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# An Analysis of the Quality of Ph.D Theses: A Peep Through In-text Citations And Bibliography

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**Abstract**

This study attempts to analyze the quality of Ph.D theses awarded by Mahatma Gandhi University, South India in the field of Social Sciences through their in-text citations and bibliography.  This is done by foregrounding the mistakes made by the scholars in their theses. In between 2017-18, the university had awarded 69 Ph.Ds under Social Sciences of which 25 theses were selected  for this study.   The major finding of the study is that even though American Psychological Association (APA) style of citation is generally accepted across the academic community, none follow it strictly. This is because research guides are often permitted to make their own changes in the style sheets. As no criteria was framed with regards the information sources that might be used as reference sources, even local newspapers were used by the researchers. The internet facility was used by all researchers but often failed its meaningful representation in their bibliography. 13 theses provided chapter reference in addition to their bibliography thus making the thesis bulky. In 12 theses the bibliography was broken down under subheads such as Books, Journals etc., of which 7 had no chapter references, making it difficult for the evaluators to find out the details of in-text citations. The overall observation made is that both the research guides as well as scholars are either unaware of the role of existing literature over research or not giving due importance to its presentation. Suggestions to improve the present scenario and possible solutions are discussed herewith.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, Doctoral Dissertations, Social Sciences

...they (examiners) will be irritated by academic presentation errors such as an incorrect or inconsistent bibliography or citations, references that are omitted or misreported, incorrect publication dates or misspelled names, and citations and quotations that are misused. (Golding, Sharmini and Lazarovitch, 2014, p.569)

## 1. Introduction

Literature cited alone cannot be considered as the prime criteria for assessing a thesis. However, there is an integral relationship between the quality and quantity of existing literature used for the study and the quality of the thesis generated out of it.  If Ph. D work is the mixing up of existing literature with the data derived out of either lab or field work by a researcher as in the case of Science and Social Sciences respectively, in Humanities and theoretical works it is only the manipulation of the existing literature.  So in general one can say that the quality of a PhD thesis, especially in the case of Humanities, and theoretical studies is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of existing literature collected and analysed by the research scholar. If more literature

published by eminent personalities on the subject is used, it will definitely reflect upon the quality of thesis.  So also is the nature of document in which the literature is published. For example, an article published in a journal, especially a peer reviewed one has its own advantage over other kinds of documents. While delving into certain theses it is found that even newspaper reports were used as references.  At present, the scholars depend heavily on the internet for collecting literature. Use of webpage is very common. But before using it in their thesis they need to identify the quality of the document. Also, the information retrieved from the web pages may not be authentic.  Many a time, what is seen or downloaded today may not exist on the web tomorrow. It is often found that many scholars are unaware as to how to evaluate the different information sources. As stated in the title of this work this is only a peep into the making of a few theses so as to point out the major mistakes committed by the researcher. The study intends to churn out certain suggestions so as to eliminate these vagrant mistakes in the future and thus enhance the overall quality of the thesis and the wide range of research that it implies.

Many studies were conducted based on the citations of Doctoral Theses, globally as well as within India.  Indian studies vary from Journal Article (Eg.Kumar and Dora, 2011) to Ph.D Thesis (Eg.Padmaja, 2015) and the coverage of subject under study from the broad area of Social Sciences (Eg. Thoidingjam, 1994) to specific subjects such as Economics (Eg. Kaur & Rattan, 2018).  Under each work the items selected for the study also varies.  Some are comprehensive studies that cover many aspects of research such as "distribution of citations by document types, pattern of authorship of cited documents, cited Indian and foreign authors and chronological distribution of citations" (Singh, Bebi, and Garg, 2014, p.363) and some others concentrate on the study "as a way of determining the use of information sources made by the scholars of the University" (Nayak and Patil, 2017), p.1). Yet other works make use of citation analysis as a tool for collection management (Mahajan and Kumar, 2017).  But the current study is not meant for above purposes but to find out the common mistakes committed by the researchers.

## 2. Area of Study and the Methodology used

The study is conducted by taking into its annals the Doctoral theses awarded by Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, South India for the period 2017-18 (1 July, 2017 to 30 June, 2018). A total of 217 theses were awarded by Mahatma Gandhi University during this time. Out of this, subjects covering the broad category of Social Sciences constitute sixty nine.  Twenty five theses were selected for this study. Samples were taken on random basis but covering all subjects such as Economics, Political Science and International Studies, Management, Commerce, Sociology, Social work, Gandhian Thought and Development Studies.  Also, meticulous care was taken to cover thesis generated from both the University Departments (Schools) and Research Centres of Affiliated colleges.

