



## **PEER REVIEW PROCESS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EXPERTS**

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### **Introduction**

Nigerian Journal of Business Education (NJBE) is a formidable journal outlet that feeds the academic community with quality articles that shape the landscape of business education discipline. Through the course of the past three decades, the journal has grown in leaps and bounds witnessing ever increasing number of subscribers. This welcome development has necessitated a determined approach by the association to increase the peer review skills of the editorial board members and at the same time enable subscribers to watch out for the requirements for successfully publishing in our esteemed journal. This desire paved the way for a successful workshop on the process that should be followed in the review of articles for our journal. When next you need to send an article for publication in our journal, ensure that you go through this review process in order to increase the chances of your article getting published.

The work of the reviewer is very important to publishing outlets because it ensures the quality and integrity of academic journals. Apart from ensuring high quality, review increases the confidence of subscribers, and it is an indication that experts in the field agree that articles published in such journals meet acceptable standards. The contributors of such journals take for granted the issue of impartiality in the selection process and therefore, enjoy high level of confidence and pride of being part of the academic community from whom such publication emanates. The peer review process when mastered, helps improve the insight of reviewers to spot common flaws in academic articles and at the same time sharpen the publication capability of the reviewer. The main task of this workshop is to engage the participants on the steps that lead to writing a quality review.

### **What is Peer Review?**

Peer review is the assessment of a research paper independently by experts in the field concerned. The assessor's job is to determine the quality of the article and its suitability for publication. In this regard, the review acts as a form of quality control in the Journal outfit concerned. The process of peer review entails a collaborative action as the peer reviewers engage the authors who receive constructive support on how to advance their work to the point required for acceptability or at least a veritable source of feedback that enables the author to improve the paper for presentation to the same or other outfits on future occasions.

### **The Need for Peer Review**

The need to uphold high standards of scholarly writing and the maintenance of quality of Nigerian Journal of Business Education (NJBE) is the major reason for the importance of peer review. The other reason is that sponsors are very serious regarding the quality of journals they commit their money to sponsor. Hence, they set stringent guidelines that journals must meet in order to be sponsored. Obviously, these guidelines such as quality, originality, relevance, etc., are the reasons peer review is taken very seriously by publishing outlets, especially the Nigeria Journal of Business Education. Furthermore, peer review is important because the feedback received by authors enable them to see clearly where they are making errors or the gaps which their work has neglected. Finally, every journal relies on the hard work of the reviewers who test and refine articles so that a measured decision can be reached by the editors.

### **Steps to Effective Peer Review**

There are majorly two types of peer review: Single-anonymous peer review and double-anonymous peer review. Single-anonymous peer review also called single-blind review is more pronounced in science and medical reviews where the reviewers know that the author does not know the reviewers. In the case of double-anonymous peer review, also called double-blind review, the reviewers do not know the authors of the articles and the authors do not know the reviews either. This system of review is common with social science and humanities journals and that is the system we adopt for the Nigerian Journal of Business Education.

Peer Review is in the heart of every successful journal outfit. Anonymity in peer review enables the reviewer to do his job without fear of being criticized. The author benefits from the work of the reviewer as his article is refined leading to acceptability at times. Where anonymity is abused, it may lead to bias



where papers are rejected based on gender, tribe or any other reason or even accepted based on whom you know.

### **Problem of Anonymity**

The first step to be taken by any editorial board is to ensure anonymity of editors. This factor must never be underplayed. The reviewers should not know the authors of the articles being reviewed. This means that the editors should take steps to blot out the names and other particulars of the authors before sending the articles to the reviewers. Similarly, the reviewers should not be known by the authors to avoid acrimonious relationships. When articles of superior professionals are reviewed by junior ones, such reviewers are also afraid assessing their superiors because they may fear retribution. There are so many disadvantages of double-blind review. Sometimes, double-blind peer review may not really be blind after all. When articles are too many, blotting out particulars of authors is a challenge. Similarly, when articles are few and particulars of authors can be blocked, it is easy to have an educated guess who the reviewers and authors are. There is no doubt that double-blind per review system has advantages. Some of which are improvement of articles, quality of journals and pride enjoyed by both the author and the reviewer for taking part in this all-important academic activity. We now turn our attention to the actual job the reviewer should do.

