REPORT WRITING

A report is a detailed description or an account of a situation or an event that happened in the past. It is an official document that provides detailed information about a particular subject, which is usually derived from special studies. You may be asked to submit a report on a field work or trip or on an industrial training. Reports, such as a news report, technical report and progress report, are structured presentations prepared for a purpose or in response to a request or a given task. Reports can be written or spoken and it can also be both, just like reports prepared in writing; and at the same time, to be read before a particular audience for the sole purpose of necessary clarifications.

Report forms: Direct and Indirect Speech

Recapturing past incidents or what other people have said or done can be presented in two forms: direct and indirect. Direct reporting, also known as direct speech, involves the presentation of the speakers' actual words. In direct reporting, the actual utterance of the original or initial speaker is enclosed in quotation marks ("—"). This indicates that the words are not those of the person writing the report. The enclosed quotation is, however, accompanied by a reporting main clause, which is the word of the report writer. The reporting main clause can occupy the initial, middle or final position of a sentence.

The students vowed, "Those guys are too proud".

"We are going home", they said.

"I will", shouted our gateman, "deal with them now".

Indirect Reporting

Indirect reporting is common and natural in everyday language use. It makes modifications to the actual speech of the original speaker. Among the changes involved in indirect reporting are tense, pronoun and adverbial. Note the changes in the examples below.

"She is not in school" → He said that she was not in school. (Simple present → past tense)

"We are leaving today". → She said that they were leaving that day. (Present continuous → past continuous tense; we → they; today → that day)

"I will be there tomorrow". → He said that he would be there the next day. (I → he; will → would; tomorrow → the following day)

"I want my pen now". → S/he said s/he wanted her/his pen then. (Now → then)

"Ade travelled yesterday. → They said that Ade travelled the previous day. (Yesterday → previous day)

"Submit your assignment next week" → The lecturer asked us to submit our assignment the following week. (Introduction of the verb asked and the preposition to; your → our; next week → the following week)

Types of Report

News Report is a short account that is written to inform audience members of the happenings around them. It reveals basic facts about an event that is presently happening or that has happened. A news report basically indicates **who** and **what** are involved in a story, **when** and **where** it happens and **why** and **how** it happens. News reports are given in newspapers and magazines, on radio or television and in online versions of these media. For example, reports about an infrastructural project inauguration, a fire incident, traffic jam/gridlock or riot at a particular area.

Technical Report is a document that presents the results or outcome of a scientific research or experiences on an experiment, field work or industrial training. Components of a technical report include title page, acknowledgments, table of contents, summary/abstract, introduction, method, results/analysis, conclusion and appendices.

Investigative Report is an account of an official and systematic inquiry about a crime, an accident, an epidemic, a workers' or students' riot, or certain unusual acts perpetrated by some people. This type of report normally features some terms of reference and is usually commissioned by an authority or an organisation. It reveals the participants involved, place and time of the activities, causes, problems and possible solutions to prevent future occurrence. For instance, a comprehensive report about the October 2020 violent ENDSARS protests will be investigative.

Periodic Report is a regular report written at certain intervals: for example, weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly. It is prepared on the activities, conditions or state of affairs of a particular unit or organisation in order to carry out informed decisions. For example, a report, which is written by heads of departments and units to reveal the total number of staff under them to higher authorities, is a periodic report.

Progress Report is an up-to-date account of certain improvements on a special work or a project, which is written at different stages and periods until the completion of the project.

Features of a Good Report

The following represents the usual sections found in reports, especially those in the investigative and technical categories: title page, acknowledgements, table of contents, summary, introduction, procedure/method, findings, conclusion, recommendation, bibliography and appendix.

Title Page is the page that indicates the subject matter of the report. It also reveals the names of the report writer(s) and its initiators. It is also important to include the date of submission on the page.

Acknowledgements are various recognitions of different contributors and expression of gratitude to those who have helped the writer(s) in gathering data and in the process of producing the report.

