



**LEGAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: GUIDE TO SCIENTIFIC APPROACH
(A BOOK REVIEW)**

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INTRODUCTION

Legal Research Methodology: Guide to Scientific Approach by Okuma N.C. is a very important book on research methodology (in the Faculty of Law). The book essentially seeks to address some unique research requirements of law students (at all levels of research engagement) within tertiary institutions. The contribution easily attracts attention. The specific segment of the title which promptly announces the work as dealing with a scientific approach to legal studies immediately draws a reviewer's interest to its contents. Then as this review was being contemplated, something that became interestingly relevant to the contents of the book occurred somewhere in Nigeria. A famous Pastor in the country (with one of the largest national congregations) stopped a worshiper who was giving a testimony, mid-way into the lady's speech and ordered the testifier back to her seat. The Pastor furiously accused the woman (in the mammoth crowd of worshippers) of giving a false testimony. Among other "slips" by the lady who wanted the congregation to join her in thanking the Almighty God, on her graduation from Nigeria's National Open University (NOUN), was that she claimed to have obtained a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in law.

The famous Nigerian preacher who oversees the affairs of the church was flabbergasted. After ordering the lady back to her seat, he asked lawyers in the large congregation if they had ever heard of anyone obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in law. The entire church auditorium roared in the negative (and in support of the powerful Nigerian preacher). Independent investigations (by the established press and the social media) subsequently confirmed that the testifier validly obtained a law degree from the National Open University of Nigeria (Adetayo, 2024; Johnson, 2024; Oyewo, 2024; Sulaimon, 2024). Then if this citizen had used the scientific approach advocated by the current author of Legal Research Methodology: Guide to Scientific Approach, to conduct her research, why would she not be forgiven for the "slip" of stating that she obtained a BSc in law? The importance and timeliness of the book under review are underscored by such contests.

Summary of the Book

Legal Research Methodology: Guide to Scientific Approach, indeed offers a profound examination of both the doctrinal and non-doctrinal legal research methodologies. The work distinguishes and compares the two methods in-depth. The book is quite methodically crafted, to attend to the needs of student-researchers who are confronted by complex methodological issues in legal research.

Further Analysis

Issues bordering on the compartmentalization and de-compartmentalization of legal research, into doctrinal and non-doctrinal trajectories have remained integral to scholarship in this area of studies (Bhagamma, 2023; Burns & Hutchinson, 2009; Disemadi, 2022; Lloyd, 2019; Majeed et al., 2023; Ngwoke et al., 2023). The current book joins the debate on the questions of doctrinal and non-doctrinal methodologies in legal research. Additionally, the book is exceptionally detailed in its explanation and description of non-doctrinal research. Furthermore, in examining the different types of research, the book presents a comprehensive guide to the researcher on the questions of research procedures, collection and organization of data, data analysis and data interpretation. The author's arguments in all these instances are quite robust and convincing. Moving beyond the specific confines of legal research, the author



skillfully takes the reader/user of the book through the entire gamut of research methodologies, research requirements and research imperatives. This, the book achieves in eleven adeptly presented chapters.

The scholarly tone of the book was adroitly set by Chapter One of the work, captioned “Snippets on Academic legal Research and Scientific Approach”. Chapter Two of the presentation on “Fundamentals of Research” was where the doctrinal-non-doctrinal dichotomy and their surrounding issues were promptly introduced. In Chapter Three, under the caption, “Contents of Academic Legal Research”, the author introduces a “summary of project format” which implies his recommendation on project formats in the Faculty of Law. It is this format that the author applies to the presentation of doctrinal and non-doctrinal research methodologies in Chapter Four. Chapter Five of the book on “Literature Review” further contains elucidations on theoretical review and theoretical framework. Another truly practical chapter in the work is the sixth chapter. This is because, here again, the writer demonstrates what should be the contents of chapters three, four and five of legal research under the different formats of doctrinal and non-doctrinal tendencies. It is probably also in this chapter (more than in any other) that the book strongly makes the case for a scientific approach to legal research.

In Chapter Seven, captioned “Bibliography and Appendices” the work presents in a highly comprehensive manner, arguably everything a researcher would need to know and adopt as applicable in this section of research report presentation. There is then Chapter Eight, christened, “Academic and Scientific Research Approach”. However, the contents of this chapter (with its caption) should have more appropriately been placed in the earlier sections of the book, for finesse of chapter arrangements. Chapters Nine (Statistical Techniques in Scientific Research) and Ten (Inferential Statistics) jointly capture the next high point of the work, in boldly utilizing and defending the application of quantitative techniques in legal research. These two chapters indeed contain everything a researcher may need to remember in the conduct and presentation of research quantitatively. The eleventh chapter, sub-headed “Computer Application and Scientific Research Analysis” is actually considered superfluous by this reviewer.

However, the author's arguments in the book are generally strong enough. Adequate evidence of the purpose of the book is also presented. But the writing style is a bit unwieldy. Invariably, the same book that may be said to have clarity of the explanations as an attribute also possesses structural irregularities.

Overall Relevance of the Book

Legal Research Methodology: Guide to Scientific Approach by Okuma N.C is undoubtedly a highly relevant contribution to legal research methodology. The book's subject matter is comparatively, differently treated, and the work ambitiously contributes to contemporary issues, debates, or trends in legal research at the global level. It accordingly represents a positive contribution to the challenge of scholarship in the emerging world regions (Okeke & Iloh, 2020). Additionally, it truly seems as if this is the first book on this subject matter in the Nigerian legal research environment. There may have been journal articles on the subject matter and possibly conference papers. But no book that this reviewer is aware of, has attempted to treat legal research, from a scientific perspective in the entire Nigerian research firmament.



Personal Reflection

The hearth of the thoughts that gave rise to this book appears otherworldly. It is profoundly a book that begins to suggest to academics everywhere that there is beauty in academic eclecticism. In the final analysis, a very specific question raised or highlighted by the book borders on the plausibility of awarding degrees in law as scientific enquiry-related (B.Sc, Legal Studies; B.Sc, Law, etc).

RECOMMENDATION

The book is highly recommended to all classes of researchers in the law discipline. It is additionally recommended to all categories of scholars who may have the need to consult a very rich book on generic research methods.

CONCLUSION

The book addresses some unique research requirements of law students at all levels of research engagement within tertiary institutions. It is methodically crafted to attend to the needs of such student-researchers. In overall terms, it is a very important contribution to the field of legal research. It uniquely blends the qualitative and quantitative techniques into a book on legal research. By its second edition, when some structural oversights in its presentation must have been addressed, the book will possess a pride of place among the authoritative works on legal research methodology in the Nigerian environment and beyond.

Book Title: Legal Research Methodology: Guide to Scientific Approach

Author: Okuma, N.C., Ph.D, LLB

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