Regional training workshop on writing skills

MEETING REPORT

Training and Research Support Centre (TARSC)
Locally hosted by REACH Trust (Malawi)

For the Regional Network for Equity in Health in east and southern Africa (EQUINET)

Lilongwe Hotel, Lilongwe, Malawi
20-24 October 2007

Supported by SIDA (Sweden)

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1. Background to the workshop

The Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET) is a network of professionals, civil society members, policy makers, state officials and others within the region who have come together as an equity catalyst, to promote and realise shared values of equity and social justice in health. EQUINET gathers people to overcome isolation, give voice and promote networking using bottom-up approaches built on shared values. We have come together in a spirit of self determination and collective self reliance working through existing government, civil society, research and other mechanisms and institutions in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and in southern and East Africa. EQUINET is building a forum for dialogue, learning, sharing of information and experience and critical analysis. We do this to build knowledge and perspectives, shape effective strategies, strengthen our voice nationally, regionally and globally and our strategic alliances to influence policy, politics and practice towards health equity and social justice.

EQUINET's goal is to build capacity and skills in health equity in East and Southern Africa. Capacity and skills building are viewed as essential to creating equity in the region – so as to contribute to equity in knowledge production, equity with regard to who speaks for the network and presents the knowledge of the network, and equity in the ability to take on various roles in the network. Through institutions in the steering committee, EQUINET has been supporting capacity and skills development in research for health equity through the skills training in different areas of theme work, through training in policy analysis, in methods for work on fair financing, health workers, trade and health and health rights, through its student grant programme, and in participatory research methodologies for people centred health systems.

The EQUINET Steering Committee also identified a need for the network to break down the silos between our work, and communication is key to ensuring this happens. To reach these publications, media and communication goals, it is essential to build capacity and skills in writing various kinds of publications, not just for EQUINET, but also for scientific reports and peer reviewed journals, as well as to report back on the work network members are doing and meetings they have attended.

EQUINET held its first training workshop on writing skills in June 2004 in co-operation with University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. This workshop built skills for researchers to write for peer-reviewed journals. Further formal writing skills training has been provided in the policy analysis training and through mentoring of researchers in all theme work. EQUINET has further provided technical and language editing of research publications produced in the network. The manual and workshop consolidate these experiences from the network and cover additional stylistic issues which often plague academic writing.

Those involved in reviewing and editing EQUINET documents have noted a number of trends regarding the types of errors that typically need correcting before a document is print ready. Therefore, a pilot manual, *Writing skills for publication of work on equity in health: A manual for east and southern Africa*, was produced to guide the production of scientific reports, peer reviewed articles and EQUINET papers. The manual was written by Rebecca Pointer and Rene Loewenson of TARSC, with additional support from a private contractor, Pierre Norden. The manual was piloted for the first time at this workshop in Lilongwe, Malawi from 20-24 October 2007 to build skills and capacity in the field of written communication (see *Appendix 1* for workshop programme).

Participants for this workshop were drawn primarily from among researchers working in EQUINET research programmes. A list of participants can be found in *Appendix 2*. Initially, workshop applicants submitted a draft paper or abstract and were selected based on the

relevance of these to EQUINET work to attend the workshop. Those who had not submitted a draft paper then submitted a first draft by 17 September. All papers received were peer reviewed by Rebecca Pointer and returned with comments to participants before the workshop, in order to give them an opportunity to write a second draft before the workshop. Some applicants papers were not received in time to peer review them before the workshop. Participants were also asked to bring reference material with them to the workshop to support their writing process at the workshop.

This workshop report was prepared by TARSC (Rebecca Pointer).

1.1 Objectives

The Writer's manual and workshop forms part of EQUINET's ongoing capacity building efforts. The overall objectives of the Writer's Manual and the Workshop were to help EQUINET members and partners:

- prepare their research papers for publication in peer reviewed journals, scientific papers and for EQUINET Discussion Papers and Policy Papers;
- communicate with each other and break down the silos between theme areas.

The workshop was designed to support capabilities for effective dissemination of the significant body of research results coming from EQUINET activities through scientific journals and publications. It was held as a response to specific demand from EQUINET researchers for these areas of skills building. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- build skills for writing in scientific papers and peer reviewed journals;
- understand the peer review process works and facilitate peer review and feedback on a set of equity-focused papers among a group of east and southern African researchers and practitioners;
- be introduced to tools and approaches to improving writing skills, and to introduce other relevant areas, including meeting reports.

2. Welcome and introduction

Rebecca Pointer (EQUINET/ TARSC) briefly announced the opening of the workshop and introduced herself and Pierre Norden as the main facilitators; she introduced Fortunate Machingura (TARSC) who assisted with facilitation and workshop administration. She explained that Rene Loewenson would arrive on Sunday and would facilitate some sessions, and also noted that a guest facilitator, Professor Malcolm Molyneux, from the Malawi Medical Journal would facilitate a session on peer reviewed journals Tuesday morning.

Grace Bongololo (REACH Trust) then welcomed everyone to Malawi. She said REACH Trust was very happy to be co-hosting such a useful workshop and she hoped all the participants would learn a lot about publishing scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Fortunate Machingura (TARSC) then asked everyone to introduce themselves, stating where they were from, what they would be working on at the workshop and why they wanted to write. The participants gave various reasons for wanting to write, including: improving communication, getting published, advancing their careers, contributing to the knowledge about health equity in their chosen field, giving voice to African research and researchers in the northern-dominated realm of peer-reviewed publishing, and recording their research activities. *Table 1* below shows the titles and EQUINET theme areas developed by participants at the workshop.

Table 1: Papers developed during writing workshop

Name	Country	Theme/ process	Title of paper
1. Fortunate Machingura	Zimbabwe	Equitable health systems	(untitled) Access to maternal health services in Zimbabwe
2. Aulline Mabika	Zimbabwe	Trade & Rights	The right to health and international trade agreements: The case of Zambia
3. Lincoln Khasakhala	Kenya	Human resources	Retention of health workers in Kenya: Draft desk review report
4. Caleb Othieno	Kenya	Human Resources/ Governance & participation/ PRA	Strengthening the capacity to address the community's mental health challenges among primary health workers and the residents of Kariobangi in Nairobi, Kenya
5. Abraham Mutumba	Uganda	Equitable Health Services/ PRA	Community empowerment and participation on maternal health in Kamwenge sub-county, Kamwenge district, Uganda
6. Therese Boulle	South Africa	Governance and participation/ PRA	Developing an understanding of the factors related to the effective functioning of community health committees in Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality
7. Grace Bongololo	Malawi	Equity and HIV and AIDS	Challenges to health care worker access to post exposure prophylaxis (PEP): A case of Mchinji district Malawi.
8. Paul Kwale	Malawi	Equitable Health Services	Impact of increased financing to the health sector in Malawi on equitable access to the essential health package
9. Albert Makone	Zimbabwe	Equity and HIV and AIDS	Peace building, political stability and security: A precondition for successful HIV & AIDS interventions
10. Thomas Deve	Zimbabwe	Trade	
11. Amon Mpofu	Zimbabwe	Fair Financing	A study to determine the contribution of National AIDS Council Trust Fund (NATF) towards meeting Abuja declaration targets
12. Eunice Kyomugisha	Uganda	Fair Financing	Building strategies for sustainability and equity of prepayment schemes in Uganda: Bridging gaps
13. Bona Chitah	Zambia	Fair Financing	Deprivation-based resource allocation criteria in the Zambian health service: A review of the implementation process
14. Elijah Chiwota	Zimbabwe	Equity and HIV and AIDS	HIV and AIDS threatens attainment of Millennium Development Goals in Southern Africa
15. Kathe Hofnie-Hoebes	Namibia	Human Resources/ PRA	(untitled) Perceptions of community roles in health in student nurses
16. Enna Gudhlanga	Zimbabwe	Equity and HIV and AIDS	Shona cultural aspects and the fight against HIV/AIDS: The untapped reservoir of Shona proverbial lore
17. Mulumba Moses	Uganda	Values, policies and rights	Homelessness as a human rights violation of persons with mental health disorders: An international perspective
18. Barbara Kaim	Zimbabwe	Governance and participation	Handing over the stick: Youth participation in reproductive health programming
19. Jacob Ongala	Kenya	Governance and participaton/ PRA	PRA research on communication issues between HIV positive clients and HIV clinic personnel in Kasipul Division, Rachuonyo District in western Kenya
20. Shepherd Shamu	Zimbabwe	Fair financing	Zimbabwe National Health Sector Budget Analysis and Equity Issues

