

## Writing Exercise for Students

In this exercise, students have to write a journalistic piece (1,500 words) on an economic issue/policy at a regional level. This exercise provides students an opportunity to research an economic issue of their interest and develop how to communicate the research to a non-specialized audience.

There are two parts to this exercise that teachers need to focus on. First, the student has to choose a topic that is based around a region: state, city, or a specific geographic unit in India. The choice of region should be based on the student's interest. After choosing a region, students need to pick an important issue or problem which the public should know about. This project can be considered an exercise in building consciousness about an economic issue or policy amongst common people in a region. I encourage students to pick topics/themes which are not written about in the local media. After picking a theme/policy and a region, students should formulate a question or a main argument for their article, this can be the main message they want to communicate in their article. I usually give students a week to research their topic and then present it to me. During this time students should survey national newspapers and academic journals to see if there is any literature on this question or theme. They should also search for any data available either from government databases or academic articles which can be used in their writing. I will ask questions or push students to sharpen their questions if it is too general or too specific to be of interest to lay readers. Some examples of topics for articles by my students are as follows:

- 1) How has the tourism industry in Goa impacted the local economy?
- 2) How has the construction of metro rail in Bangalore affected the environment?
- 3) How has the real estate act of 2016 affected the real estate market in Hyderabad?
- 4) Why is there a water shortage in Shimla?
- 5) How have Van Gujjars been dispossessed from their land in Uttaranchal?
- 6) What are the long-term impacts of the Green Revolution policy in Punjab?
- 7) How has militancy and army presence affected the economy of Kashmir?
- 8) Why has automobile manufacturing successfully grown as an industry in Tamil Nadu?
- 9) How has left politics influenced welfare policies and social outcomes in Kerala?
- 10) How was the Hyderabad economy affected by the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh?

In the first stage, students should finalize their topic, determine what their main argument will be, and collect literature and data connected to the theme.

The second part of this exercise is to get students to write about this research topic for a non-economics reader. The focus will be on making the issue relevant to a lay reader and explaining any economic terms and data used in the article. I usually spend a session discussing how popular media writing is different from academic writing. I will bring some of my favorite popular economics articles to class and get students to read and discuss the writing in small groups. Some questions I would like them to discuss are how does the writer make this topic relevant to the reader, how does the headline and opening paragraph interest readers, how does the writer explain economic concepts and terms, how is the data presented, what do you think the main argument of the author is, what feedback would you give to the writer of this piece. These questions will help a student understand the mechanics of popular writing.

The next stage of the assessment is for the students to write a draft of the article and get feedback from a student in the class. The teacher can allocate students into pairs who can review

each other's writings. The student will take the feedback and write a final draft which can be submitted for evaluation.

I evaluate the article on the following criteria:

- 1) Structure of the Paper: Is the headline a good indicator of the main issue in the article? Does the opening paragraph introduce the topic and invite the reader to read on? Does the conclusion summarize the article? Is the article coherent, that is, does each paragraph make sense, do paragraphs transition well?
- 2) Research: What kind of literature has the student accessed? What kind of data did they find? Did they include any fieldwork, interviews, or case studies?
- 3) Accessibility: How did the student make it accessible to lay readers? Do they explain concepts or jargon? How has the data been explained? How has the theme/question been made relevant to the reader?
- 4) Connection to Indian Economy: How has the student imbibed learning about the Indian economy? Have they mentioned any history of the region? Have they discussed how politics has shaped this issue? Can they identify who is affected by this topic/policy? Can they discuss the economic impact/relevance of this theme?