

Book Review

Doing Academic Research

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Inyang, E. (2017). Doing Academic Research UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 133 pages, hardcover, C\$144.96

In his book *Doing Academic Research*, Ekpe Inyang guides novice and more experienced undergraduate students who may need help with assignments like academic essays or more elaborated works like thesis. The target audience for the book includes students and instructors who wish to introduce the basic concepts of research methodology to their students. In the book, the reader can find broad and simple concepts used in academic research. After each chapter, the author poses questions to invite readers to revisit the discussed topics. Combined with these exercises, readers can find lots of examples to enhance their learning process. The book is “written in a simple and straightforward language” (p.xiii) a valuable attribute for students new to the research world. This characteristic may be due to the author’s previous experience working with students in Morocco and writing a previous book titled *Doing Academic Assignments*.

The book is divided into three parts, part I is titled “General Research Methodology” and distributed into four chapters. Chapter one includes the definition of research, its purpose, and its process. Inyang discusses two main steps in the research process: research design and data analysis, he brings in more elements into the understanding of research like methods, research types how quantitative and qualitative data can be analyzed and represented, etc. In chapter two, the author introduces the definition and purpose of research and explores more concepts used in academic jargon that can be useful for students. For example, concepts like reliability and validity help to raise awareness in the limitations and delimitations of research and how doable research can be. The author defines these terms as measurement tools and relates them to the topic of variables that will be explored in more detail in Part II. In chapter

three the research process is delineated based on nine steps that the author suggests. The process starts with the research problem and concludes with the presentation of the research results. In chapter four, there is a description of research types like qualitative, quantitative, basic, applied, and action research. The author also mentions research designs like prospective study design, experimental, and non-experimental study designs. Finally, the author discusses research methods of data collection. In the end, the author warns the reader of elements that can alter the data analysis, namely bias, placebo effect, Hawthorne effect, and Halo effect.

Part II: Academic assignment consists of two chapters in which the author concentrates on the process of writing essays. He starts by describing how to frame a research question and discusses the key components that are part of an essay's structure including the typical introduction and conclusion. Inyang highlights the importance of writing good academic research and gives suggestions on how to achieve this goal. The author devotes a whole chapter to explain the conventions for citations and references. He provides several examples that clarify the differences between Harvard, APA, and MLA referencing systems. However, it is important to mention that the examples and explanations only cover the most common cases in citing and referencing information. The readers will have to explore a more specialized bibliography for specific and less common cases.

The last section of the book Part III: The Thesis Project and Internship consists of two chapters that cover the processes of doing more formal research like a thesis or writing a proper internship report. In this section, the author designs a clock named Inyang's Research Clock meant to help students visualize the steps to follow when doing research. Inyang's Research Clock is a good time management resource because it enables students to plan their research timeline. An interesting suggestion by the author, as a first step in the research process, is to consult other students' dissertations since they may not only become a good guide to learn how to write a thesis but also inspire students to find a research topic. Inyang wraps up Part III of the book with two educational examples: one for quantitative research and the other for qualitative research by including the components in a dissertation like abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, etc. Finally, there is a brief mention of the format for writing an internship report.

The book *Doing Academic research* is a good introduction to research since it can be used as a general guide for the research process. In this sense, the author gives the reader a good approximation of the research experience. However, the information may be found at times vague and confusing. For example, quantitative and qualitative research occupy the same level as applied research, descriptive research, and action research and the reader may struggle to understand qualitative and quantitative research as a field of studies from where paradigms of interpretations and their respective methodologies and methods derive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Consequently, there are moments of a lack of clear differentiation between these two fields of studies as seen on page 7 “reliability is related primarily to measurement results and validity to what is measured”. This criterion would be hard to apply to qualitative research. In addition, another confusion can occur with the difference between method and methodology, for example, Case study can be considered as a method instead of as a methodology as many authors suggest (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2015; Merriam 1998).

It is true that qualitative and quantitative research methodologies and methods can vary depending on several factors. For example, context or educational traditions, case study, may be considered as a method. Nevertheless, I think that this distinction could be briefly mentioned. In addition, including the debates regarding the diverse ways in which different terms are conceptualized in research could greatly enrich the students' perspectives about the requirements of doing research, how knowledge can also be constructed through dialogue with other voices. For this purpose, it would be helpful if the author could include more resources for deeper exploration of specific topics such as data analysis and methods. Finally, throughout the book, there is a sense that research is a stable and straightforward process. However, I consider that carrying out research is a process full of uncertainties and it would be important to help students to be aware of this unpredictable path and show them how to handle it. Because of this way to introduce the research process, I recommend this book to students who are making their first attempts to do research.

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