. Their so called self assumed objective would be getting their research papers published or the degree conferred and not higher standards of excellences of researching.

Most of the researchers in social sciences and arts stream do not understand the difference among the researches, book reviews and report writing. As already noted, the negative advantage of the researchers on this stream is no need of presenting any new physical thing to show off. So most of the researchers have not found new themes or researched something new, but just they present book reviews or report writing in the name of researches. Especially in the social sciences where the case studies are a must, their research works do not have any aim or objective in terms of research findings, but they would be a collection of bits and pieces of information about the subject they have been dealing with. Their so called self-assumed objective would be getting their research papers published or the degree conferred and not higher standards of excellences of researching.

RESEARCH EXPERINECES:

Universities follow strict Ethical clearance guidelines. They require forms that need to be filled up as the final process of accepting of one's application as a research scholar at their host university. Social sciences and Liberal art faculties rely on this ongoing research process. The experience on the field is an exciting one and researchers have new opportunities to learn experience and witness different areas of investigation. The ethical clearance process requires researchers to provide the interview questions to be posed to respondents during the interviews. The mere understanding of human beings as an object would place the researcher in a position to prepare the very same questions to all invariably; this as we know is not always the case. Most of the questionnaires do not necessarily reflect the true nature of what the interviewer has in his or her mind. The questionnaires that have been approved simply become a process with little or no significance for the research being conducted. The repetition of questions to all respondents, without a social scientific understanding of the mood and conditions of the respondents is premature and therefore bias



to a degree. The mentality of the researcher is hard set in such a way that his/her research is not ultimately engaged in for the advancement of a particular area in the society, but it is identified for a quick completion of a funded project or to confer him or her with a degree that is required for advancement at some level.

THE RESEARCHER AND THE TRUST

More over the universities in few countries like India and South Africa do not allow people to use first person narratives in their research projects. For example if a researcher wants to cite the interviews that he or she conducted with a respondent, the main question in front of the review panel is the authenticity of the interviews that he or she claims to have conducted. Truly speaking most of the interviews conducted are not truly conducted but they are cooked up. It is too simple for a researcher to write on a fake interview as if it is done. The review panel does not have time to go through all the interview documents or the audio recordings to ensure that the interviews are really conducted genuinely. In my opinion, questionnaires, though they are really distributed and collected from the respondents do not necessarily reflect the real situations in full. And at the same time the interviews are really conducted; do not fulfill the basic requirements of research perspectives as no one can fix up basic standard requirements and yard sticks for these interviews. Most of the research papers of the scholars from many countries I have edited, though they claim they are written based on the interviews conducted are really written based on the cooked up interviews. These show well that the higher education board should develop and cultivate the true research nature among the researchers. The researchers who wrote their papers are the best judges of what they have written and of the truth whether the interviews are truly conducted. Most of the case studies are hanging out of the sky and they are neither preceded by background nor followed by inferences. Consequently the inferences are not supported by secondary sources. There is no core logic in the research articles and most of the research papers are just a page filling exercise done by the researcher without any particular research intention or objective.

Once a research paper came to my friend for making it suitable for publication as it was rejected by the editor who is a famous and strict professor working in one of the Universities in South Africa. The paper was not a research paper as it did not give any findings, but a note-worthy comparative study between the South African Indian women and women from India. The professor continuously rejected the paper and at last, though it is not by my friend, but by one of the peers of my friends. He too participated in the hearing session of how to make this paper publishable, conducted by the professor. He was shocked to listen to professor's words as he has some pre conceived notions that Indian women are better than South African Indian women. The paper said just the opposite. He could not accept the fact that the conditions of women belonging to his ancestral home country are worse than those in South Africa. Though my friend raised his concerns in his understanding, he was requested by his friend to revise the paper to make it publishable. My friend's intention is very clear as



she believes that the journal for which the professor is one of the editors holds lots of credentials in South Africa and absolutely the publication of her paper in that journal will give some weight in to her professionalism. But unfortunately there were no evidences to prove that Indian women are better than South African Indian women, but the professor was keen on that matter. So my friend cooked up evidence as one top most journal from New York in its issue of the month of June, 2012, page number 67 says that socio economic conditions of Indian women are better than South African Indian women. The paper was accepted for publication. Most of the papers are written like the way I have said as example. The pre conceived notions of the professor; the burning desire for publication of many professors (learning my friend's leniency) add one more negative example in the research failures. Of course the higher education board that sets up the norms for research and professorship will take a lion's share of the blame.

