

Peer Review

Review of: "Simplifying Academic Knowledge: Why and How"

Jonas Michel Wolf¹

1. Hospital Moinhos de Vento, Porto Alegre, Brazil

This manuscript brings an important and original perspective to a longstanding challenge in academia: the difficulty many people face in accessing, understanding, and applying complex academic knowledge. The author advocates for a more user-friendly and approachable form of academic content, emphasizing that simplification—when done thoughtfully and responsibly—can benefit a wide range of stakeholders, from researchers and students to society at large. This is a bold and generous proposition, rooted in the values of accessibility, inclusion, and educational innovation.

One of the most compelling aspects of the manuscript is its central thesis: that making knowledge easier to learn and apply does not mean diminishing its power or sophistication. On the contrary, the work argues that simplification can serve as a catalyst for deeper exploration, interdisciplinary dialogue, and practical application. The author successfully frames simplification not as a shortcut, but as a legitimate and often overlooked academic endeavor that can enhance the utility and reach of knowledge.

The three strategies proposed—conceptual re-engineering, the modification of jargon and symbolism, and the strategic use of black boxes—form a clear and helpful framework. Each of these approaches offers practical entry points for rethinking how knowledge is structured and shared. The author's insistence that user-friendliness should become a legitimate academic criterion is refreshing and necessary, particularly in an era marked by growing interest in open science, educational equity, and digital innovation.

The manuscript is also well positioned in a broader cultural and technological context. With the rise of artificial intelligence, personalized learning systems, and other digital tools, the need for clarity and usability in academic knowledge has become more urgent. The author effectively acknowledges the enabling role of these technologies without over-relying on them. There is a thoughtful balance between technological potential and human-centered epistemology.

Nevertheless, there are areas where the manuscript could benefit from further development. While the proposed strategies are conceptually strong, they would be more persuasive if illustrated with concrete examples drawn from different academic disciplines or educational practices. This would allow the reader to see how simplification has been successfully implemented and understood in real contexts, reinforcing the feasibility of the author's proposal.

Moreover, the argument could be enriched by a deeper engagement with the structural and institutional factors that have historically deprioritized accessibility. Recognizing the pressures of academic publishing, disciplinary silos, and traditional conceptions of scholarly rigor would bring nuance to the discussion. The author's tone is constructive and forward-looking, and this could be complemented by a recognition of the cultural forces that may resist such change.

The manuscript maintains a clear and accessible writing style, which aligns beautifully with the core message of the piece. This consistency between form and content reinforces the author's commitment to the values being advocated. The reader is not only told about the importance of clarity and user-friendliness but is invited to experience it directly through the prose itself.

While the overall structure is logical, the manuscript would benefit from a clearer articulation of its key arguments and a stronger conclusion. Summarizing the implications of each simplification strategy and tying them back to the broader vision presented at the beginning would create a more cohesive and impactful reading experience. The conclusion, in particular, could more explicitly reinforce the cultural and educational stakes of the author's proposal.

This work contributes meaningfully to ongoing conversations about the future of knowledge production, dissemination, and learning. Its originality lies not in offering technical solutions, but in advocating for a cultural shift in how academic knowledge is valued and communicated. The tone throughout is thoughtful, inclusive, and sincere—qualities that lend credibility and warmth to the argument.

In summary, this manuscript opens an important dialogue about how academia might evolve toward a more human-centered and accessible future. It invites scholars to rethink long-standing assumptions and to embrace simplification as a form of generosity, precision, and intellectual care. With some expansion and refinement, particularly in the use of illustrative cases and engagement with institutional dynamics, this piece has the potential to inspire meaningful change across disciplines and communities of practice.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.