

Book Review

Nav R. Kanel (2003). *Guidelines to Format Theses and Dissertations: A Quick Reference*. New Hira Books Enterprises, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal, x+106 pp. Price: NRS 70, ISBN: 99933-685-5-5.

A thesis or a dissertation is the culmination of a student's entire graduate education. Insofar as possible, it should make an original, substantive contribution to the literature. It should also reflect the technical mastery of a specific area of study. In practice, the originality and importance of a thesis/dissertation is determined primarily by his/her committee members and other readers.

In a written thesis or dissertation, the candidate should demonstrate his/her best communicative and intellectual skills. The review of the literature should be thoughtful and complete up to the date of submission. The discussion section should clearly relate to the obtained results. Since a thesis or dissertation is not a journal article, more details of the procedure adopted may be included in the methodology section than would usually be placed in a journal article. The overall writing should be in a uniform form and style.

However, students and their supervisors in Nepal have been bothered and confused regarding the proper format of theses and dissertations that they have been writing and supervising. Even though the then Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tribhuvan University published a format, *Format for Thesis and Dissertation* (in ca. 1976), to help the students in their thesis and dissertation formats, it is very primitive and incomplete in its coverage. It failed to cover some major aspects of thesis or dissertation writing. As the number of thesis and dissertation writing students has been increasing in Tribhuvan and other universities in Nepal, a book on the format of thesis and dissertation writing had been an urgent need to the concerned people.

Realizing the urgency for a book on the format of theses and dissertations, Professor Kanel wrote a book, *Guidelines to Format Theses and Dissertations: A Quick Reference*, by expanding his earlier articles, papers, and reports on the concerned area. In these circumstances, this book under review is highly useful for all the students and/or the faculty members who are going to write and/or supervise a master's thesis and/or a doctoral dissertation.

This book contains six chapters and an appendix with exhibits ranging from A to G. The author explains each and every topic essential for thesis and dissertation writing in a comprehensive and lucid manner. The first chapter begins with the definitions of the terms "thesis" and "dissertation". Though these two terms are used interchangeably in Nepal, the author suggests that the term "thesis" be used for the written presentation of the master level research and "dissertation" for the written presentation of a Ph.D. research. It also describes about the objective of the book and its contents.

The second chapter deals with the general format of a thesis or a dissertation. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the mechanical format of a thesis/dissertation, which includes three categories of materials namely, the preliminaries, the text of the report, and the reference materials. The second part deals with the page format, which clearly explains

about the chapters, chapter divisions and sub-divisions of a chapter, margins, indentation, spacing, pagination, and italicization and underlining. This really helps the researchers and their supervisors to properly format the concerned theses and dissertations. Understanding of this chapter would, therefore, help to remove any inconsistency in thesis and dissertation writing.

The third chapter is devoted to the use of quotations. This chapter discusses about five categories of quotations used in a thesis/dissertation. This will help to control the abuse of quotations in thesis or dissertation writing. Similarly, matters relating to the construction of tables and illustrations are explained in the fourth chapter. Placement, numbering, captions, footnotes, pagination and margins of tables and illustrations are discussed in this chapter.

Most of the students face the problem regarding the format of footnotes and they do not understand why footnotes are cited in theses or dissertations. The author explains about the importance of footnotes and methods of giving sources in the footnote format in Chapter Five. In this chapter, the author has also given some examples for describing a method for using website addresses as footnotes. The author has also discussed about APA and MLA styles of referencing in this chapter. He suggests a blend of both of these styles as they have their own weaknesses and strengths. This will help the students to follow a standard format for references and maintain uniformity throughout the research report. Finally, the last chapter, Chapter Six, is devoted to the description of "major sundries and accessories of a research report not covered in other chapters" (p. 8). A sample of different fonts and their sizes is given in the appendix.

Finally, though there are some typographical errors in the book, the contents and procedures given in the book are really appreciable and are highly useful to fulfill the existing gap in the uniformity regarding the format of theses and dissertations. In my opinion, however, certain terms such as Gregorian calendar, Arabic numbers, centered and left-flush headings need some explanations with appropriate examples. If such terms were clarified, that would increase the beauty of the book and help the students in a wider sense. If the universities of Nepal, including Tribhuvan University, follow this book as a standard procedural guideline for master's theses and doctoral dissertations, it will streamline the format of the research reports prepared by their students.

In summary, master level theses and doctoral dissertations are usually based on original empirical or methodological studies. Both of them call upon one's organized knowledge, imagination, investigative acumen, industry, persistence, and analytical and critical powers. The thesis or dissertation is a model of one's scholarship and a specimen of what one can achieve at this important stage of personal and professional development. Nevertheless, such theses and dissertations should be presented in a standard format. Whenever there are two or more methods/styles to do the same thing the candidate can choose one in a consistent manner. This also shows academic maturity in research. The book by Professor Kanel will be very helpful to lead one in this direction.

Nepal Electricity Authority
Durbar Marga, Kathmandu

Satis Chandra Devkota
Economist