Rebecca then briefly outlined what would be covered at the workshop during the five days (see Agenda in *Appendix 1*). The workshop would take participants through the writing process from developing a key message, planning the structure of writing, to writing the specific sections of scientific papers such as the title, abstract, keywords, executive summary, introduction, methodology, results and discussion, conclusions and references. In addition, Prof Malcolm Molyneux from the Malawi Medical Journal would give participants input on various aspects of peer-reviewed publishing. During the workshop, issues of authorship, copyright and plagiarism would also be discussed. The final day of the workshop would focus on evaluating both the manual and the workshop.

She explained that since the printing of the manual, the facilitators had realised some major problems with the manual and that they would be putting the manual in the bin, and that participants also needed to put their papers in the bin. She said we would be starting from scratch with writing the papers, as the purpose of the workshop was to learn about writing, not merely to just edit papers. She explained that the manual (and participants' draft papers) contained useful source material, but that the facilitators would be approaching the workshop from a fresh angle. She said all the participants needed a fresh approach on writing their papers as well, and therefore they needed to let go of the work they had already done, and clear their minds for finding this fresh approach. The existing papers and manual would not be wasted, as they contained useful information, but participants needed to acknowledge that they are in draft form and it was a normal part of the writing process to throw away many drafts before finalising a piece of writing. Rebecca suggested that writers needed to work on at least six drafts before any piece of writing could be considered complete.

3. Preparation for writing

3.1. Brainstorming

Pierre explained that now that we had put aside the existing draft papers, we needed to get the creative juices going to start writing the new drafts. He explained that even scientific writing was a creative process and involved storytelling. He asked participants to brainstorm in two minutes the five top important points about the research they were going to write up. Once they had done this, they gave their ideas to a partner, who then chose one of the five ideas as most interesting to be developed further.

Participants then took that idea and brainstormed all the relevant material around that idea. Pierre emphasised that participants should NOT be tidy with this brainstorming, and should write all over their pieces of paper in every direction.

Once they had completed the brainstorm, participants worked in consultation with their partners and wrote two introductory paragraphs, linking the key ideas together. The facilitators moved round the classroom guiding the participants' in writing two linked paragraphs, similar to *Example 3.2* and *Example 3.3* on page 44 of the pilot manual. (Participants noted that there was a problem in the logic of the argument presented in these examples and they need to be fixed when the manual is rewritten.)

The paired writing was followed by a plenary report back in which participants identified lessons learnt during the activity, as follows:

1. It is important to identify keywords to keep focus and be specific.
2. It is good to throw drafts in the dustbin and good to write many drafts.
3. You should present evidence to show or support your key ideas.
4. It is important to explain terminology and give clear definitions.
5. Linking words between paragraphs, sentences and ideas help build an argument.
6. You must write with clarity and precision.

7. Paragraphs must have a logical flow and tell a story.
8. You must present comprehensive information leaving no unanswered questions.
9. It is important to use the right language.
10. You must put **everything** on paper during the brainstorm.
11. Keep sentences short and to the point.
12. Participants were impressed with the speed with which they were able to change and be flexible.
13. Always share your work and get a second opinion as this helps you become aware of the reader.
14. Writing must be logically structured to make it easier to read.
15. Pay attention to detail.
16. Don't jump to conclusions.

Participants were asked to keep the piece of paper on which they had brainstormed all their ideas for writing up their research, and to rank the ideas in order of importance for 'own work' in the evening.

3.2. Developing a key message

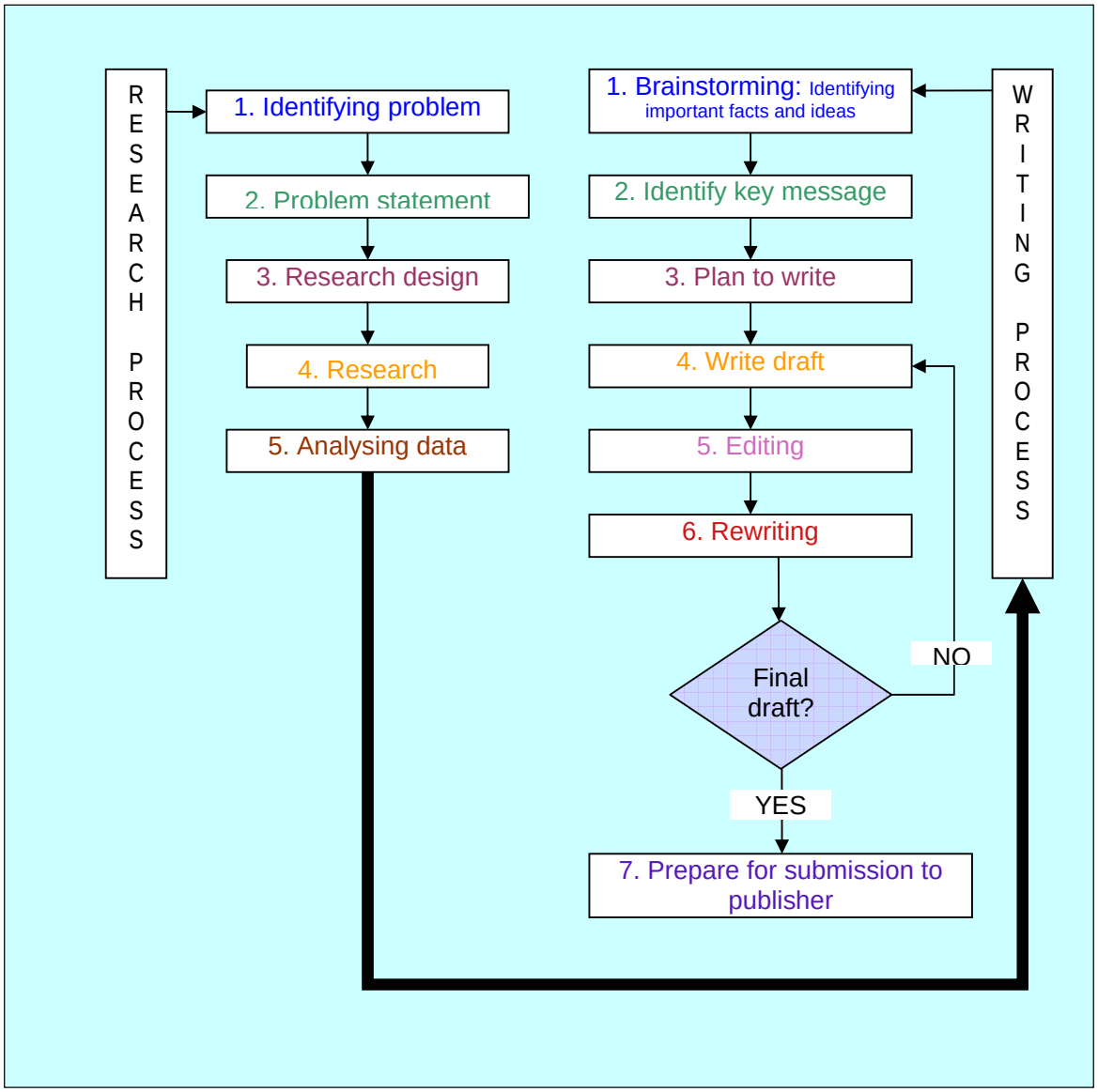
Once the participants had finished brainstorming, Pierre explained that brainstorming around the message selected by the partner was merely a practice run to free up creative juices. He now asked participants to select and write up their own **one sentence** key message. He explained that the key message should present the MAIN point of the paper the participant would write. The key message should also present a logical argument, and may use linking words between two parts of the sentence to show logic, e.g. 'because', 'however', 'despite'. Participants spent ten minutes developing their key message, and then they broke into four groups and shared their key message with the group. Group members then gave feedback to each other about their key messages.