## 3. The major observations made out of the study

### 3.1 Style of Citation

The University has not specified any specific citation style for Social Science.  The general practice followed is APA style, except in the case of History were Chicago style is followed.  However it is

interesting to note that no thesis followed APA style as such. Variations were noted in between the departments and within the same department itself.  Departments provide freedom to the concerned Research Guide for deciding the modification in the style of citation.  However School of International Relations and Politics (SIRP) has made some attempts to have a common citation style for their department (Mahatma Gandhi University, School of International Relations and Politics, n. d.) They have formulated SIRP style which is very close to APA style but with some modifications. Even then it was not strictly followed in the department.

## 3.2 Terminology Used

Out of the 25 theses examined only one used the terminology 'References'  as in APA.   23 theses used the term 'Bibliography' while the remaining one used 'Select Bibliography'. 'Bibliography' is a loose term compared to 'Reference' as it could house more documents related to the work even if it has not been cited in the work which the  future researchers can make use of.

## 3.3 Use of Quotation

A Researcher in Social Science often uses quotation in his/her thesis.  It is quite unavoidable and there is no restriction for the use of it in the thesis.  However, while using a quotation the researcher has to maintain certain codes of ethics.  One of the most important being, he/she has to put it in double quotes or to indent the quote if it is a lengthy one (according to APA above 40 words). Another thing is that he has to give the pagination of the source document.  But such codes of ethics were seldom practiced in the theses examined.  For example, two continuous sentences from a thesis are reproduced here:

> According to Best and Khan (1995) validity and reliability are essential to the effectiveness of data gathering procedure. Validity is that quality of data gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure.

Out of this, the second sentence is a mere reproduction from the document authored by Best and Khan.  But it is not given in double quotes.  Also, the year of publication of the document given in the thesis is not correct.  It is given as 1995, but the actual year of publication is 1989.  Also the pagination of the document from which the quotation is taken is not given.  Above all this document is not included in the bibliography.

In another thesis the quotation is given in double inverted commas but proper in-text citation is not given. So it is difficult to find out whether its details are included in the bibliography.

## 3.4 In-text Citation

Out of the 25 theses examined 22 follow the same rule as suggested by APA in the in-text citation. In one thesis in addition to this, the citation was super scribed with a serial number and the corresponding number was given with bibliographical details as 'Notes and Reference' at the end of the chapter.  An example is given below-

> Example: According to Davis etal (1993)[1], "A measurement scale is valid....
> --------------
> 1. Davis, D and Cosenza (1993), R.M. Business research for division...........

In the other two theses the above method was followed only in the Literature Review part but in all other chapters the corresponding serial number was super-scribed. Bibliographical details of the corresponding serial number were given as foot note in one thesis while in the other as Notes and References at the end of the chapter.

> Example: The shortage of nurses in India was a concern for the British.... in general-nursing, Chennai[7]
> ---------------
> 7. Gulai, K.K (2001): "Development of Nursing Education in India", History.....

## 3.5 Providing incomplete in-text citations.

In-text citation can be linked to the bibliography only if the necessary information is provided there. In APA style they are the entry element of the author's name, year of publication of the document and the pagination, if it is a quotation (American Psychological Association, 2010). However this rule was not practiced in many theses. Two examples from two theses are given below-

> In February 2011, 'The Economist' included a special report....
> As per the 2011 census population.... is 4,112,920

The full bibliographical details of the first example were provided at the bibliography. Regarding the second one the bibliographical details given is incomplete. It is just given as Census, Government of India.

Another example from another thesis...

> As per the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) observations, the normal mean daily...wind speed varies from 8.5 to 13.6 km/hr

## 3.6 Use of abbreviations in in-text and bibliography

In one thesis examined, abbreviations were used very extensively in both the in-text and bibliography.

> In text: Example 1. ..........are among its focus areas (DAE, 2010)
>         Example 2. ..........meaning 'prosperity of the family' (GKI, 2016)
>
> Bibliography: Example 1. DAE. (2010, October). The Adult Educator. Newsletter of...
>         Example 2. GKI (2016, 08 01). The Mission and Organizational....

