

## **Relevance of Pre-Writing Stages in Essay Writing**

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**ABSTRACT:-**The relevance of pre-writing stages in essay writing would not be overemphasized. Experts in this concept are aware of this fact. Pre-writing steps are preliminary overview of how an essay would look like and it guides the writer(s) on things expected in the actual draft of the essay as well as guiding the reader(s) of what he /she is about to read in the essay. It is more or less the skeletal nature of an essay that would afterwards receive some flesh, skin, vein and blood to have a complete life. These veins, flesh, skin and blood are the phrases, clauses and sentences that would develop into several relevant paragraphs that would make up the essay. It is hoped that this paper would align the technical knowhow of the reader(s) as it succinctly brings out the beauty of preliminary writing techniques in essay writing especially to the youths who are always saddled with responsibilities of writing one form of essay or the other. This paper looks into the following in details: these statements, brainstorming, organizing and outlining, so as we can appreciate their relevance in an averagely written essay. A sample essay is also provided in furtherance of brightening the readers' minds.

**Key words:** *brainstorming, organization, and outlining*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **RELEVANT CLUES ABOUT ESSAY DEVELOPMENT**

Before you delve into the art of writing, there are several contending issues you should have in mind: Firstly, you should be certain of the kind of paper you intend writing. Is your work going to be summarizing the paper done by other writers? Or is it solely your personal ideas? Or should it consist of your ideas in comparison with some selected authors? Or better still is it on something else? Getting rational answers to the above questions one would go a long way in easing the preliminary hardship in writing and would serve as a focus to you as a writer.

Secondly, you should be aware of the time frame of the required write up (especially examinations and tests that are usually time guided) as well as the length of the writing because most of college writings (examinations and tests) are as well length guided as per page or word numbers. Knowing the expected length of a paper will help you decide exactly how detailed your treatment of a subject matter would be.

#### **PROPER KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR SUBJECT MATTER**

By this, it means you as a writer of an essay should have a clear knowledge and understanding of the topic you intend to write about. You should write on topic that you can explore accurately without facing difficulties in the composition. So, it is important that you take your time otherwise you would be short of expressions when you choose a topic you cannot fully generate ideas on.

#### **THESIS STATEMENT**

Thesis statement is the focus of the whole write up (essay). It is a constructed sentence containing what is obtainable in the essay and it guides you to remain focused as you write and readers would benefit from your writing. It is like a headline in a magazine or newspaper because it guides you of what you are about to read. According to (J. Langan 2005.P 49) "A good thesis statement does two things. Firstly, it tells the readers an essay's topic. Second, it presents the writer's attitudes, opinion, idea or point about that topic." As could be seen below,

there is the need to limit your topic so as to achieve adequate coverage of your subject matter. If the thesis is too broad it may take you another year to finish the draft and this is not good for an essay that time has been specified for it. Writing a thesis requires you to limit your topic from a general one and it would lead you to the focused topic. When you write a working thesis statement, you convert your focus into a single sentence expressing the central point you intend to develop in the rest of your essay. Consider the sample below:

1. **GENERAL TOPIC: AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA**
2. **LIMITED TOPIC: AGRICULTURE IN BORNO STATE**
3. **FOCUSED TOPIC: PROBLEMS HINDERING THE GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE**

Following these steps in writing would not only help you as a writer but would as well go a long way in guiding the reader(s) on the ways ahead. If you observe carefully you would notice that the topic is broader when it is “**AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA**” because animal rearing, fish farming and crop production are forms of agriculture and Nigeria has thirty seven states including the Federal Capital, covering the whole is not feasible in one particular essay. But limiting the topic to “**AGRICULTURE IN BORNO STATE**” would be easier and focusing on the topic only the “**PROBLEMS HINDERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE**”

is a lot easier and better for proper coverage of the subject matter. So, it is good, better and best.

**BRAINSTORMING (THOUGHTS GENERATION)**

After much thoughts and focusing, you need to think of ways to generate your thoughts and ideas. Brainstorming is one of the ways you could generate your ideas and this is done by writing your topic at the centre of your paper and connect the ideas as they occur to you. At this point your concern should not be on whether what you are writing is correct or wrong, just keep writing and do your editing afterward.