After the group activity, participants returned to a plenary session in which they highlighted difficulties they had with creating a clear key message, as follows:

1. It is difficult to explain the point-of-view of the paper in a single sentence.
2. It is difficult to state the exact problem the research seeks to address.
3. Participants were not clear of the difference between a research 'problem statement' and the key message.
4. It is difficult to find the focus in a single sentence key message if there is more than one important fact or idea.
5. Reducing information to one sentence is difficult.
6. Some participants realised they were mixing issues up in their key message, and this led to a lack of clarity.
7. Some felt that they had the information they needed to write, but they were having difficulty communicating it in the right way.
8. Deciding what is really **key** and what is not is difficult.
9. Words must be used precisely as poor word choice confuses the readers.
10. Some participants had difficulty setting the context of their key message in one sentence, as they could not assume the readers pre-existing knowledge on the subject.
11. It is important to state both the problem researched and the outcome/findings/solution of the research in the key statement.
12. Participants were unclear about **when** in the research to writing process they should develop their key message.
13. It is hard to change your key statement and it must be written in a way that does not undermine your research.
14. It is hard to be specific.
15. Writing short sentences is difficult.

Rebecca explained that a ‘problem statement’ was the question asked by researchers, before the research was undertaken. The key message should be the answer to the ‘problem statement’, whether researchers found what they thought they would find or not. If no answer was found to the ‘problem statement’ in the research process, researchers would have to decide on a new key message, probably explaining why the research has not answered the ‘problem statement’ (see *Figure 1*). Writers should determine the key message once they have finished the research and analysed the research. Once the analysis is complete, it is important to decide the key message **before** commencing with writing, as the writing should be structured around the key message.

Figure 1: The link between the research process and writing a research article



4. Writing a scientific paper

In a plenary session, participants brainstormed around the question: 'What is a scientific paper?' as follows:

- A scientific paper is a rigorous process of review and rewriting to get to scientific perfection.
- A scientific paper presents research findings.
- A scientific paper is evidence based.
- A scientific paper answers a research problem.

Rebecca explained that while all of these were true, a scientific paper should **present an argument**. The methodology and results should support the argument. A scientific paper should tell the story of:

- why the research was undertaken (*introduction*);
- how the research was done (*methodology*);
- what was learnt from the research (*results*);
- interpret the results and explain how the research fits in with other research in the field (e.g. does it support existing research or bring it into questions?) (*discussion*); and
- the significance of the research and how it should be taken forward (*conclusion*).

Many of the participants' draft papers submitted had presented the results, but they did not make clear a strong key argument, and therefore did not explain *how* the findings supported the key argument. Identifying the key argument or message before you begin to write is important to ensuring a good structure for your writing, as you need to make clear how each sentence, paragraph and section supports your key argument.

As many participants were still grappling with developing a key statement or key argument, Rebecca indicated that this was a sign that participants needed to spend more time thinking, analysing the data and discussing ideas with others, before they were ready to write the main body of their paper. She explained that it was important to get very clear in your mind what you wanted to say, before you work on your draft. At the same time, the drafts participants had already written should have helped explore the important themes, ideas and findings of the research. But now it was important for participants to start completely fresh with a new draft where they could make clear the links between the research question, the methods used, the findings and the **key argument**.

To stimulate creativity, she also said writers need to engage their emotions. Even though scientific writing should not be emotional writing, strong emotions around particular ideas and facts could help you make decisions about what is important in a text and what is not – in most cases, what interests the writer, what the writer is passionate about is likely to interest the reader as well, and if the writer can convey a certain amount of passion to the reader, it makes for a more engaging read. On the other hand, if something about writing is frustrating the writer, it could mean that this area needs to be thought through better, so that the writing comes easier.

Regarding the structure of scientific papers, she referred participants to *page 66* of the pilot manual, which outlines the structure as follows:

i. Title
ii. Abstract or Executive summary
iii. Key words
iv. Introduction
v. Methodology
vi. Results
vii. Discussion

viii. Conclusion
ix. References

Although the title, abstract or executive summary, key words and introduction come first in the paper, they are usually only written last. Normally, the first section written for a scientific paper would be the methodology.

4.1 Methodology

In a plenary session, participants brainstormed what information should be included in the methodology section of a scientific paper, as follows:

- ***What*** *instruments were used in the research?* All instruments must be listed, but the description of instruments does not need to be too detailed if they are commonly used by other researchers in the field. Don't forget to name the instruments used for *analysing* the data.
- ***How*** *were the instruments used?* Describe the order in which instruments were used and the logic of using the instruments in this order.

For each instrument listed, the methodology section should then describe (in one or two paragraphs per instrument):

- ***Why*** *were these instruments chosen?* Explain if these methods are commonly used in the field of work and give citations/ examples of where it has been used before. If the methods are not commonly used or if the methods are new, explain why it is appropriate to the subject matter, and why existing methods were not useful in answering your research questions. Issues concerning validity, reliability and cultural issues regarding instruments should also be considered.
- ***Who*** *participated in the research?* You should list both the research team AND the various 'objects of research'.
  - Regarding the **research team**, state how many researchers worked on the project and what differing roles they performed – don't forget to include those involved in *analysing* the research, where applicable. If there were field workers, explain how many there were, what work they did and if they were especially trained for the research.
  - Regarding the **'objects of research'** for each instrument used explain how many participants were involved and how they were selected. For example, if you used sample questionnaires, describe how you targeted people to answer the questions, how many were distributed and how many answered. If you held focus group discussions, how many people were in each focus group, how were they selected and how was the composition of the groups decided? If you selected individuals for focussed interviews explain how many were chosen and what criteria were used for selection.
- ***Where*** *did the research take place?* Briefly list the different communities involved in the research and the places where the different aspects of the research were conducted.
- ***When*** *did the research get done?* In some cases this can be important information, especially if you are trying to determine change between some old research and your research, or change between the start of your research programme and the end. Stating when the research was done helps the reader contextualised the information.

The methodology should give a clear picture of the research design and any problems with the process (you can refer back to your research design in the original project proposal to write up the methodology section). The methodology section presents the study of the methods, i.e. it describes the methods and instruments and analyses the usefulness of these. In the methodology section, weaknesses in the methodology should be listed. If you planned a particular research methodology, but in practice undertook a different

methodology, you should explain the change – giving valid reasons for the variation. Explain if the methodology worked, and if not, why not? You should also include one paragraph explaining ethical clearance and the type of consent given by participants.