### **Reading the Article**

It is very important that the reviewer reads the manuscript in its entirety in order to develop an impression of the article. If the reviewer bore the topic in mind he will have an impression of the topic regarding its focus, purpose and relevance. The reviewer should aim to get an overview of the article, its aim and objectives and decision in principle whether the article is publishable.

### **Re-Read the Article and Take Notes**

This time around, the reviewer goes over the article in more detail. If a good reading must be achieved, the reviewer should pay attention to the title and the main purpose of it. Read critically and do not assume that the writer is correct so that you can discover errors along the line. Make your notes as you read the articles multiple times. The best approach is to read a paragraph or two or a page and pause to thinking about what you have read. Taking notes involves summarizing important ideas, using symbols and abbreviations.

To develop useful comments and critiques of an article, the reviewers should ask himself the following questions:

1. Is the article appropriate for NJBE
2. Does the content have archival value?
3. Is this research important to business education?
4. Is the article clear, unambiguous and balanced?
5. Is the author or the article a source of new information?
6. Is the article focused on its subject?
7. Are the presentation of ideas and methods worthwhile, new or creative?
8. Did the author evaluate the strength and initiative of the work?
9. Is the impact of the research clearly stated?
10. Is the paper free from bias?
11. Is the work of others adequately cited?
12. Are the tables, titles and figures clear, correct and relevant?
13. Does the author demonstrate knowledge of basic composition skills such as word choice, sentence structure, paragraph rules, grammar, punctuation and spelling?

Bear in mind that many of these questions will form the basis for writing a very good review.

### **Write a Review**

Writing a review is mandatory because it is the only way to justify that a clear and constructive review was done. It should be noted that review can be done manually by outlining the reviewer's observations on a paper that is attached to the article. Sometimes, assessment forms are given by the editorial board to reviewers whose report is expected to follow the template given. If the reviewer decided to use the 'Reviewer's' task tool on the computer for review on soft copies of the article, then step-by-step observations are written on the article itself in deferent colors or on the right-hand margins. Whichever style used to review an article; a review report must be written. The best way to structure the review is to:

- a. Summarize the research and your opinion of it.



- b. Include feedback on the strength and weaknesses of the article. Detailed explanation of the strengths and weaknesses will consume most of the reviews and the reviewer details what the author needs to do to improve the paper. The reviewer should point out major and minor flaws of the paper and offer solution.
  - c. The reviewer ends the review with any other additional remark and suggestions.
- Under the section "re-read, the Articles and take notes," the items raised are expected to attract positive answers because they are the cutting-edge requirements for high-quality research. Therefore, positive or negative restatements by the reviewer are what is needed. For example:
- i. Research not appropriate/Research is appropriate.
  - ii. Content has no archived value/Content has archival value.
  - iii. Research not important to business education/Research is important to business education.
  - iv. Manuscript not clear/Manuscripts very clear.
  - v. Author not source of new information/Author is source of new information.
  - vi. Paper not focused/Paper is focused.
  - vii. presentation of ideas and methods are not worthwhile, new or creative/ Presentation of ideas and methods are worthwhile, new or creative.
  - viii. The author did not evaluate the strength and initiative of the work/The author evaluated the strength and initiative of the work.
  - ix. The impact of the research was not clearly stated/The impact of the research was clearly stated.
  - x. Paper not free from bias/Paper free from bias.
  - xi. Work of others not adequately cited/ Work of others adequately cited.
  - xii. Tables, titles and figures not clear, correct and relevant/Tables, titles and figures are clear, correct and relevant.
  - xiii. The author did not demonstrate knowledge of basic composition skills such as word choice, sentence structure, paragraph rules, grammar, punctuation and spelling/The author demonstrated knowledge of basic composition skills such as word choice, sentence structure, paragraph rules, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Based on the comments above, a decision is reached regarding the suitability of an article for publication in NJBE. It is instructive to note that where the comments are positive, the paper is accepted for publication, but those flaws need to be fully documented by the reviewer.