It is important that you do the writing as quickly as possible because important ideas may escape if you do not write them down as they keep rushing and you must as well keep other issues aside. Look at how thoughts were generated from the focused topic:

**“PROBLEMS HINDERING THE GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA”**



## II. ORGANISATION

Organizing of thoughts is the arrangement of the generated ideas in the brainstorming (clustering) in a larger form as headed by a major point. Organizing the ideas would distinguish the thoughts generated. For example Africa is an example of continents in the world, Nigeria is a country in Africa, Borno is a state in Nigeria, Hawul is a local Government Area in Borno State and Bilatum is a town in Hawul local Government Area. Now let us organize the ideas generated under the brainstormed ideas in the topic

### “PROBLEMS HINDERING THE GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA” ORGANISATION OF THOUGHTS

Inadequate Funding

1. Governments Policies
2. Non-Governmental organizations Insufficient water
  1. Low annual rain fall
  2. Lack of irrigation mechanism Inadequate plant growers
    1. Fertilizer
    2. Manure Agro-chemicals
      1. Insecticides
      2. Pesticides
      3. Herbicides
      4. Rodenticides
  3. Insecurity Problems
    1. Killing of local farmers
    2. Abduction of youths
    3. Burning of farm products
    4. Territorial invasions
  4. Poor Storage Facilities
    1. Epileptic Power Supply
    2. Lack of Cold rooms
  3. Inadequate Silos Insufficient working Tools
    1. Manual Tools
    2. Mechanical Tools
  2. Inadequate Extension Services
    1. Extension Worker
    2. Farmers' Interest

**Note:** Organizing your thoughts and outlining may seem the same as you see it, but strictly speaking they are different concepts though similar. If you observe, you would notice that organizing has to do with the arrangement of thoughts headed by a major idea and in outlining each Roman numeral represents a particular paragraph in the essay as well as all the related points under it. According to (Bobboi, 2009 p 14) “an outline is a skeletal list or a segmented summary of the main sections of a write up. It has two main purposes—to shape the technical information in a logical order and to help organize the thinking of the writer.” Outlining gives the detail information about the essay. In essence, going through the outline alone would give you an insight to the essay itself without reading the actual draft of the essay. And it is important

that you remember to cross a neat line on your generation of thoughts and the thoughts organized above but allow your outline to stay.

## III. OUTLINE

- I. Inadequate Funding
  - A. Governments
    1. Loans
    2. Subsidies
  - B. Non- Governments
    1. Assistance
    2. Co-operatives

3. Rice Farmers
4. Cassava Farmers
5. Animal Husbandry

- II. Inadequate Water
  - A. Insufficient Rain
  - B. Irrigation
    1. Surface irrigation
    2. Sprinkler irrigation
- III. Agro- Chemicals
  - A. Insecticides
  - B. Pesticides
  - C. Herbicides
  - D. Rodenticides
- IV. Insecurity Problems
  - A. Killing of Local Farmers
  - B. Burning of Farm Produce
  - C. Abduction of youths
  - D. Territorial Invasions
- V. Poor Storage Facilities
  - A. Epileptic Power Supply
  - B. Cold Rooms
  - C. Inadequate Silos
- VI. Insufficient Working Tools
  - A. Manual Tools
    1. Hoes
    2. Cutlasses
    3. Watering Cans
  - B. Mechanical Tools
    1. Planters
    2. Sprayers
    3. Tractors
    4. Harvesters
- VII. Problems of Pests
  - A. Termites
  - B. Rodents
  - C. Grasshoppers
  - D. Grass Cutters
  - E. Birds
  - F. Weevils

Having seen the pre-writing stages in details (thesis, brainstorming, organizing and outlining) it is hoped that taking a sample essay from the prewritten stages above would further brighten your understanding of the relevance of pre-writing stages in a fairly written essay. Try to compare the essay draft and the outline; you would clearly appreciate the relevance.

