

Post graduate seminar:

Conceptualization of a research topic



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INTRODUCTION



- Constructing and writing a research proposal should be regarded as the core preliminary activity for a researcher.
- It is the process of arriving at a clear and direct statement of the research problem.
- The problem is often articulated as the aim of the research



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- research problem originates from a situation of need, where unresolved difficulties occur.
- research problem is a discrepancy between what one knows and ought to know to solve for instance, an educational problem”



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NATURE/FORMS OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

- An unsatisfactory state of affairs
- An unanswered questions
- A missing link
- A need
- An imbalance



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Qualities/characteristics of a good (educational) problem

Educational in nature- findings will have implication in the field of education

. **Novel-** no solution exists as at the time study

. **researchable** – can be investigated through the collection and analysis of data; can be supported by the resources available; variable should be precisely defined and measured and lead to an answer to the question.



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Interesting – relating to the area of expertise and significant personal/ professional interest.

Compelling- must be important to you and to a large community; it must be the one that motivate student to address it

Significant- will make a difference



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Manageable- fits the level and skill of the researcher(s), needed resources and time restriction.

Practicable- of practical significant; contributes to the professional practices



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Sources of research problems/ Identification of research problem

- Personal intuition
- Personal observation of the environment
- Personal experience
- Personal belief
- Literature- reports of previous research projects
- Internet/technology



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- theory.
- Interaction with others



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CONCEPTUALIZATION OF A RESEARCH PROBLEM

Conceptualization of research problem begins with;

- Identification of the problem area – decide on the general area of study; influence by your personal experience.
- Definition of problem
- The Problem under study is usually referred to as “statement of problem”



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DEFINING THE PROBLEM AREAS

- ✓ Begins with a broad topic area.
- ✓ Narrow it down
- ✓ Evaluate the potential of the problem
- ✓ Produce the problem statement



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A GOOD STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- ❖ clarify exactly what you want to determine or solve
- ❖ Scope limited to a specific questions; sub questions
- ❖ balance between the general and specific in problem



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Example: Critical issues facing education

- Curriculum standard
- Student learning
- Political
- Technology
- Social medial
- Testing
- School leaderships



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- Teacher training programmes
- Teaching methodology
- School environment/climate



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Academic research

- the research problem, demands an already deeper understanding of the discipline and of higher-order analytical techniques that may be applied
- Whatever the case, all research is motivated by questions arising from prior work or observations of the world, and defines an issue that needs to be analysed



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Fundamental properties of a research problem

- Must articulate a real and justifiable issue, grounded, in all likelihood, in prior research experience, and thus worth doing;
- Should clearly relate to a body of relevant prior knowledge within the given discipline;
- Must be formulated with a full understanding of the appropriate analytical tools



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- Should make some potentially original contribution to knowledge and/or theory
- Involves identification of a viable topic and of a core question around which the research will develop
- The write-ups (proposal or final report) that follows is usually formal and guidelines provided.



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- The research problem may also be linked to expected outcome and outputs.
- Requires identification of a viable topic and of a core question around which the research will develop
- ❖ With such understanding, the researcher will have greater control over his or her research design



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The role of academic writing skills

- The product of the research project is essentially an argument
- Note the purpose therefore is to communicate your truth in a way that appeals to your target audience
- Ensure you develop a credible argument which has considered an appeal to logos, pathos and ethos



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- Consider the fundamentals of academic writing (language, structure and style) as you progress with writing:
- Putting forward a coherent argument
- Supporting the argument with evidence
- Showing writer's knowledge of the subject
- Showing evidence of reading



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- Reflection of independent thinking
- Contains quotations
- Contains references and a bibliography
- Adopts a formal style
- Is logical and analytical
- Is clearly structured



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Cont'd

- Remember you are a scholar writing for other scholars: a very skeptical audience!
- Enjoy researching and writing



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Announcements

- Thanks to all of you for coming
- Conference: may 21st-22nd
- Training on publishing in June; a visiting professor will be on hand to assist prospective writers develop manuscripts for journal articles and book chapters.
- Those preparing to graduate in 2020, please mark the timelines



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