Workshop participants went on to clarify the difference between quantitative and qualitative research, both in the design process and in identifying the research type in the write up of the methodology section of the scientific paper. They suggested that this be included in the writer's manual, explaining that quantitative research was usually done with large sample sets and was intended to identify trends in population groups, whereas qualitative research was usually done with smaller groups and intended to identify people's *experiences* of particular situations, processes or policies. But qualitative research always had a quantitative element, as it was possible to quantify the number of participants and quantify the variations between the participants.

After the plenary discussion, participants were reminded of the importance of writing with a logical paragraph structure: starting with a **topic sentence** (key message of the paragraph), followed by **supporting ideas** and the **closing sentence**. The methodology section should normally not be longer than two pages. Participants then divided into pairs to work on their own methodologies.

4.2 Results

Rebecca explained that in some scientific papers writers combine the results and discussion sections, presenting each finding followed by discussion of it, but in other cases writers put the results and discussion in separate sections. The main purpose of the results section is to explain in detail what you found in the course of your research and once the data had been analysed. It is important to structure the presentation of your findings, presenting a broad overview of the findings first, then moving onto more detail. In the case of PRA papers, writers might also need to separate out the findings made by PRA participants and the findings made by researchers (in some cases these might be different).

In presenting the results, writers should compare and contrast the different results, making clear the links between the different results. The findings should not be presented as an undifferentiated mass, but should be clearly explained in a narrative form, using proper paragraph structure (i.e. **topic sentence**, **supporting arguments**, **closing statement**).

In the draft reports prepared for the workshop, a number of writers had presented the results as long bullet lists, in multiple tables or in multiple figures. Rebecca explained that this was not reader-friendly and made it difficult to digest the results. She said that bullet points, tables and figures should only be used to **highlight** key points and should be used sparingly. In general, the findings should be written in narrative form, with no more than six tables and figures. Also when tables and figures were used, they should be preceded by a guide sentence highlighting the most important information on the table or figure.

4.3 Discussion

The discussion should make **links** between the key argument and the findings, showing how the evidence supports the key argument, and if necessary, how the findings contradict the key argument. In this section, it is also important to discuss how this key argument is supported or contradicted by other research in the field, and how the research findings are supported or contradicted by other research. Do not go off on tangents in this section, but stick to evidence you have to back up your key argument. If you did not find all the evidence to support your key argument in your own research, you should refer to other research that does have the evidence.

Start with a broad overview discussion first, then move onto the details and then conclude with a final paragraph drawing all the findings and discussion to reassert your key message.

This section is likely to be the heaviest in terms of citations, as many references are needed to show that your argument is related to other research in the field (although in the case of a literature review, both the findings and discussion sections would be very reference heavy). Rebecca referred participants to page 97 in *Appendix 2* to see in text referencing style for EQUINET papers.

The discussion section of the paper is also likely to be the most theoretical, as you theorise about why you got the particular results from your research. In some cases, if your research results contradict the results of other research, this could be due to a flaw in your own research, a flaw in other research or because of changes over time. If any of your results were surprising (either to yourself or other researchers) you need to carefully offer a theoretical explanation for this that is supported by the findings. You can present theories for which there is no evidence, but then you should highlight the lack of evidence and suggest this as an area for further research.

After her explanation of the results and discussion sections, Rebecca referred participants to page 69-70 of the manual for further explanation of the purpose of the results and discussion sections. Then participants broke into groups and told the story of their paper to each other. The group participants interrogated the stories and helped each other pull out important details. From there, after a brief report back session, participants went into pairs to work on writing the results and discussion sections of their papers.

4.4 Conclusion

Participants broke into groups to discuss what they thought should go into the conclusion of a scientific paper. The groups then came back to the plenary and displayed the results of their discussion on newsprint on the wall, in a gallery. The participants compared and contrasted the different presentations and consolidated the conclusions section into one list, with input from facilitators using page 45-46 of the manual. A conclusion should contain the following information:

- Did you achieve the objectives of your research?
- Summarise the main points of your argument (main implications) and the key message.
- What were the limitations of the study?
- Does the research have validity?
- Restate your position as a researcher.
- Recommendations, including:
  - areas requiring further research;
  - policy changes required;
  - actions to be taken by researchers or others;
  - how you will take the research forward (e.g. lobbying government, community education, engaging in public debate, further research, etc).

4.5 Introduction

Pierre briefly explained that when deciding to read a document, first impressions count; therefore the introduction is one of the most important pieces of writing in a scientific paper. In particular the first sentence is the most important, and writers should try to make a good first impression from the first word. The participants then brainstormed around what should be included in the introduction of a scientific paper as follows:

- the key message
- background information, including:

  - historical/ political/ geographic/ economic country or community background relevant to the research, including relevant statistics;
  - background on the context of the research, for example, describe the current field of research and what it covers, gaps in the research, differences between research and contradictions, whether similar studies have been done in other areas, etc.
- definition of main terms and concepts contained in the paper;
- the motivation for doing the research; and
- an outline of the structure of argument later in the paper, highlighting key points, perhaps in a bullet list.

4.6 References

To practice referencing, participants broke into four groups and each group undertook *Activity 3.6* on pages 57-61 of the manual. Each group then presented the model answer for one reference, with Rebecca inputting corrections on the data projector. Participants then discussed difficulties they had with the exercise, in that:

- not all relevant information was there;
- it was not always clear why some types of information had been included;
- the documents contained confusing information about the source of the documents; and
- they were unsure what to include and what to leave out in some cases.

Participants felt that the activity was confusing and that it should be clearer or better structured in the manual. Participants also indicated that more discussion on acceptable references was needed, for example, some journals may not accept newspaper articles that have not been peer reviewed. Issues such as citations on unpublished material were also raised, e.g. How would personal communications be cited? Are they acceptable?

4.7 Executive summary

Pierre referred participants to the section on writing an executive summary on page 68 of the manual, and said participants should read through it in the evening and also look closely at *Appendix 4* in the manual. He also explained the difference between an executive summary (or abstract) and the introduction, as outlined on page 68 of the manual: they perform similar functions and contain similar content, but an abstract is shorter and less discursive, as required by journals, while an executive summary is for scientific publications of, for example, occasional papers – not journal articles.