### **Recommendation**

The last step of the review is to make a recommendation of either to accept, reject, revise and return for further review. In almost all cases, papers are never excellent upon first review. The reviewer must be categorical in his decision.

### **Adopting Uniform Standard Structure for NJBE**

Every reputable journal must have established in-house rules guiding its operation. Until now, NJBE has existed based on rule of the thumb, but it is time to set up a standard to be followed by editorial board members, authors, and reviewers. Adoption of a standard format will further improve the quality of the Journal and help increase production of the volumes and series of NJBE because when authors adopt the in-house rules, the reviewers' job will be made easier, and number of articles published will increase.

There are so many types of articles such as book reviews, case report, clinical study, conference materials, datasets, data notes, letters or short reports, review articles, opinion/position paper and empirical reports. Experience has shown that position or opinion paper and empirical study were the two major types of articles being reviewed by NJBE Editorial Board. The structure of both is discussed here.

### **Opinion/Position Papers**

Opinion papers is a long essay, a formal piece of writing requiring an opinion on a topic. When the aim is to write a paper for publication in a journal, it should not just be an academic paper where the author expresses an opinion, make arguments and conclusions but need to research into the topic to reveal its relevance to the advancement of knowledge in the discipline espoused. Therefore, its part shall entail introduction, body of the work in short subheadings academically prepared in paragraphs that are well-linked and finally conclusion. Though it has become common tradition to make recommendations but in the real sense conclusion normally suffices but where necessary suggestions rather than recommendations may be used.



### Empirical Papers

Empirical article is a report of a primary study that uses data derived from observation or experiment and this is very popular with professional business educators. The sections of an empirical paper include title, abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion, conclusion, recommendation and references. We shall try to explain what each section entails as guide to both authors and reviewers.

### NJBE Empirical Paper Structure

<b>Section</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
<b>Title</b>	<i>Should be descriptive, concise, appropriate, unique and interesting. Not too short and not too long. Not more than 18 words. Always in capital letters, 14 Font, Arial and without punctuation. Make such there is no 'period' at the end.</i>
<b>Abstract</b>	<i>Should convey title, design, population, sample, instruments, validity, reliability, research questions, hypotheses, type of analyses, findings, conclusion and recommendations. It should be written in past tenses and not more than 300 words.</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	<i>Interesting to catch the reader's interest. Should cover background of the topic, using the variables as tools and should show details of the problems, research questions and hypotheses. Note that things like 'theory', 'significance', and 'need for the study' should be incorporated not written in subheadings. The research problem must be made clear otherwise additional sub-headings "statement of the problem" should follow where the problem will be clearly enunciated.</i>
<b>Method</b>	<i>The method section should cover the design of the study, population, sample, Instruments, validity, reliability, how research questions were answered and decision rule.</i>
<b>Results</b>	<i>Restate research questions followed by tables and brief reports of result. Use short table titles paraphrased from the research questions or hypotheses and not the entire research questions and hypotheses as table titles.</i>
<b>Discussion of Findings</b>	<i>Major findings are discussed with supporting evidence from literature which must be current. Every finding must have implications to real life situation which should amplify the voice of the researcher. This is where the researcher brings out the implied inference from the findings so that he can also be cited by other researchers.</i>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<i>Conclusion statements are given which should be taught out from implications of the findings.</i>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<i>Recommendations on each research questions should be given in itemized manner. It is important to note that recommendations should address every research question answered not general recommendations that are good to know which were not part of the study.</i>
<b>References</b>	<i>All cited authors must be referenced using the current APA style.</i>
<b>Appendices</b>	<i>Where necessary, appendices should be given.</i>

### Conclusion

Editorial board members of the Journal have now been presented with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the processes involved in reviewing articles, particularly the Nigerian Journal of Business Education, and if they can adhere to the guidelines as discussed here, they will be able to seamlessly perform their tasks and thereby improving uniformity and quality of the journal. For members of the association and other contributors who are eager to publish their article in NJBE, or those whose articles have been rejected in the past, which could be for reasons carefully outlined here, this report will serve as guide against rejection of their article in the future by complying with the explicit in-house rules of the journal.