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## **A Brief about the IISRR-MANUU International Virtual Workshop on “Art of Writing Research Article : Tools & Techniques”**

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The University Grants Commission (UGC) had issued a Circular to all Universities in India urging the institutions to immediately introduce two credit courses of 30 hrs. duration for Ph.D. pre-registration Course Work applicable across disciplines and subjects. This was issued as early as December, 2019 before the onset of Covid Pandemic. The said course is entitled “Research and Publication Ethics”, the detailed syllabus of which consists of six Units. These are Philosophy and Ethics, Scientific Conduct, Publication Ethics, Open Access Publishing, Publication Misconduct and Databases & Research Metrics. The detailed syllabi in each Unit have also been prescribed. A careful scrutiny of the International Workshop conducted by IISRR during March 17-24, 2021 on “Art of Writing Research Articles : Tools & Techniques” will reveal that each of the issues laid out in the Units has been covered in the Workshop by eminent resource persons and experts. This is an extra-ordinary vision by the leadership of IISRR.

During my service of more than two decades as the Registrar of a leading University, I had come across many instances where publication of very innovative and high-quality research work, even in emerging disciplines, were refused by reputed Research Journals because the presentation of the methodology, data and results were abysmally poor and subverted standard norms. There were harsh comments made by the referees that occasionally demoralized the researchers. However, these were quite avoidable only if there was exposure to the necessary skill sets of composing the results of research that contour years of hard work accomplished in laboratories or fields by the concerned research teams. Similar setbacks were noted in case of Thesis and Dissertations too.

There is consistent demand on academicians to produce good quality research papers. This demand is institutionalized in the requirements laid down by the regulatory bodies and the strategic attempts by educational institutions to manage research. Keeping this demand in mind, the objective of the Workshop was to unpack what constitutes a great research paper and

outline the pleasures and pitfalls of writing it. With the help of characteristic examples and hands-on activities, the Workshop served as a practical guide to the art of writing Research Papers.

The Workshop adequately highlighted that writing a Research Paper or Article is a form of logical communication and thinking. Strong writing skills help to develop good speaking and teaching skills too while weak writing skills are often symptomatic of inadequate experience in thinking scientifically, logically and/or rationally and, of course, the lack of knowledge. Writing is a form of creative expression, and therefore writing, even scientific writing, is a form of art. In art, one's creative works are his/her masterpieces. The necessary ingredients for making a good writer are the same for making a good artist. The artist has command over his painting. Similarly, the writer should have complete command over his/her manuscript, even if the contents of the manuscript result from collaborations with other authors. Once this fundamental aspect is appreciated and built up, then it becomes clear that an author would neither copy someone else's work (plagiarism) nor would let someone else, such as the Supervisor or Advisor, write the paper for the researcher and still put his / her name as the first author.

The Workshop ventured into every corner and component. For example, there were presentations to –

- i) recognize the questions or problems under study;
- ii) answer the questions by systematic experiments, library or field work and observations;
- iii) interpret the experimental results and
- iv) communicate the results and implications to the outside world for the benefit of society.

A researcher is therefore very much like a modern-day Sherlock Holmes. We are detectives. We have a responsibility to tell the story of how we solved our mysteries. Good detective stories follow this basic template-

- 1) Set the scene and identify the mystery or problem to be solved.
- 2) Describe the methods used to gather data (evidence).
- 3) Present the data (evidence) in an unbiased way (negative, positive and neutral data must all be presented).
- 4) Analyze the data.
- 5) Interpret and discuss the data.
- 6) And finally Conclude.

However, there is only one template for writing a research paper. Deviating from this template can be perilous. Although the general template parallels that of the above detective story, a cardinal rule is that all elements of the paper must flow continuously and uni-directionally. In this regard, scientific papers differ fundamentally from fiction novels, essays or movie scripts, which

are often littered with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and continuous suspense. Scientific writing should be direct and concise with minimal suspense, except for a little anticipatory suspense in the introduction. Above all, scientific writing needs to be clear, leaving no room for interpretation of the author's thoughts (the author's interpretations may eventually turn out to be wrong, but there should be no question about the author's ideas or views).

The IISRR has by organizing this unique Workshop of its kind, has contributed enormously to the focal theme. I would even go as far as suggesting that the syllabus developed for the Workshop could be followed by the Universities in the mandatory Ph.D. pre-registration course work of six months. The IISRR will forever be willing to extend all assistance in this respect.