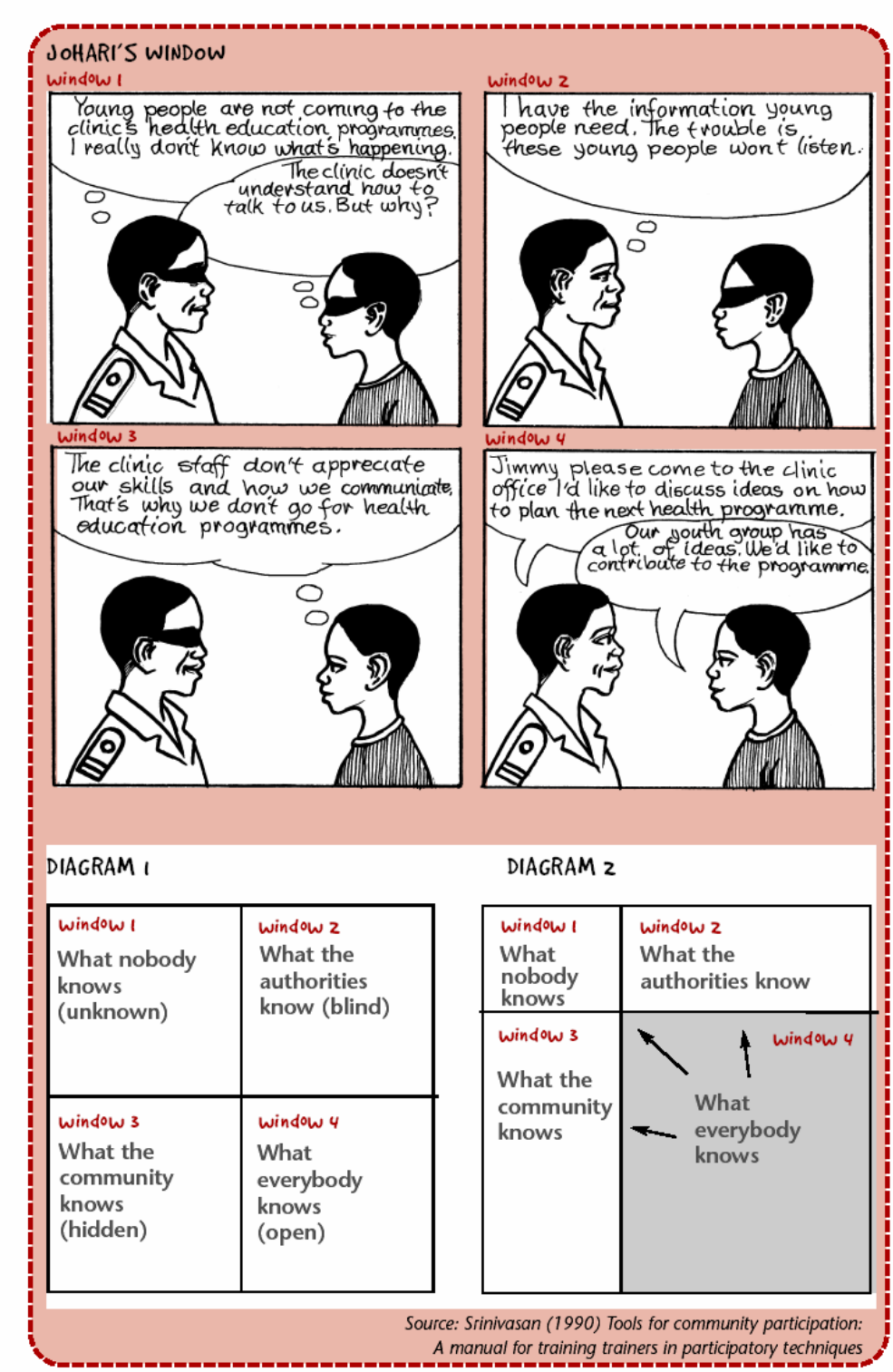
Participants were also asked to continue working in pairs on the results and discussion section of their papers.

4.8 The title

Pierre introduced some of the general ideas for titles as outlined on page 62 of the manual. He also explained that a title did not necessarily have to be a full sentence, it might have words such as ‘the’, ‘a’ and ‘is’ left out, and might use punctuation, e.g. colons to link to related ideas about the paper. He advised that the title should include a verb, so that it sounds strong and active. In addition, a title should never be more than fifteen words. Participants then worked in pairs to produce a good title for their paper. The facilitators moved around the class giving direction and pointers, and all participants came up with a strong title for their paper.

5. Communication between researchers and stakeholders

Rene Loewenson presented the Johari's window activity on how to improve the communication between researchers about research and other stakeholders (in particular policy makers and communities).



From: Loewenson et al, 2005.

She explained the four quadrants of Johari's window:
1) researchers and policy makers/ communities are both unknown to each other
2) researchers don't involve policy makers/ communities
3) policy makers/ communities don't see researchers
4) researchers and policy makers/ communities communicate well with each other.

The participants broke into groups and for each quadrant in the window, brainstormed around the cause of each of the four situations. The results were reported back to the communities, as follows:

1. Unknown to both	**2. Blind: researchers don't take communities/ policy makers into account** Researchers are not involved in the policy making process. There is a language barrier in the types of language used by researchers and that used by policy makers. Researchers "know everything", they are arrogant 'empty vessels'. Researchers have a lot of preconceptions. --- Language is a barrier to researchers seeing communities. They may not see the relevance of a particular area or community. Researchers are not involved in community processes. There can be political, religious or cultural blindness. There is a clash of interests.
3. Hidden: policy makers/ communities don't see researchers Political processes take place between political groups, which tends to exclude researchers. Policy processes are different to research processes. There is suspicion about the political agenda of researchers. Research and researchers are not brought into policy processes. --- Communities are the subjects of research, but often get no feedback from researchers. Researchers are outsiders. There is linear top-down communication from researchers to communities. Parallel communication. There are issues of intimidation, ownership and suspicion. Communities have no personal benefit from researchers.	**4. Open: researchers and policy makers/ communities communicate well** Shared values and benefits. Joint ownership, mutual respect, shared knowledge. Insider/outsider. Flexibility and clear input points into processes. Acknowledge communication and leadership. --- Joint participation Two way feedback. Appreciation and openness. Avoid predisposed positions. Sharing at all stages.

Key: Communities; Policy makers.

Participants felt that communication between policy makers and communities is good when:

- contact happens early in the research process with invitations to participate;
- researchers discuss but do not tell;
- researchers elicit contributions;
- there is dialogue and outreach;
- when all parties receive recognition for their contributions;
- when the process is enjoyable and meaningful;
- when shared potential is recognised and when the value of the research is shared; and
- when research moves beyond talking into action.

6. Editing

Rebecca spoke about the craft of writing. She said every piece of writing you undertake has limits in terms of the form it can take; even creative writing has certain rules and conventions that cannot be broken, as the conventions convey particular types of information. Every type of writing has traditions, rules and limitations. For example, in poetry, across languages and cultures there is a shared consensus about what constitutes a poem, 'rules' we all agree on but that are difficult to define. These 'rules' are limitations but we have incredible creativity and variety within those limitations. Scientific writing is no different in this regard. Writing within the limitations, while also expressing passion and creativity is in fact 'the craft of writing'. And at this level, writing rises from being purely functional communication to being an art form.

When you decide to write, to be a writer, you are deciding to be an artist as well as a scientist. And like any craft, it takes time to hone your skills, practice the skills, grow and develop them. None of us ever perfect the art of writing; it is a process. In each new draft, we strive to improve, sometimes making big leaps and sometimes small changes. But ultimately, the art of writing happens at the level of words and grammar. To craft your writing, you need to develop a deep relationship with vocabulary; you need to be constantly updating your vocabulary and growing your vocabulary.

The 'youth of today' have a different approach to language and if we want to communicate with them, we need to be open to the radical ways they have changed language and be prepared to revolutionise our own ways of communicating and our own ways of thinking. If you are constantly aware of language and vocabulary, constantly growing your vocabulary, trying out new vocabulary – at that level, language comes ALIVE.

Writing should never be dull. Writing should always be lively.

The craft of writing also happens on the level of grammar. Most people have a phobia about learning grammar … but when you have a deep understanding of grammar and a deep relationship with grammar, you can play with your writing.

So word **choice** and grammar really bind together to make the difference between a functional piece of writing and a creative one. As writers you will always have to make choices; decision-making is a major part of writing well. Firstly you must decide the focus of your writing, and then you choose what to put in and what to leave out, what is essential and what is not. You have to choose between words, between sentences, between sentence structures, paragraph structures. And once you have written your first draft, you choose what to keep and what to throw out. Do not be afraid to throw it all out and start again, you will have learnt something in the process of writing the first draft, and you will learn something new again in writing the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth drafts: each time, working at a

deeper and deeper level, each time focusing on different details and each time polishing your writing more and more.

Editing, word choice and grammar are the key ways to polish a piece of writing.