## 3.7 Incomplete and incorrect entries in the Bibliography

While providing the bibliographical details of information sources other than books and journals, Researchers are committing many mistakes. Many entries given in the bibliography were either incomplete or not correct. For example a part of the bibliography from a thesis is reproduced below-

> Government of India, "Chapter VIII: Public Healthcare System
> India Brand Equity Foundation
> International Council of Nurses
> Press Information Bureau, Ministry of India, Health and Family Welfare
> Source:Deloitte, TechSci Research

In another thesis examined, the bibliographical part had four entries beginning with the words "To cite this article" in the author/corporate position. One example out of it is given below.

> To cite this article: (2002): "Resources and Reviews", Applied Environmental Education and Communication, 1(3): 203-209

Actually it was a bunch reviews from 5 different books by different reviewers under the common title "Resources and Reviews" and published as a single document in 'Journal Applied Environmental Education and Communication, 1(3): 203-209'. The mistake the Researcher did was that he had reproduced the citation given in the document including the instruction how 'to cite the article'! Here also the bibliography is incomplete as he has not provided the author and title details of the document he had referred.

At the same time there were instances from some theses with entries "flooded" with details, often un-necessary. An example from a thesis is given below;

> Passel, C.A. (2015). *Service Learning's Impact on the Development of Undergraduate Nursing Students soft skills* (Order No.3707716). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection; ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I: The Science and Engineering Collection (1696935963). Retrieved from http://search......

Instead of giving unnecessary details, if he had given the place of publication and name of the University which awarded the degree, after the end of the title of the thesis, it will be a meaningful entry. Further he can supplement the entry with the URL/Webpage from which he had downloaded/referred this information with the date of reference.

### 3.8 Non-representation of in-text citation in the Bibliography

In-text citation and bibliography are reciprocal to each other. Actually they are two sides of the same coin. So while an in-text citation is made, its full details have to be given at the bibliography so as to refer the evaluator or user, if required. Also, the evaluator could get an opportunity to assess the quality of the documents used by the researcher for the preparation of the thesis. However, on close examination it was found that some researchers could not attain this goal fully. In one thesis its occurrence is very high. While checking 40 in-text citations in the Literature Review, details of half of the citations were not given in the bibliography.

### 3.9 Chapter reference and Bibliography:

Out of the 25 theses examined 13 have both chapter references given at the end of each chapter and a bibliography covering all the entries given in the chapter references in alphabetical order at the end of the thesis.

### 3.10 Categorization of documents in the bibliography:

Normally bibliographies are prepared alphabetically in a single sequence. But some research guides or research centres (School of International Relations and Politics) will insist in getting it divided among different types of information sources. Sometimes the researcher himself/herself makes the division which seems convenient to him/her. Anyway entries under each sub-heads were arranged alphabetically. Splitting-up of reference was found in 12 out of the 25 thesis examined and are tabled below for further analysis

**Table 1. Sub-heads used in the Bibliography**

| Serial No. | Sub-heads given |
|---|---|
| Thesis 1 | Books; Dissertations; Reports; Research Papers and Articles; Websites |
| Thesis 2 | Books; Journals/ Paper presentations/ Conference Proceedings; Reports/ Manuals/Guides; Website References |
| Thesis 3 | Books; Encyclopaedia and Dictionaries; Dissertations and Thesis; Journals and Magazines; Websites/Web pages |
| Thesis 4 | Books; Journals; Thesis/Research Projects/Working papers/Seminar papers/ News Paper; Official Reports and Publications |
| Thesis 5 | Books (It is assumed that the Scholar had forgot to mention it as the subdivision); Journals and Reports |
| Thesis 6 | Books; Theses; Articles and Research Papers; Reports and Reviews; Periodicals and Dailies; Websites; Other Sources |
| Thesis 7 | Books; Edited Books; Journals; Technical Reports; Dissertations, Webliography |
| Thesis 8 | Other Documents and Reports; Books; Journal article/ Book article; Newspaper articles |
| Thesis 9 | Relevant Indian and Kerala Law; Relevant Policy Documents; Books; Journal Articles and Book Articles; Newspaper Article |
| Thesis 10 | Books; Journals; Websites |
| Thesis 11 | Books; Articles; Papers at Seminar/Conference/Workshops/Reports and others; Web Sources |
| Thesis 12 | Books; Journals; Working Papers; Reports; Others; Websites |

