UUM COLGIS Workshop on Master/Ph.D Proposal Writing and Research Methodology

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The General Format of A Postgraduate Thesis Proposal (Qualitative)

Dr. Shamsudin L.Taya

Organised by:
UUM COLGIS
THE GENERAL FORMAT OF A POSTGRADUATE THESIS PROPOSAL (QUALITATIVE)

DR. SHAMSUDDIN L. TAYA
VISITING SENIOR LECTURER
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
COLLEGE OF LAW, GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (COLGIS)
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)
SELECTING A TOPIC

- Before embarking upon writing a research proposal, a student has to be engaged in, what they call invention (Huckin and Olsen, 1991).
- Invention refers to the task of discovering and recovering useful materials housed in memory.
- In plain language, it means to identify and decide upon a topic or problem to be investigated.
• Problem can be identified through observing social phenomena, through discussion with peers and scholars and through studying various reports (Attig and Winichagoon, 1993:23-43).

• One useful device to generate topic is known as a brainstorming. It allows the student to uncover both ideas stored in memory and useful association among those ideas.
• **Criteria of the topic**
  
  – It must be appealing to the researcher
  
  – It must also be of interest to other scholars in the field (especially student’s supervisor and examiners).
  
  – It should be doable/manageable
  
  – Student must be sensitive to the ethical consideration associated with the research. Conducting research is an extension of one’s personal actions (Shively, 1990: 10).

• **Types of topic that most supervisors advise their students to avoid:**
  
  – Student must avoid controversial topic.
  
  – Student must stay away from theory-generating type research.
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Logically, the first step in any research is to formulate one’s questions CLEARLY and UNAMBIGUOUSLY.
- Such questions might be concerned with description, correlation or explanation or all of them.
- A problem may be stated in terms of a verbal statement (e.g. The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze.... OR in the form of question (e.g. Why did Israel attack Gaza? The most important thing is to state the central, major theme clearly and stick with it.)
• For a qualitative study, it is suggested that research questions be made as broad as possible because researcher usually does not have extensive knowledge about the setting in which the research is to take place.

• A narrowed question may turn out to be inappropriate for the setting and hence the entire project might have to be discarded.

• Setting research in a broad manner is also in conformity with the relatively open and unstructured research strategy which most qualitative researchers prefer.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

• In stating the problem, it is also necessary to specify why it is important and what new insights may be found. What would be its net contribution to the body of knowledge?

• The study would be considered of value if its relevance to one more of the following criteria:
  1. Is the study current enough to be interesting?
  2. Does it relate to a practical problem, faced by individual, the society or the humanity as a whole?
  3. Does it clarify an important concept or extend knowledge in a discipline?
  4. Does it create or contribute to a theory or improve an instrument?
LITERATURE REVIEW

- LR helps place the proposed study under the general body of knowledge and saves duplication.
- It is well-organized critical appreciation of relevant and related literature conceptually integrated within the logic of the proposed investigation.
- One good strategy of constructing LR is, first, to collect, scan and read the literature, then to group the literature according to some scheme.
- It must be evaluative, but should also include enough descriptive information to enable the readers to understand the research reviewed.
• In evaluating LR, the following questions must be asked:
  • What type of research has been done in the area?
  • What research questions have been asked?
  • How have researchers gone about answering those questions?
  • What suggestions do other researchers make for further study?
  • What has not been investigated?
  • How can the proposed study add to further knowledge in the area?
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- A research problem must, where possible, be set within the framework of theory.
- It serves as a guide....
METHOD(S) OF DATA COLLECTION

- It is assumed that the student has already designed the specific techniques (e.g. document study, interview etc.) to be used in obtaining information to buttress the argument being made.
CHAPTERIZATION
REFERENCE/BIBLIOGRAPHY