Rebecca said, certain word processing and computer skills can help you refine the editing process and write better, but before leading into developing these computer skills, participants played a word game.

6.1 Word choice

In this section, Rebecca started by introducing various words to participants who said what they thought the words meant, whether they would use the word in a scientific paper and if not, why not. Participants identified words that are too emotive, in general, for scientific papers and pointed to circumstances under which certain words might be used, and other circumstances in which those same words would not be used.

The participants then discussed the word ‘rape’ at some length, as one paper was talking about this issue as ‘sexual violence’. People felt that in some cases the word was too emotive for a scientific paper, and at other times, it was wrong to shy away from it.

Participants then went on to look at examples of complex words, and thought of simpler synonyms. In general, participants were quick to find synonyms, and Rebecca explained that they needed to watch for unnecessary complex words in their own writing, and look for simpler synonyms.

She then showed participants, on the data projector, how to use the thesaurus function in MSWord to make choices about words. Using particular words chosen from one randomly chosen participant paper, participants discussed if they would keep certain words as they were in the paper or replace them with another word.

6.2 Computer skills

Rebecca then introduced the activities around using computer skills to improve writing. She asked participants to work through the activities in *Module 2* of the manual, and to put up their hands if they were struggling to complete any of the activities, so that she could move around and assist them. One of the activities in the module was to perform a grammar check on their own papers; Rebecca explained that in some cases participants might be unable to correct grammar problems identified as they might be unfamiliar with the terminology. She asked them to note any unfamiliar grammatical terminology, so that they could learn about those particular grammar problems in the afternoon session.

She explained that participants were probably at different skill levels, and therefore, should just work through the manual at their own speed. Some people might finish the whole module, while others may only cover the basics. Even if there was not time to complete more than the basics in the workshop, participants could always refer back to the manual after the workshop to keep improving and developing their skills.

The main problems encountered in working through the manual were that:

- sometimes participants screens did not look the same as the screen shots in the examples;
- some people’s style sheets contained too many options (need to include instructions on how to change type of list);

- in installing the template, some computers were set up differently so that different versions of word were storing the templates in different places (will have to think of a work around for this).

Participants also indicated that unfamiliarity with the software also made some of the activities difficult, but that in most cases the instructions were clear, and therefore they felt they would be able to practice and use these skills in future. Some participants felt unsure of the purpose of using templates, but other participants were very enthusiastic about the usefulness of this in their work, including:

- helping to structure documents;
- to develop a house style for their organisations (e.g. selecting consistent fonts, heading style etc.)
- improved presentation; and
- useful for different types of publications that must be produced regularly, e.g. organisational newsletters.

6.3 Grammar

Pierre introduced the topics to be covered in the grammar session of the workshop, as follows:

- sentence structure and passive voice
- word choice
- wrong verbs
- nominalisation (noun groups)
- meaningless phrases
- 'leg-of-the-table' rule
- dangling participles.

6.3.1 Sentence structure and passive voice

Pierre explained that the structure of a simple sentence in English was:

subject object verb

He referred participants to page 41-43 of the manual for examples. He went on to explain that academic and scientific writing was often plagued with poor sentence structure, in particular 'passive voice'. Writers often used to create an air of fake objectivity and to remove themselves from the picture. He referred participants to pages 49-50 of the manual for examples. He explained how participants could use grammar check in their word processor to identify passive voice, or to search for the words 'by' or 'to be' in the document, as these often flag a passive sentence. In some cases, passive voice is used to protect confidentiality as the reader will not know who took the action described by the verb.

6.3.2 Word choice

In writing scientific papers, you usually need to use technical terminology; however, writers often choose complex or long words unnecessarily. This can sound pompous and makes a text unapproachable by the reader. You can generally communicate much more effectively with the reader by making simpler word choices. Participants then worked in groups on a list of complicated words and found the simpler alternatives.

6.3.3 Wrong verbs

Pierre described the typical examples of wrong verbs being used, as outlined on page 54-55 of the manual, then he drilled participants on the short verbs to watch out for: make, give, do, effect and have.

6.3.4 Nominalisation (noun groups)

Pierre explained how 'nominalisation' created wordy writing and showed some examples of how to address the problem. He then wrote examples on newsprint, and randomly selected participants to correct the grammar errors.

6.3.5 Meaningless phrases

Pierre listed the commonly used meaningless phrases listed on page 55 of the manual, then drilled participants on those phrases, so that they could remember not to use them.

6.3.6 'Leg-of-the-table' rule

Pierre explained the 'leg-of-the-table' rule, wrote examples on the newsprint and asked participants to correct the errors.

6.3.7 Dangling participles.

Pierre explained what 'dangling participles' are, and showed some examples. Participants then tackled a number of examples written on newsprint and corrected them.

7. Publishing in peer review journals

Professor Molyneux from the Malawi Medical Journal was introduced to the delegates. In the plenary, he asked participants why they thought peer review was important. Participants suggested that peer review:

- was a learning exercise to improve the writer's skills;
- could point to information gaps in the paper so that it could be improved;
- identify further literature from the field that should be cited in your study;
- enables knowledge sharing;
- acted as a quality control mechanism for scientific publishing;
- enhances the researcher's CV; and
- allows you to access more grants and promotions.

However, participants also identified the snags with the peer review process, including:

- the devastating effect of negative comments;
- misconceptions with the meaning of reviewers comments;
- bias and personal slant from peer reviewers;
- harmonising comments from different peer reviewers can be tricky;
- the referee could be closed to new methodologies, or new ideas – it can be a conservative process; and
- if the referee is a competitor, they could pan your ideas, then steal them (sometimes even unconsciously).

In spite of the problems, peer review is still the best mechanism we have for identifying and evaluating scientific writing. And therefore, scientific writers sought publication in these journals for altruistic reasons (e.g. community benefit), to advance their own careers and to raise the profile of their own institutions.

Prof Molyneux said that for some time there had been a bias in terms of the 10/90 gap where most published research was about 10% of the world's health problems in developed countries, while the 90% disease burden of developing countries was hardly discussed in many health journals. He said this is slowly shifting now, and many journals are making a concerted effort to publish more African research and more African scientific writing,

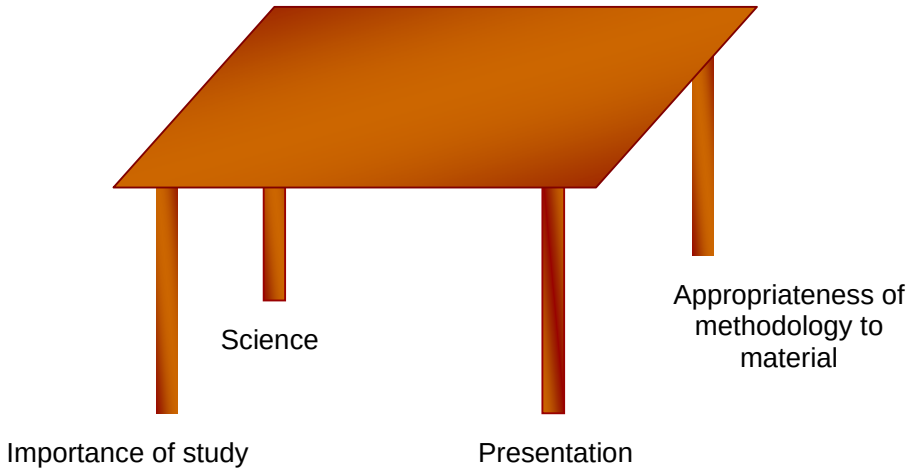
therefore there are many new opportunities for Africans writing scientific papers to get published in some of the top international journals, such as *The Lancet*, the *British Medical Journal*, etc.