The general observation made from this is that all research scholars are well aware of the information source "Book" as it is listed in all theses. However two Researchers have some hesitation to classify Reference books and Edited Books under books and so created another sub-head Encyclopaedia/Dictionaries (Thesis 3) and Edited Books (Thesis 7) respectively. In Thesis 9 one sub head was Journal Articles and Book Articles. It is not clear what he meant by 'Book Article'. On examination of the citations given under this head it was understood that what he meant was not book chapters but working papers, discussion papers, conference papers etc. Chapters from edited works were included in the sub-head 'Books' but not provided in the proper way. For example:

> Mukherjee, Sachidannda and Chakraborty, Debashish (ed) (2015): *Environmental challenges and governance:* Diverse perspective from Asia, London: Routledge

Here, the researcher has not given neither the title of the concerned work nor the name of the contributor from which he had taken the reference. All edited works are given in this way

The second information source that they were very familiar was Journals or Journal Articles. Out of the 12 thesis 9 has given this sub-head 'Journals' or 'Journal Articles' either alone or along with other categories. In the remaining 3 theses the term 'Article' was used. Clubbing of Journals with

either Paper presentations or Conference Proceedings (Thesis 2) or Magazines and Websites/Web pages (Thesis 3) show that they were not much aware of the difference between these different information sources and the relative importance of journal article over research.

Another observation made is that in Thesis 5, even though the sub-heading Journals was given no journal article was included in that sub-head, but all were included in the first sub-head 'Books'. Only 15 entries were there and all except one were reports. The odd one represents a Gazetteer.

### 3.11 Newspaper as a reference source

From Table 1, it is very evident that many researchers used newspaper reports and articles as a reference source. Four out of the twelve theses tabled above (Table 1) had used the sub-head newspapers either alone (Theses 8 and 9) or with other sources such as Thesis/Research Projects/Working papers/Seminar papers (Thesis 4), or with other periodicals (Thesis 6). All the four theses except one belong to School of International Relations and Politics (SIRP). As mentioned above SIRP have a separate style manual which approved the use of Newspaper as a reference source (Mahatma Gandhi University, School of International Relations and Politics, n. d., p.8)

In addition to the 4 theses mentioned, many theses used newspaper as a reference source but not as extensively as these.

Even statistical data were taken from newspapers. Sample entries from different theses are given below-

1. *It is reported that in <u>39 years Kerala lost 7 lakhs hectares of paddy fields</u>*
2. *India saw <u>1,35,445 suicides</u> last year*
3. *This bridge is the <u>tallest arch bridge in Kerala</u> ... <u>spending rupees 6.90 crores</u>*
4. *....rural area covered by a PHC (Public Health Centre) in Kerala was <u>lower by 84.4</u> square kilometres compared to...*

### 3.12 Resources through Internet

Examining the bibliographical part of the 25 theses it is understood that all but one used internet for retrieving information. This observation was made by taking into consideration whether there were any URLs given in the bibliography. This does not mean the lone thesis which does not have URL had not made use of the facility. The researcher might also have made use of the facility but would not have given any URLs. On examining Table 1, we understand that 8 out of the 12 theses had used this facility extensively as they had provided separate sub-heads for this, even if the name given were different in different theses. The most commonly used phrase was 'Website' (Theses 1, 6, 10 and 12), another one used Websites/Web pages (Thesis 3) and others Website References (Thesis 2), Web Sources (Thesis 11) and Webliography (Thesis 7).

Sample-entries collected from each of the 8 theses given under this subhead are tabled below for further analysis.

**Table 2: Examples of Websites/pages provided by the Researcher**

| Sl. No. | Thesis No. (corresponding to Table 1) | Terminology used | Selected entries from the bibliography |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Thesis 1 | Websites | 1. www.indianjournals.com/ijor.....pdf<br>2. www.rbi.org.in<br>3. www.ssrn.com |
| 2 | Thesis 6 | | 1. www.indianjournals.com (Indian Tourism and Research Publication)<br>2. htpps://www.wttc.org (World Travel and Tourism Council)<br>3. www.shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in (shodhganga Inflibnet) |
| 3 | Thesis 10 | | 1. http://fao.org/docs/up/.........._paradigms_102en.pdf<br>2. http://atmams.in/raman.php<br>3. http://thedawnjournal.com/wp-con...Nithya-N.R.pdf |
| 4 | Thesis 12 | | 1. https://kerala.gov.in<br>2. https://www.licindia.in |
| 5 | Thesis 2 | Website References | 1. Joshi, Upasana. (2016). *Funds for NGOs*. Retrieved from htpps://www.fundsforngos.org...-information<br>2. *International Centre for Non Profit (sic) Law*. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.icnl.org/research/... |
| 6 | Thesis 3 | Websites/Web pages | 1. http://www.Google.com<br>2. www.shodaganga.inflibnet.ac.in *(sic)*<br>3. http://www.ncert.nic.in<br>4. http://www.cbse.nic.in/cce/ccemanual<br>5. http://www.cbse.nic.in/cce/3htm |
| 7 | Thesis 7 | Webliography | 1. Jun, J (2005). *Understanding...e-learning*. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10454/4447<br>2. Muriithi, E.M...(2003). Project method... Secondary Schools. International Journal of Educational Research, 17. Retrieved...http://www.ijern.com/....pdf |
| 8 | Thesis 11 | Web Sources | 1. http://www.jagsheth.net/docs/markathon.pdf<br>2. http://www.icsi.edu/38nc/Articles/Archana_shruti.htm |