Few students in my college are doing their research projects on various contemporary issues. Few of the themes they have selected are like on campus violence, the condition of black workers in rural areas, the gender based violence on women in Durban City and few others. But the outcomes are nothing but the data collections. Their understanding of researches ends in working the data that they have collected from their field work. For example, number of women students present in Howard College is 500 and number of girl students affected by gender violence is 455. But their research writing would be as follows. There are five hundred girl students in Howard College, out of which, four hundred and fifty five students have been affected by the gender based violence. They do not understand the real meaning of research. The real intention of research is to collect the data from the field and to apply their understanding on the data they have collected and come up with new solutions (whether solutions will really solve the problems of the society is altogether a different question). As the great teacher Mao says the society is the laboratory for the arts and social sciences. He says:

There is a factory attached to the science and engineering faculties at Tsingua University, because students must learn from [both] books and work. But [we] cannot set up factories for arts faculties such as a literature factory, a history factory, an economics factory, or a novel factory; these faculties, should regard the whole of society as their factory. Their teachers and students should make contact with the peasants and urban workers as well as with agriculture and industries. How else can their graduates be of any use? Take students of law, for example. If they do not understand crimes in a society, they cannot be good students of law. It is out of the question to set up a law factory; so society is their factory. Comparatively speaking, our arts faculties are the most backward owing to a lack of contact with reality. Students and teachers do only class work. Philosophy is book philosophy. What is the use of philosophy if it is not learnt from society, from the masses, and from nature? It can be composed only of vague ideas. Logic is the same. [One] does not understand



much of it if one merely reads through the textbook once. But one understands it gradually through application. I did not understand much when I read logic. The understanding came to me when I used it.

When the software is introduced to find out the plagiarism, the research scholars started following the alternative plans. Most of the research writings are just the paraphrase of what was already told. They just present the old ideas with different usage of words. One more accepted plagiarism among the scholars is works cited. A fifteen page article had four paged cited works and more than twenty five quotations. As a proverb goes, people are always ready to find out loop holes in the laws. I am afraid to say that most of the professors, who have post-doctoral guiding scholars and doctoral scholars, do have the advantage of claiming their names as one of the authors in the papers by their research wards. Though there is no harm in claiming so, it leads to the competition among the professors to catch post-doctoral fellows and doctoral wards. The professors do not understand the overwhelming importance of publishing their own papers apart from being one of the authors in the papers of their wards.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Many of the research papers published will never be the yardstick of one's own research, scholarship as research publication needs some linguistic talent and a HR technique to maintain a good relationship with few publishers. Most of the contemporary professors started their own e-journals. They are the publishers cum authors. There is a basic need for revolutionizing the education system and also the researches globally, leave alone the arts and social sciences. As the great teacher Lenin in his "Speech to Adult Education Directors" correctly points out, "There was no connection in capitalist society between the actual tasks of the organization of social labour and teaching. There was dead, scholastic, routine teaching befouled by the influence of the clergy which everywhere, even in the most democratic republics, functioned in such a way that everything fresh and healthy was compelled to withdraw". (2) More than anything else, the basic connection between the research papers publication and the job security by all means should be removed so as to ensure the outcome of free and fair researches. The research is the shining path for the future and no compromise should be tolerated in this regard. Honesty of doing research realistically and freedom of publishing it are to be the marks of distinction for the research scholars, the professors as guides are to be free from academic high priestliness and explorative nature.



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