In addition, Prof Molyneux said that the larger international journals were also willing to publish different types of things, other than scientific papers, such as poetry, non-scientific material. These journals tend to have quick turnaround times on replies, so it is a good idea to submit to them first, then if it is rejected cast your net wider, as if you aim high, you might be surprised with acceptance.

General topic journals such as *Tropical Doctor* sought articles which painted a picture of how things were on the ground, which was not necessarily a rigorous scientific piece. Articles on interesting topics would be considered, even if not entirely scientific. In addition, participants were advised to look for journals on specific topics such as 'malaria' or 'mental health' journals if they were working in those fields. Local and regional journals would also be open to publishing on a wide variety of topics, provided the papers were within their area of coverage. So then, the *Malawi Medical Journal* would publish on a wide range of health issues in Malawi, etc.

On receiving questions from participants, Prof Molyneux advised that you can only submit to one journal at a time, and that some journals did not have quick turn around times on submissions. He advised that the first step was, after waiting to months, to follow up regularly, seeking feedback on publication. He advised that if necessary, if a journal was not responsive in giving timelines, you could politely withdraw your paper if you felt they had not got back to you timeously and you would be better off trying another journal.

In conclusion, Prof Molyneux said editors were frequently asked 'What is the most important thing to get right in writing a scientific paper?' He explained the paper as a table, standing on four legs, without each leg the table would not stand … similarly a paper was not publishable unless it addressed all the four issues:



He then asked participants to write their own journal submission letter. In plenary, participants each presented their letters and received comments from Prof Molyneux and the facilitators on how to improve the submission letters. He gave many tips on writing these submission letters, as follows:

- Use a descriptive title for the letter, but do not explain that you are submitting and your submission is attached as this is redundant.

- Promote the paper a bit, but do not over explain. Keep it to the point, making a brief compelling statement about the issue addressed in the paper and the importance/ impact of the findings.
- Use personal pronouns in the letter, rather than third person.
- Don't lapse into formal writing; rather use a more journalistic style or conversational style, without being sensationalistic.
- Always read your letter out loud to another person to check if it is easy to read and flows. If you battle to read your own piece to another, it is a sign that the writing does not flow well.
- Do not use words like 'try', 'attempt', 'aim to' … say what you did successfully!
- Editors will most likely reject a submission if you try to manipulate them emotionally or attempt to shove your opinion down the editor's throat.
- Do not attempt to flatter the editor or the journal.
- Do not try to argue your paper, but imagine you are conveying your key message to the lay person.
- Keep it light and immediate.

8. Authorship, copyright and plagiarism

Participants broken into three groups, each group tackling a different topic and different set of questions. They then reported their findings back to the plenary, as follows:

Group 1: Authorship

Q: What authorship issues have you encountered?
Deciding who the main author is; whose name appears first on the paper?

Q: Why is authorship important?
Authorship acknowledges the contributions of those who worked on the research and writing the research report.
It is important for career and promotional purposes.
It is important to lend authenticity to pieces of work.

Q: How do you determine authorship? What activities must you have participated in to be considered an author?
Writing for publication, being a research assistant, designing and planning the research, analysis of data, etc. must all be taken into account when deciding authorship, as discussed on page 7 of the manual.

Rebecca added that it is a good idea to sign an authorship agreement before you undertake a project, so that you know who will be named as the author. In some cases, an organisation may take credit as the author, while the actual writers may not be acknowledge on the front cover. These issues are usually stated in an employment contract if you are employed as a writer and/or researcher.

Group 2: Copyright

Q: What is copyright (for written publications)?
It is an intellectual property right, guaranteed by both domestic and international law, and contained in common law, for protecting literary and artistic works. It applies for a limited time after the death of the author.

Q: What copyright issues have you encountered (for written/printed publications)? Give some examples.
Photocopying someone's work and distributing it without authority from the publisher or copyright holder.
Use of diagrams, tables, graphs, etc without acknowledging the source and without getting permission from the publisher (you always need permission from the copyright holder to copy diagrams, illustrations, graphs, photographs, etc).

Q: How can an author transfer copyright? Under what circumstances?
Authors retain copyright unless they actually sign a written contract assigning copyright to someone else. Even if you have signed a copyright agreement, it might only be for the new owner to use in limited circumstances, e.g. only for publication in one issue of a journal. You need to read copyright agreements carefully before you sign away to many of your rights.

If there is more than one author on a paper, one cannot give copyright to a third party, without the agreement of any other copyright holders.

Group 3: Plagiarism
Q: What is plagiarism?
Plagiarism means passing off the work of another as your own, in other words, claiming you are the author of a piece of writing when someone else wrote it.

Q: What is the relationship between plagiarism and copyright? How are plagiarism and copyright infringement different?
Plagiarism means you have not acknowledged the source and therefore are claiming authorship yourself, but in copyright infringement, you might acknowledge the source in the copies, but make unlawful copies of a written work.

Q: How does a court determine plagiarism?
Courts determine plagiarism based on 'fair use' laws, as described on page 10-11 of the manual.

If you are in any doubt as to whether you are infringing on copyright, it is best to get the copyright holders permission for your use of their material.

9. Evaluation

9.1 Workshop evaluation

Rene asked participants for feedback on the workshop in a plenary discussion. Overall the comments were positive, but the following criticisms were noted:

- The details in the original call for papers did not match the specifics of the workshop; for example participants were asked to bring some reference material for their paper with them, but they did not use it. The peer review process stated in the call was not met exactly, and therefore, we need to ensure the call procedure etc are workable and feasible, and thereby match the actual methodology for lead up to the workshop and workshop itself.
- Participants were stunned about being asked to put their drafts aside and start afresh with a new draft at the workshop, as they thought they would emerge from the workshop with a complete paper, and that had not proved to be the case. However, most participants ultimately agreed with this approach, as they had then focussed on **writing** skills, not editing skills and had improved their writing skills. One participant said that the process of putting their papers aside had been "learning to unlearn" in order to learn something new and different.

- There were a lot of time constraints, and this led to slippage on feedback on certain activities from facilitators. Given the size of the class, participants did not feel more individual feedback was possible, but as this was felt to be needed, smaller workshops were recommended for the future.
- A wider variety of activities would have been better, as there was a lot of group and pair work, and it was felt that those with PRA experience might be able to contribute some better methodologies to manual.
- At the start of the workshop, there should have been a much stronger bridge from the research process to the writing process, as participants and facilitators grappled and struggled to understand each other on these issues, although understanding was reached in the end.
- Some participants had thought that certain sections of the workshop were unnecessary, e.g. grammar and computer skills, but even approaching the workshop with that attitude, admitted they had learnt a lot on both these sections of the course that would be useful to them in future. There was a general agreement that all sessions should stay in, although there may be some issues around timing etc.
- It would be useful to have more input during the whole workshop process from a journal editor or someone with peer review experience, and Prof Molyneux's input was considered invaluable and greatly appreciated. The facilitators agreed they had also learnt a lot from Prof Molyneux.
- Participants felt that there should be more 'hands on' interaction with actual journals; we should bring copies of journals to the workshop for participants to look at and analyse, for example, looking at other examples of methodologies, introductions, conclusions etc, to get a sense of the parameters and the variety available in writing.
- Making citations and finding material for citations was a gap in the material covered by the workshop. Participants felt that they needed more guidance on searching for relevant material and accessing the latest research in their fields.
- Sometimes links between the content of the workshop and the content of the manual were weak, and it would be good to make more links between the two, to help participants' navigate the workshop.