Thesis 1 includes webpages (example 1), websites (example 2) and websites of databases (example 3) under the subhead 'Website'. The first example given is the URL of a journal article, but had not provided any details such as Author, Title of the article, Title of the Journal and its location. If he had given the full bibliographical details along with the URL and placed under the subhead 'Research Papers and Articles' it would have been useful to both the evaluator of the thesis and the users. The third example given is the website of a database- SSRN (Social Science Research Network) from which he/she might have taken documents for his/her research. By just giving Websites it is neither useful to the evaluator nor the researchers themselves as no cross reference can be made out of it.

In Thesis 6 webpages were not given but it included websites (example 2) and websites of databases (example 1 and 3). In addition to the Website its name is also given in parenthesis. (But it is not

correct in the first case. Indianjournal.com stands for itself and not for 'Indian Tourism and Research Publication' as given by the researcher).

In Thesis 10 the researcher had not used any website as such (like www.fao.org), but had either referred or downloaded pages from websites. On cross checking, the first example was an 'Issue Paper' published by Food and Agricultural Organisation. Actually he had to give the entry under Book (He had used only 3 sub-heads- Books, Journals and Websites) and not in the Website and had to be represented in the following way.

> Bellu, Rosenso G (2011). Development and development paradigms: A (Reasoned) Review of Prevailing Versions. (n.p.): Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

The second one referred by the researcher was a Webpage from the website www.atmams.in/

The third example is journal article. It has to be included in the sub-head 'Journal' with the following bibliographical details with DOI, if it is an online journal.

> Nisha, N.R (2014). Globalization and the plight of Tribals: The case of Kerala, India. *The Dawn Journal, 3 (1), 727-758*

Also the researcher could have added the URL and the date of retrieval along with the bibliographical details.

The subhead "Website' used in Thesis 12 can be justified as the researcher had included only websites in this category. But here also neither the evaluator nor the user of the thesis seems to benefit as no bibliographical details were provided.

Thesis 2 had given the subhead 'Website References'. This researcher had gone one step forward by providing details such as author, year of publication and title of the document etc even though there were mistakes. In both the examples given, he had not provided the exact title of the document/information provided in the webpage even if its corresponding URL was given. Instead of that in the first example he had given the domain name itself as the title. That is 'Funds for NGOs'. The correct title was *"Understanding NGO Registration in India and other Important Financial Information".* In the second example also he did the same mistake by giving the corporate author as the title ie. 'International Centre for Non Profit (sic) Law'. Here the title is *"Civic Monitor Freedom: India"*

In Thesis 3 the sub-head given by the researcher is Websites/Web pages. By giving a place to webpages also, this Researcher had overcome the mistake did by the other Researchers. This sub-head had a total of 5 entries – one website, two web pages and one search engine (https://www.google.com/) and the URL of an Electronic Theses and Database (ETD) (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/). As no other details such as author or title is given for the web pages it is not clear whether he had made any citation out of this in his thesis.

In thesis 7 the term 'Webliography' was used to represent the documents retrieved through internet. Almost all entries had all fields like Author, Year of Publication and Title, Publisher details like any other entries given in all other subheads. In addition to this, the URL from which the document was retrieved was also given. However, the reason why the researcher had given such a subhead is not clearly understood. If he/she meant it for documents retrieved from internet, the reason why he/she had arranged documents retrieved from the database ERIC, under 'Technical Reports' is not known. Also, this researcher had arranged entries under subheads 'Edited Books' and 'Dissertations' that too retrieved through internet. The Researcher had given 78 entries under this subhead

'Webliography. On a close examination of the entries given, it was found most of the entries belong to Ph.D thesis. Other documents include Journal Articles, conference proceedings etc. It would have been better if he had given these entries under the respective subheads 'Dissertations' 'Journal Article' etc., retaining only webpages in this subhead. Example 1 given in the table is a Ph.D thesis and 2 a journal article.