#### **IV. SAMPLE DRAFT**

##### **THESIS: PROBLEMS HINDERING THE GROWTH OF AGRICULTURE IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA.**

In modern times it is believed that agriculture is the bedrock of all meaningful development of a

nation. However, In Borno State agricultural development has been hampered by innumerable problems. The following are some of the major problems hindering the smooth growth of agriculture in Borno State. Among others they include inadequate funds, inadequate water resources, insufficient plant growers, lack of agro-chemicals, insecurity problems, poor storage facilities, insufficient working tools, problems of pests and lack of professional extension service workers.

An inadequate fund is one of the major problems militating against the growth of agriculture in Borno State. Although the governments keep on saying that a huge amount of money is allocated to the agriculture sector, no significant sign of improvement has been noted. Government is therefore urged to give loans to groups or individuals who want to invest in agricultural business. The loans are however be backed by subsidies in improved seeds varieties which the practitioners will plant. It is also expected that non-governmental agencies should participate through cooperative unions to boost the efforts of the farmers especially rice, cassava and animal husbandry.

Inadequate water as a result of insufficient rain also poses a great threat to the growth of agriculture in Borno State. It should be observed that if sufficient water is available people can practice surface or sprinkler systems of irrigation in which crops can be harvested twice or more times in a year thereby boosting agriculture. Another major problem hampering the growth of agriculture in Borno State is lack of or insufficient plant growers and manures which will increase the plant nutrition for faster growth and ample yield. Though, the government has been making effort in providing fertilizers for farmers. It is sad to note that only few bags reach the farmers which are far below their use expectations.

Another area of worry concerning the growth of agriculture in Borno State is lack of agro- chemicals to fight garden and farm pestilence. It is expected that the government should supply and subsidize the sale of pesticides, herbicides, insecticides and rodenticides so that plants can have healthy growth.

A more retrogressive element against the progress of agriculture in Borno State is the problem of insecurity. The insurgency being experienced in the state has destroyed any meaningful development in general. Agricultural development has been hampered as a result of the destructive tendencies of the insurgents by burning farm products, killing local farmers' abduction and killing of productive, active youths whose territories and villages have been invaded. Yet another setback to the development of agriculture in Borno State is poor or inadequate storage facilities. Even if farmers are able to get little harvest, some of the products are easily perishable. It is at this point that the government is expected to provide cold rooms and adequate silos in which easily damaged crops or reserved crops could be kept for future use. Related to the aspects of cold room is the fact that electric power supply is quite epileptic or unobtainable for months.

It is also expected that it is the duty of the government to supply sufficient working machineries and tools which farmers will use for maximum cultivation of their farm lands. However, it is sad to note that mechanical tools like planters, harvesters, sprayers and tractors are inadequately supplied. Even simple manual tools like watering cans, hoes and cutlasses are in most cases hard to obtain due to abject poverty of the immediate users.

Since Borno state is located in the desert prone encroachment, environmental pests' hazard like the termites, rodents, grasshoppers, grass cutters, weevils and birds are always a menace against bumper harvest. These pests have constituted huge problems against agricultural development for a long time and it still appears that there are no adequate pesticides to deal with the menace decisively.

The points discussed above, coupled with lack of professional extension service agents and non- involvement of our rich people in agricultural business, and are some of the major problems militating against prosperous agricultural development in Borno State, Nigeria. To revise the content of your essay, try as much as possible to ask yourself the following questions (John. L. P. 33):

1. Is my paper **unified**?

- a. Do I have specified thesis or implied introductory paragraph?
- b. Do my supporting paragraphs actually support my thesis?

2. Is my essay **supported**?

- a. Are there separate supporting points for my thesis?
- b. Do I have specific evidence for each of the points

3. Is my essay **organized**?

- a. Do I have an interesting introduction?
- b. Do I use transition and other connecting words?
- c. Do I have a clear method of organizing my essay?

A writer, who is conversant with these pre-writing stages mentioned above, will help a long way in drafting any type of essay. There are different types of essays, but the stages are applicable to all types in developing them. We are optimistic that this will help many young writers especially those in tertiary institution not only in examinations and tests, but also in their final year research projects.

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