Participants felt they had gained a lot from sharing their writing with each other, getting 'peer review' in an active process, and having the eye of other critical thinkers to critique their approach in their writing. Several participants commented that they felt they had a learnt a whole new approach to writing that was more constructive and helpful than any previous approach they had adopted. One participant commented that she had been on writing workshops before but this was the first time she felt she was going away having spent time practicing her writing skills and having learnt some real writing tools, instead of just theory about writing that she could not recall.

Rene asked participants when they thought it would be most useful to insert the writing workshops in all our theme processes and streams of work. After some discussion it was agreed that when participants had completed their research, but before they wrote their first draft, it would be important to have the skills workshop as it was currently designed. Participants felt it was important to get the first draft written well from the outset and this workshop design would help them get that first draft right, so that they could go away and work on additional drafts on their own and in conjunction with others.

For those in EQUINET processes, the agreed follow up process from the workshop was that participants would submit their papers via the existing EQUINET processes in their theme area; these would eventually arrive at TARSC for technical review and copy edit and at that stage the authors would receive further feedback on the papers. If there were any writing questions in the meantime, participants could send these to Rebecca and she would reply (in consultation with Pierre, if necessary). For those not in EQUINET processes, it was

agreed that participants could submit their drafts to Rebecca for comment, once they have written a semi-final draft.

9.2. Evaluation of pilot manual

Participants were asked to write their detailed comments in the manual, but provided reflection of general issues in a plenary discussion. The following gaps were noted in the manual:

- links between research and writing processes at the start of the manual;
- the information provided by Prof Molyneux;
- more examples needed, like the one in *Appendix 4* on the executive summary, especially model examples for the methodology, results, discussion, conclusions, and introduction;
- explanation of quantitative and qualitative research;
- the manual should have an index;
- the brainstorming activities we did are not in the manual
- a lot more guidance is needed in the introduction on how to work through the manual;
- the grammar section should have more examples;
- more information on how to access information on the internet – finding relevant material, literature reviews, etc; and
- some participants suggested it would be good to have a section explaining how to write a research protocol, required to get ethical approval from academic institutions.

There are a number of errors, especially in the examples that need to be fixed, including the example on paragraph structure and linking words (page 44), the activity on referencing (page 56), the example submission letter (page 75), etc. These have been noted where they have been picked up and the manual needs a thorough check to make sure the examples are accurate. In addition, the manual should be restructured to reflect the process better. There is an unresolved tension in the manual between general writing skills and writing scientific publications, as it was conceptualised to build writing skills across different types of publications, but as the workshops were focussed on scientific papers, we need to consider if that should be the focus of the manual, and include other types of publications in some other format elsewhere, or …??

Participants commented that they found the manual easy to read and a good reference guide to many aspects of writing: ‘The manual is in my opinion very comprehensive and accessible.’

10. Closing

Caleb Othieno thanked the facilitators for a fruitful workshop on behalf of the delegates. The facilitators thanked the delegates for their hard work and inspiration and brought the workshop to a close.

Appendix 1

Regional training Workshop on
Writing skills for scientific papers and peer reviewed journals
Lilongwe, Malawi, 20-23 October 2007
TARSC, EQUINET
locally hosted by REACH Trust

PROGRAMME

Saturday 20 October

Purpose of day: Preparing for writing and introduction to scientific writing

TIME	SESSION	SESSION CONTENT	ROLE
INTRODUCTION: Writing skills			
8am	Introductions and welcome	Registration Welcome Introduction Delegate introduction (ice breaker)	FM REACH RP, PN PN&FM
MODULE 1: Preparation and Story telling			
9.00am	Brainstorming Mind mapping	Individual activity; pair activity	PN
10.15am	Tea		
10.45	Practicing logical writing	Paragraph structure	PN&RP
13.00pm	LUNCH and RELAX		
MODULE 4: Writing scientific papers			
14.00	Overview of scientific writing Methodology	Presentation Plenary discussion	RP RP
15.45pm	Tea		
16.00pm	Own writing	Pair work	Delegates
17.30pm	Own work	Finalise key message and methodology	Delegates

Sunday 21 October

Purpose of day: Writing scientific papers

TIME	SESSION	SESSION CONTENT	ROLE
8.15am	Feedback: own work	Plenary discussion of problems, questions	RP
MODULE FOUR: Writing scientific papers			
8.45	Key message, results and discussion	Plenary discussion Group story telling	RP RP&PN
10.30	**TEA**		
10.45	Own writing	Group work to write discussion and findings	Delegates
13.15	**Lunch**		
14.15	Writing the conclusion	Group discussions Gallery report back	Delegates RP
15.00	**TEA**		
15.15	Writing the introduction	Plenary discussion	PN
16.30	References	Activity in Module 3, page 57-61	RP
Evening	Own work	Read sections on executive summaries Continue writing discussion and findings	Delegates

Monday 22 October

Purpose of day: Editing skills

TIME	SESSION	SESSION CONTENT	ROLE
MODULE 3: The craft of writing			
8.30am	The craft of writing	Presentation	RP
9am	Communicating equity work	Activity using Johari's Window	RL
10.00	Word choice	Plenary word games and discussion	RP
10.00	**Tea**		
MODULE 2: COMPUTER SKILLS			
11.15	Computer skills	Individual work on activities in Module 2	RP
12.30	**Lunch**		
MODULE 3: GRAMMAR			
13.30	Grammar skills	Games and plenary discussions on grammar	PN
17.00	Own work	Delegates work on own papers	Delegates

Tuesday 23 October

Purpose of day: Peer review journals

TIME	SESSION	SESSION CONTENT	ROLE
MODULE 5: PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS			
9am	Introduction: writing for peer review journals	Health journals, criteria for accepting and rejecting papers and the submission and peer review process	Prof Molyneux, Malawi
11am	**Tea**		
11.15	Writing for peer review journals	Title, abstract, key words and structure	PN/RP
13.00	**Lunch**		
14.00	Authorship, copyright and plagiarism	Group activity and report back to plenary	RP
15.00	**BOOK LAUNCH- SEE SEPARATE PROGRAMME**		

Wednesday 24 October

Purpose of day: Wrap up

TIME	SESSION	SESSION CONTENT	ROLE
REVISION AND FEEDBACK			
9am	Review of the workshop	Plenary discussion	RL
10 am	Way forward/ next steps	Plenary discussion	RL
1030am	**Tea**		
10.45am	Review of the manual	Feedback from group work Plenary discussion	Delegates RP/PN
12.00	Closing remarks		Delegate

Appendix 2

Training and Research Support Centre (TARSC), EQUINET, REACH Trust Regional Training on Writing Skills, 20-24 October2007, Lilongwe Malawi

DELEGATE LIST

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Equity in health *implies addressing differences in health status that are unnecessary, avoidable and unfair. In southern Africa, these typically relate to disparities across racial groups, rural/urban status, socio-economic status, gender, age and geographical region. EQUINET is primarily concerned with equity motivated interventions that seek to allocate resources preferentially to those with the worst health status (vertical equity). EQUINET seeks to understand and influence the redistribution of social and economic resources for equity oriented interventions, EQUINET also seeks to understand and inform the power and ability people (and social groups) have to make choices over health inputs and their capacity to use these choices towards health.*

EQUINET implements work in a number of areas identified as central to health equity in the region:

- Public health impacts of macroeconomic and trade policies
- Poverty, deprivation and health equity and household resources for health
- Health rights as a driving force for health equity
- Health financing and integration of deprivation into health resource allocation
- Public-private mix and subsidies in health systems
- Distribution and migration of health personnel
- Equity oriented health systems responses to HIV/AIDS and treatment access
- Governance and participation in health systems
- Monitoring health equity and supporting evidence led policy

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