The terminology used in Thesis 11 is 'Web resource'. Only webpages with URLs are given under this subhead. Here also the author and title details are not provided. Even though an attempt to examine some of the webpages referred through the URL provided was done, none could be opened.


## 3.13 Heavy dependency on a single source

In one thesis examined, it was found that two documents were depended upon heavily for writing a chapter. In the introductory chapter of the study for the preparation of just 7 pages he/she had used 34 references. Out of the 34 references used, 33 references are from two sources. The first source - a book in local language, is used for 26 references and that too 20 references from just 3 pages. The second source is a website and used 7 times.

## 3.14 Citation of Government Documents

Government documents are the most reliable source of information for research especially in Social Science as it gives primary data. Even though researchers were making use of Government publications, in different theses its reference was given in different ways. The major reason for this is the non-availability of personal authors attributed to government documents. Usually it is prepared by a group of people working at the concerned Government Department and naturally the authorship of such documents will go to the Government itself. As per the usual practice of APA, it has to be given in the following way-

In-text reference:    (Name Government Organisation, year of publication, page number [for quotation])

Bibliography:    Name of Government, Name of Government Agency. (Year). Title. Place of Publication: Publisher

An entry found in a thesis examined for this purpose and related to Government publication is given below -

Department of Economics and Statistics (2013): Panchayat Level Statistics 2011 Kottayam District, Kerala.

The major problem with the entry is that nobody could understand that it is a Government document and that too by the Government of Kerala. Also, the imprint area of the document is excluded. So the right way of providing the reference is-

In-text reference: (Government of Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, 2013)

Bibliography: Government of Kerala, Department of Economics and Statistics, (2013). *Panchayat Level Statistics-2011: Kottayam District*. Thiruvananthapuram: Government of Kerala

He can add the URL and date of download if it is retrieved through internet.

More examples can be cited from different theses --

> Example 1. Economic Review (1999): State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram
> Example 2. Economic Review. Medical and Public Health, Chapter 12, 2010; 11-32, Kerala State Planning Board, Government of Kerala
> Example 3. CSR in India (2011). Ministry of Corporate Affairs. Government of India
> Example 4. Census, Government of Kerala
> Example 5. Census, Government of India

Economic Review is an authentic regular annual publication from the Government of Kerala which is very essential to all Research Scholars under Social Science, especially from Economics.  But its bibliographical details are provided in different ways and are also not correct.


## 3.15 Use of "Cited by"

Research Scholars are frequently found using the reference of the primary document either without verifying its reliability or using "cited by". A quotation used in a thesis can be used here as an example. The quotation is-

> "Clearly, the more nuclear weapons there are in the world, the more nations which possess......or irresponsible nuclear war"

This is a sentence from the book "Studies of War" by P.M.S. Blackett and quoted by Brown and Arnold in their journal article. If the Researcher had not referred to the original book but only the article, he should cite (in-text) the document either as "Blacket views (2010, cited by Brown and Arnold, 2010, p.308)...." or "Clearly, the more nuclear...(Blacket, 2010 cited by Brown and Arnold, 2010, p.308) and should give the bibliography as: Brown, A and Arnold, L .(2010). The Quirks of Nuclear Deterrence. *International Relations, 24(3), 293-312*.  (Actually APA is not promoting this type of citation. However, it could be recommended if the original work is out of print, unavailable through usual sources or not available in English).

A researcher has all the right to go to the primary source i.e., the book of P.M.S. Blackett through this article by Brown and Arnold.  If so, he/she needs to go through the book either in print or online so as to verify the correctness of the quotation.  Then he can give the quotation under Blackett with in-text reference as (Blackett, 2010 p. 143) and the bibliography as Blackett, P.M.S (2010). Studies *of War: Nuclear And Conventional*, Whitefish (Montana): Kessinger Publishing, LLC

But in practice it is observed that research scholars do not take any pain to refer to the original document.  Even without that they are providing the citation of the original document both in the in-text reference and the bibliography.  Unfortunately this research scholar has neither included the original document nor the quoted document both in the in-text reference and bibliography.  Before the quotation his sentence goes in this way-

> Blacket(t) views,.....

