

Characteristics of a good research problem



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A research problem is a statement that provides the context for a research study. As stated by Brewer & Hughes, (2005). " Research problems indicate gaps in the scope or the certainty of our knowledge" (Brewer & Hughes, 2005, p. 39). They point to problematic phenomena, observed events that are puzzling in terms of our currently accepted ideas, or current ideas that are challenged by new hypotheses (Dissertation Mentoring Services, 2013).

The research problem is the start of bringing to light and introducing the problem that the research will conclude with an answer. Further, according to Ellis and Levy (2008) the research problem is the initial phase in the scientific method. The methodology that is utilized should be applicable for the problem that guides the research. The methodology yields the outcomes of the study, which in turn produces the support required to facilitate the findings (Ellis & Levy, 2008). The purpose of this paper is to examine the characteristics of a research problem.

The focus is on the elements of what constitutes a researchable problem, the components of a well formed Statement of Research Problem, as well as what constitutes a reasonable theoretical framework for the need of the study. As stated by Leedy and Ormrod, (2005) " The research problem is the axis around which the whole research effort revolves (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p. 49). " Viable research cannot be deemed important without a well-defined understanding of why the research has been performed. There are several components that make research of noteworthy importance, such as the research needs to be researchable and manageable in size.

Other characteristics include the degree of how the research will influence future research and other researchers by whether or not the findings will

make a contribution to the body of knowledge, the explanation of the data and make a difference for others (Dissertation101 Mentoring Services, 2013). Influence of the research. Good research should advance the field in which it is geared toward as well as build on the current body of available research. The impact does not have to be huge, but it must be identifiable. The study should reveal how the researcher intends to take a different viewpoint and or direction.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) the research should direct the philosophy in different perceptions, as well as inspire further research to be conducted as it relates to the topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The advancement should reflect how the new methodologies will be used, along with the other current work, to help to better come to a conclusion in order to solve the problem (Brewer & Hunter, 2006). The problem is researchable and manageable in size. It is imperative to select a topic that is doable and that will allow many opportunities to conduct adequate primary research.

Limitations such as the availability of answers should also be considered when thinking of a research problem. Additionally, time and expenses are of concern. Considering how long it will take to conduct the research is important as is whether or not the researcher has enough background knowledge to carry out the research, which may cause delays. The budget is a major factor and taking into consideration the kinds of tasks that will be needed, any paid assistants, specialized equipment, or software that needs to be created and/or acquired will help in estimating the amount of funds that will be needed to conduct the research.

Explanation of the data

Since research requires data, it is important during the planning that the researcher analyzes beforehand whether or not any data related to the research problem can be produced. If not, then the research problem and the question may need to be changed. The decision of whether to use qualitative or quantitative data is important and based on the type of research. Once the data has been collected, the researcher must have a way to communicate the results.

The data must be organized in a way that it merges the existing data with the new data to determine the quality based on the guidelines for collecting the data. Components of a Statement of Research Problem Essentially, the problem statement provides the basis for the research. The statement of the research problem reflects the general concern that leads to the specific problem and must be factual and clearly stated. Accordingly, it must be a brief precise description, which sets the premise for the problem to be studied.

It distinguishes and states the underlying problems, if any and outlines the hypotheses, along with the research questions (Dissertation101 Mentoring Services, 2013). Precise, factual and clearly stated. Researcher seek to answer a question or to find a solution to a problem. Providing factual information to introduce the problem will change the perspective of what people think or know about the problem. As well the research should speak to the literature that is prevalent and to what is missing from this literature.

Therefore, a statement of the problem needs to be precisely stated in one or two sentences that outlines the problem of the research. The statement of

the problem should also address the question (Levy & Ellis, 2008). As stated by Levy and Ellis, (2008) “ The problem statement is the statement of the problem and the argumentation for its viability. It should address all six questions, what, how, where, when, why, and who (Levy & Ellis, 2008, p. 27)”. Underlying sub-problems.

Often times, research problems are too significant or very complicated be solved without breaking them down into smaller parts. The parts of the big problem are known as the sub-problems. The sub-problems make up a researchable component that will form together to equal the summation of the main problem. Division of the main problem is the fourth characteristic of formal research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Presenting a hypothesis or research questions. The researcher must prepare a hypothesis related to the expectations what will be true of the results and conclusions of the study.

The research problem, the goals, and the associated research questions and/or hypotheses are entwined in that a research goal is the main focus of the research that will be used to speak to the problem. Additionally, research questions help to simplify the goals into definite questions that the researcher would like answered (Creswell, 2005). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005) by obtaining the answers to the research questions, the goals of the research will be satisfied and an impact regarding solving the problem has been made (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

There has to be a recognizable association between the answers to the research questions and the research problem motivating the study (Ellis & Levy, 2008). A Problem Statement is based on a thorough review of the relevant literature and ongoing research. As stated by Leedy and Ormrod,

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(2005) “ one essential strategy is to find out what things are already known about your topic of interest; little can be gained by reinventing the wheel (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p. 51). ” This provides the basis for a theoretical framework for the foundations and worthiness of the research problem.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Theoretical framework is the theory which enlightens and expounds the problem to be researched. The theory will also be used to observe the results. New theories solve research problems by explaining inexplicable occurrences and by overriding the uncertainty of older theories. The current theory directs researchers in creating and communicating research problems. In determining whether and in what respects a theory is problematic, researchers consider the context of accrued theoretical and experimental knowledge.

The theories that appear to be challenging when observed in that context are then researched (Ellis & Levy, 2008). While the findings of research may be unexpected, the research itself is planned. It is grounded in a theory. There should be a theoretical connection between the problem guiding the research and the research that is being directed to speak to that problem (Ellis & Levy, 2008).

Conclusion

A research problem statement is a concise description of a problem or challenge that does not currently have an adequate solution available, therefore, making it worthy of research. A problem statement refers to an issue that is focused on by the topic. It is, in essence, a situation that is in need of a solution. A well communicated problem drives the research. A

statement of the research problem must be specific but brief and not something that refers to an isolated occurrence.

It must be researchable and manageable while addressing the sub-problems and creating a hypothesis and research questions. The statement of the problem should introduce how the research develops from previous theory and how it may be able to add to the development of new theory in which to make advancements, realizing that ultimately, the purpose of research is to add to the knowledge of how the world operates in our quest to improve and expand our understanding.