Table of Contents is a guide that outlines all headings and sub-headings according to the pages in which they start in the report.

Summary (Abstract) is the synopsis or concise presentation of the contents of the report. It reveals the most important points in the report.

Introduction provides necessary background information about the report. For example, it includes the justification for carrying out the report, the initiator(s) of the report and their interest(s) and the guidelines or terms of reference of the report (**why, who, what and how**).

Procedure (Method) deals with the process involved or how the required data are gathered (and analysed) during the course of investigation. Data can be collected through interviews, (participant) observation, questionnaires, experiments and gathering of documents including visual and audio-visual materials.

Findings present and discuss the outcome(s) of the investigation.

Conclusion is the opinion or decision that is formed from the findings or outcome of the investigation or research. It is the final decision or judgment of the writer(s) of the report.

Recommendation(s) is the section that outlines the suggestions presented by the author(s) based on the conclusion drawn from the findings. It proffers solutions to the problem(s) identified in the investigation.

Bibliography is the list of works (books, journal articles, newspaper and magazines and so on) consulted by the author(s) and cited in the report.

Appendix is an affixed section that contains other pieces of information, such as letters, graphs and photographs, which cannot be accommodated in the main body of the report.

Formats of Report Writing

Reports can be written in two formats: schematic and letter formats.

Schematic Format

This is the conventional and more formal format of writing a report. The schematic format outlines the sections of a report in a structured framework or descending arrangement/order.

Letter Format

Reports in this format are presented like a formal letter stating the components of the report in paragraphs.

Sample Reports

Schematic Format:

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

END SARS PROTESTS

OCTOBER 2020

REPORT

BY

Dr. Chris James	Director General, national Orientation Agency
Mr. Akin Onibiyo	Director General, Voice of Nigeria
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Dr. Olajumoke Sanni	Special Adviser to the President (Youth Matters)

NOVEMBER 2020

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Introduction

On 23rd October, 2020, President Muhammadu Buhari inaugurated a panel constituted as follows:

Dr. Chris James   Chairman

Mr. Akin Onibiyo   Member

Professor Ahmed Argungu   Member

Barr. Gregory Douglas, SAN   Member

Dr. Olajumoke Sanni   Secretary

The panel was charged with the responsibility of investigating the circumstances that surrounded the youths' End SARS protests in October 2020.

Terms of Reference

The panel was given the following terms of reference:

a. to investigate the immediate and remote causes of the ENDSARS protests.
b. to make appropriate recommendations for resolving the problems identified in order to prevent a recurrence of the protests.
c. to submit its report on or before 30th November, 2020.

Procedure/Method

The panel asked for memoranda on the End SARS protests and received 56 from members of the public.

The panel interviewed 24 youths' leaders, and 96 youths, randomly selected across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

The memoranda received and minutes of the meetings held are attached as appendices to this report.

Findings

   a. Police brutality: countless incidents of police brutality were reported across the country.
   b. Nonchalance and lack of political will in checking reported brutalities of the police: Government has done little or nothing to curb police brutal activities.
   c. Increasing unemployment and poverty rate in the country: many youths are jobless and they feel neglected by the government as they continue to wallow in poverty.
   d. Reckless treatment of the protest at the initial stage: Government took the protest lightly when it began and its hurried decision to change the name of SARS operation instead of suspending its activities caused the volcanic outbursts.

Conclusion

   a. There are clear cases of police brutality across the country.
   b. Government has not meaningfully checked unethical practices of the police and other security operatives.
   c. Increasing criminal cases in the country are direct consequences of the high rate of unemployment and poverty.
   d. EndSARS protests were not carefully addressed at the initial stage.

Recommendations

   a. We recommend that cases of police brutality be treated urgently and with swift action.
   b. We also recommend that governments at all levels find ways to reduce unemployment rate in the country.
   c. Finally, we strongly advise that identified culprits of EndSARS crises (both officers and civilians) be accordingly punished.