# 4. Findings / Discussion:

The general observation made after this study is that both the research scholars and the guides are either unaware of the role of existing literature in the formation of the thesis prepared or they do not take much interest in it purposefully. Also, the evaluators of the thesis do not make any effort to assess the thesis in this way. This is the reason why there exist many mistakes even in theses evaluated for and awarded Ph.D. This will definitely lower the quality and credibility of the thesis. So quality assessment and up gradation steps have to be initiated at different levels as discussed below and that too at the earliest.

## 4.1 Problems with local styles of citation

By creating their own format and style, the Faculty of School of International Relations and Politics looks very much aware of problem. They are also going to implement this style strictly in their department. All these are very positive steps but there exist a drawback too. Now-a-days researchers are depending upon reference management softwares like Mendeley, Zotero for the preparation of in-text citation and bibliography. This will definitely save their time and lower the percentage of mistakes, compared to the conventional method. But since local versions like SIRP style is not supported by international soft-wares, a research scholar working under this department fails to make use of this facility. So it is better to adopt international styles like APA instead of adopting local styles.

## 4.2 Why both Chapter Reference and Bibliography?

Providing both, chapter Reference (or footnote as the case may be) and Bibliography is utter wastage of time as it is a mere duplication of the same information in two places causing the thesis to be bulky. It will also consume time and money of the researcher. So chapter reference/foot note have to be avoided but all entries at in-text citation has to be linked to the bibliography as per the citation style adopted.

## 4.3 Documents that can be used for Research:

There exists no rule stated either by the University or the concerned departments regarding the documents that can be used for research. Research scholars were found using even local newspapers for the literature needs of their thesis. But how far information from a newspaper can be depended upon is a question worth pondering. Even statistical data were reproduced from newspapers. At the same time the researcher can use it as a bridge towards locating the primary document. An example personally experienced by this author is given below.

While going through a forthcoming thesis on 'Elderly Persons' (handed over to the author by the researcher for making appropriate corrections in the citation), a quotation *"30.7% of elderly suffer from multi-morbidities of non-communicable diseases"* is found. The Researcher had given a Newspaper as the reference source. While having an extensive search it is found the Newspaper had prepared the report out of an article published in an International Journal 'BMJ Open' (8, March, 2017). This author verified the quotation with the journal article and found correct and advised the Researcher to cite the International Journal instead of the Newspaper. Here the data reproduced by the newspaper is correct. But it need not be correct always.

Another source the researchers had used was local popular magazines. Like newspapers, articles/reports published in local magazines had also not undergone any quality check-up. The use

of Webpages is also questionable as its content may vary or even disappear after the reference made by the researcher.

## 4.4 Problems with Categorization of bibliography

Categorization of bibliography brings no benefit but only creates its own problems. Some of them are-

**4.41 Mixing up of different source of information**. On a close examination of the entries in each head, except under the category 'Books', different types of information sources often get mixed-up. For example, in a thesis articles from "Psychological Bulletin" and "Bulletin-University of Reading Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department" were put under Reports/Manuals/Guides, even though it was better suited under the category Journals. Newsletters and newspapers and even Ph.D thesis were grouped in this category. This was not a stray incident but occurred in almost all theses examined, showing that such categorization only created more confusion among the researchers regarding the sorting of different sources.

**4.42 Usage of meaningless subheads** such as Encyclopaedia and Dictionaries; Edited Books; Other Documents and Reports; Book Article etc. This will create a sense that the researcher himself was not much aware of the difference between these sources of information.

**4.43 Terms used for resources tapped from internet** Different terms were used by different Research Scholars to denote this. Websites was the common subhead used. However it includes both websites and webpages making it sound as though they themselves were not much aware of the difference between either. Websites themselves often provide no information but act as a store house of webpage which brings the researcher the desired information. So the researcher had to provide the URL of the exact webpage with other bibliographical information so as to guide both the evaluator and the user to the correct location. Instead of that many research scholars were found providing URL of the websites. If he had taken any information on "Understanding Poverty" from the Website of World Bank, he had to cite the web page https://www.worldbank.org/en/understanding-poverty instead the website of the World Bank https://www.worldbank.org/. Many research scholars had cited the website of different databases such as Indianjournals.com (An online Database providing Full text access to Indian Journals) and Shodhganga (An Indian ETD http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/). Instead of doing so, they have to provide the full bibliographical details of the Journal articles/thesis that they had referred to or retrieved, including the URL and date of download. (DOI if it is an electronic journal).

