Writing the Research Proposal

Presenter:
Dr. Tariq Habibyar
Learning Consultant
National Centre for Teaching and Learning - Wellington
In this session:

- What is a research proposal?
- Organising a research proposal
- Writing the research proposal
Research Proposal:

- A Statement of Intent
- A written document for selling your idea

Written for thesis & dissertation
Why a proposal?
To convince your audience that:

- Your research idea is worth studying
- The problem it is addressing is of significance
- You have chosen the best approach for studying the problem (methodology and design)
- You are the right person (knowledgeable and confident)
Length:

- Will vary depending on:
  - The purpose and details provided
  - University requirements, discipline and topic

Read department guidelines
Discuss it with your lecturer
Deciding your Research Topic:

- Passion and interest
- Contribution
- Challenge and Change
- Relevance and importance
Basic Sections:

- Title
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Ethical statement
- Timeframe/Plan & Budget
- Primary references
Title:

- Reflects what your study is about
- Not too general
- Clearly indicates your topic and the key issues/concepts you are exploring
- Encapsulates what you intend to do
- No more than 15 words
- Make time to think about it
- Catchy and attention grabbing (if possible)
- Simple

May change as you progress 😊
Introduction:

- Acquaints your reader with the topic
  - Historical Background
  - Your topic within the larger context...
  - Statement of the Problem
  - Rationale or Significance
  - Hypothesis (if relevant)
  - Delimitations
Statement of the Problem:

- Introduces the issue/gap/problem
- Sets the context for the study
- Justifies the need for your study
- Concise and clear
Significance, Rational:

- Refer back to the problem
- State your purpose/aim
- What objectives do you expect to achieve?
- What specific research question/s will be addressed?
- Why is it important to do this research?
- Contribution?
- Wider implications and uses?
Hypothesis:

- Prediction
- Assumption
Delimitations:

- Your choices
- Boundaries
- Sets the parameters and tells reader what will and will not be included, and why
Literature Review:

• Review the written work around your topic
• Show the relationship of your research to other local and international researches in the field
  ▪ Discuss improvements in the field and what is already known
  ▪ Clarify your study’s contribution to the field of knowledge
Research Methodology:

- Answers the ‘How’ of Your study
- Answers the ‘Why’ for your choice of methodology and design’ (Justification)

- Demonstrates the reasons behind your choice of:
  - Methodological standpoints
  - Methodological approaches
  - Techniques for data collection and analysis

Justify your choice of one approach over another and its relevance and importance to your research

(Hart, 2005)
Research Design:

The *overall plan* for collecting, handling, and analysing data in order to provide sufficient and suitable evidence to answer your research questions, accept/reject your hypotheses, or fulfil your aims and objectives

(Manalo & Trafford, 2004, p. 82)
## Methodological traditions (epistemology)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Post-positivism</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
<th>Phenomenology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical inquiry</td>
<td>Post-modernism</td>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Methodological approaches and cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental</th>
<th>Quasi-experimental</th>
<th>Non-experimental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological</td>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
<td>Action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic</td>
<td>Ethno-methodological</td>
<td>Hermeneutic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic interactionist</td>
<td>Critical inquiry</td>
<td>Feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Methods (techniques) for data collection and analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Life history</th>
<th>Content analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>Semiology</td>
<td>Observational</td>
<td>Conversation analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>Concept mapping</td>
<td>Nominal group technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparative analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis:

- Break down of data for understanding
  - Indicates how you will present results
  - Statistical tests you will use
  - Methods you use to prove your hypotheses
  - Tools used to move from exploration to discovery
Ethics section:

- Protect confidentiality, anonymity, and the physical and mental well-being of participants
- Specific ethical issues of your research and how you intend to conform to the relevant ethical codes
- “Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and Teaching Involving Human Subjects”
- Other codes of conduct (e.g., relevant governmental/committee codes) also need to be mentioned
Timeframe & Budget:

- Timeline for the study
  - Times and dates of each step of your research process
  - Be as specific as possible

- Budget estimate of costs involved in your study (need not be too detailed)
  - Costs that will be incurred
  - Indicate source of funds
Primary References:

- Highlight appropriate texts cited in your proposal
- Supervisor guidance for other essential texts
- Never underestimate the value of a good reference list
Writing Tips:
Paragraphs:

- Clear, concise, and to the point
- Consider:
  - Paragraph organization
    - Follow T – Topic sentence/controlling idea
    - E – Explain, elaborate, or define
    - E – Evidence, examples, or illustrations
    - Between 100-150 words
    - Avoid long paragraphs of 250+ words
    - One main idea = one paragraph
Paragraphs:

- Is there one main idea per paragraph?
- Is your paragraph relevant to the topic?
- Have you used topic sentences?
- Have you avoided short or overly long paragraphs?
- Is there a progression of ideas from one paragraph to another?
- Have you linked paragraphs together?
- Have you read it out loud to pick up errors?
Sections:

• Is there a logical progression of ideas?
• Are sub-sections clearly labelled or sign-posted?
• Does it relate to an understanding of the thesis topic?
Style:

• Is correct referencing style used?
• Is there appropriate use of evidence?
• Have you avoided clichés?
• Have you excluded emotive language?
• Is it the appropriate tone and level?
• Have you avoided slang or jargon?
- Save frequently and print copies
- Save multiple copies
What we covered?

- What is a research proposal?
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References