**4.44 Linking the in-text citation with the bibliography** Out of the 12 thesis which divided its bibliography in to different subheads, 7 theses have no chapter references. Here, the linking of in-text citation with the bibliography is not as easy as in other cases. This is because from the in-text citation it is not possible for either the evaluator or the researcher himself to identify the category of the document. So he/she needs to check under all the subheads so as to get the full bibliographical details of the desired document. This method thus compels the researcher to provide either chapter reference or foot note in addition to the bibliography.

# 5. Suggestions

## 5.1 Role of University Library

As the University Library is one the major sources from where the researcher collects his/her literature, the Library must set up a help desk, so as to help the researcher in collecting the relevant documents (Literature Search) and that too from the relevant sources. They can explain the Why,

What and How of literature search. They can also liquidate the doubts of the researcher related to all the problems discussed above. The Help Desks can conduct workshop on reference management software like Mendeley, Zotero etc. Orientation classes can be conducted for both research scholars as well as research guides to address the following points.

- Various types of information sources and their relative importance in research
- How they can be represented in the In-text reference and bibliography.
- Why the preparation of both chapter reference and bibliography is-

    - wasting the time of the Scholar
    - wasting the money (by printing additional pages) of the Scholar
    - making the thesis bulky

- How categorization of Bibliography leads to confusion among

    - Evaluators
    - Users
    - Research Scholars

- How to respect the literature used for research by giving due courtesy.
- The need of linking the in-text citation with the corresponding entry in the bibliography
- The need of verifying the original document before taking any reference/quotations out of it.
- Why citing primary document through secondary document without referring to the first have to be avoided.
- The role of Government documents and how they can be cited.
- Importance of Grey Literature over Social Science research and its proper representation both in the in-text citation and bibliography
- How the Internet can be used
    - As a medium for retrieving quality information
        - How its reliability can be verified
        - How it can be represented both in the in-text and bibliography
    - As a source of information
        - The difference between websites and webpages and how it can be represented both in the in-text citation and bibliography
- How soft copy files retrieved from internet can be stored and retrieved logically and mnemonically in their computer without duplication
- Different citation styles especially APA

## 5.2 Role of Universities

Universities can bring out "Thesis manuals" by upholding international standards. This can be framed by appointing a committee comprising the Directors/Heads of all subjects under Social Science. All aspects of a thesis including the matters discussed above and even the general outlook of the thesis can be incorporated in the manual. This will bring out uniformity in the thesis awarded by the University.

**5.3 Role of University Grants Commission (UGC)**

It is the apex body which deals with the quality of Higher Education in India. So the UGC will have to give guidelines to all Universities within the Country in the following aspects-

- Follow a common citation style that too an International one, if possible to all branches of Social Sciences such as Politics, Economics, Management. If it is not practical to select the one which is appropriate for each branch.

- Measures to identify the sources of information that can be referred to and cited in the thesis. Also, to list the items that is to be excluded.

- Measures to conduct orientation classes for the Researchers by Librarians dealing with all aspects of existing literature over Research.

- Assure the presence of at least one Librarian in the Open defence or Viva-voce.

- Printed guidelines have to be given to the evaluators covering all aspects of the thesis. With regards to the problems discussed above the following instructions can be given

    - Check at least 20 in-text citations spread over all the chapters with the Bibliography so as to ensure both are linked properly
    - Bibliography of the thesis have to be valued rigorously like the text of the thesis to find out

        ◦ The quality of reference sources used
        ◦ Whether it has been prepared according to the stipulated citation style
        ◦ To decipher incomplete or absurd entries

    - At least 10 quotations have to be checked with the original source so as to assess its genuinity. This can be tested for paraphrased sentences also, but will not be as easy as it is for quotations. Internet facility can be used for checking the genuineness.
    - Check the heavy dependency of the thesis to any particular document
    - Statistics given in the thesis other than the one generated by the Researcher through field study is duly represented both in the in-text and bibliography.
    - Also, the reliability of the source from which it has been taken will also have to be checked

# 6. Conclusion

A doctoral thesis is supposed to be a perfect academic endeavour although 100 per cent perfection could only be a mirage for any human being. So the only possible way is to reduce the occurrence of mistakes thereby making it as perfect as possible. It is due to the lack of standardisation and providing proper instruction both to the researchers as well as the evaluators that there exist several loopholes even after evaluation and awarding of the Ph.D. So the need of the hour is to make it

error free in the future through the joint effort of the research scholar, the University Library, University at the state level as well as the UGC for enhancing this endeavour at the National Level.

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