Lecture 2:
Generating research ideas

Dr. Anesu Nyabadza

Method of Assessment	Percentage Weighting	Learning Outcome Being Assessed	Date of Submission
CA1	80%	All 5	9th Week
CA2	20%	All of 5	12th Week

CA1:

Assessment Title & Description:	Assignment 1
Task:	Research Proposal
MIMLOs being assessed:	1,2,3,4,5
Individual/Group:	Individual
Assessment Weighting:	80%
Issue Date:	2nd week
Submission Date: (All assignments must be submitted through Moodle)	9th week
Feedback Date:	11th week

Assessment Title & Description:	Assignment 2
Task:	Research Presentation (based on proposal)
MIMLOs being assessed:	1,2,3,4,5
Individual/Group:	Individual
Assessment Weighting:	20%
Issue Date:	6th week
Submission Date: (All assignments must be submitted through Moodle)	12th week

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Basic research ⟷ **Applied research**

Purpose:

- expand knowledge of processes of business and management
- results in universal principles relating to the process and its relationship to outcomes
- findings of significance and value to society in general

Context:

- undertaken by people based in academia
- choice of topic and objectives determined by the researcher
- flexible timescales

Impact:

- initially academic community and researcher
- may also impact policy and practice

Purpose:

- improve understanding of particular business or management problem
- results in solution to problem
- new knowledge limited to problem
- findings of practical relevance and value to manager(s) in organisation(s)

Context:

- undertaken by people based in a variety of settings including organisations and academia
- objectives negotiated with originator
- tight ttimescales

Impact:

- initially policy and practice community and researcher
- may also impact academia

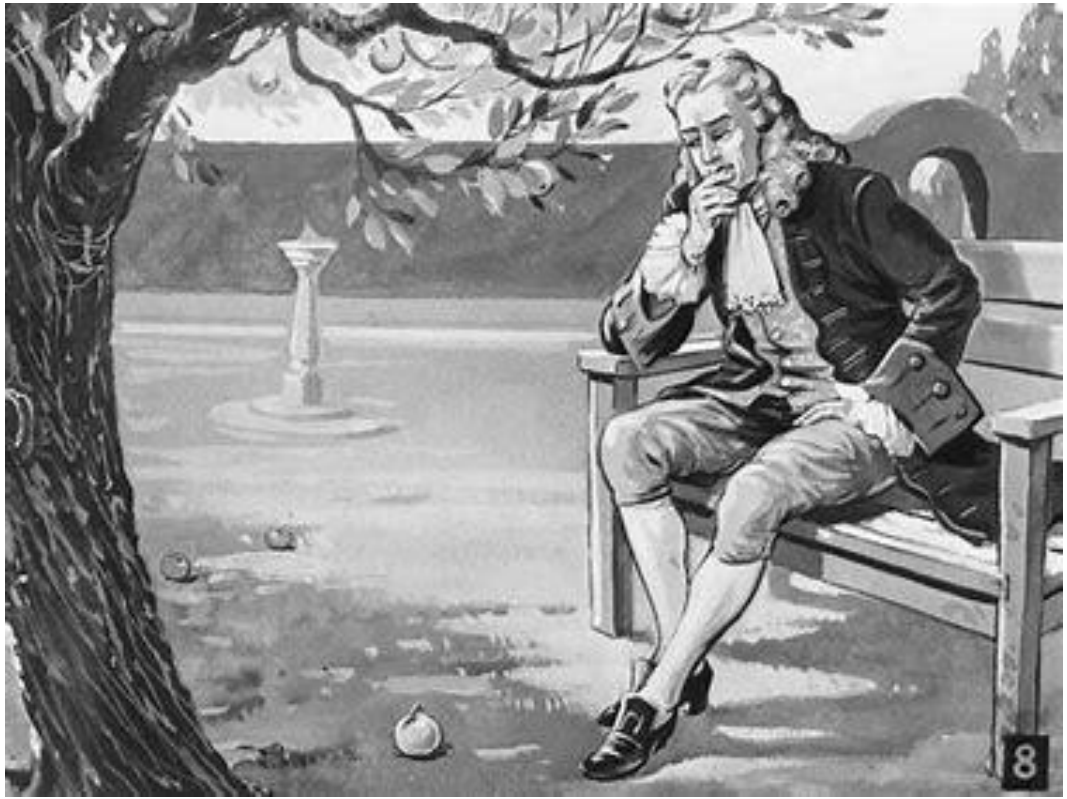
By the end of this Lecture you should be able to:

- identify the characteristics of a good research idea;
- generate your own research ideas;
- refine your research ideas;
- express your research idea as a clear overarching research question, a research aim and research objectives or investigative research questions;
- recognize the relationship between the overarching research question, research aim and research objectives or investigative research questions;
- recognize the role of theory in developing the overarching research question, a research aim and research objectives or investigative research questions;
- develop a research proposal that outlines your proposed research project.

Generating a good Research Idea

- Generating a research idea is a gradual process involving iteration, formulation, clarification, and reformulation until it evolves into a focused overarching research question.
- Refining the overarching research question is essential, including the development of a related research aim and set of objectives to guide the selection of appropriate research strategies and data collection and analysis techniques.
- The time-consuming nature of this process is acknowledged, emphasizing the importance of dedicating time to achieve a successful research project, even when starting with an embryonic idea provided by an organization or tutor.
- Sustaining personal interest throughout the research project is crucial, whether the idea is externally provided or self-formulated, and will contribute to the project's overall success.
- The lecture outlines characteristics of good research ideas, techniques for generating and refining ideas, and the tasks involved in developing a research proposal, including creating a focused overarching research question, establishing a research aim and objectives, and integrating relevant literature and theory to inform the proposal structure.

Generating a good Research Idea



Sir Isaac Newton And Gravity

Characteristics of good research ideas- Appropriateness

Meeting Requirements

The generated research idea and developed proposal must align with the requirements, including considerations like data collection methods and subject matter relevance.

Use of Existing Theory

Utilizing existing academic theory is emphasized in developing the research idea and proposal. This not only helps in clarifying the research concept but also informs the overarching research question, aim, and objectives.

Assessment Criteria and Discussion

Awareness of assessment criteria is crucial, including consideration of theoretical context. Project tutors often stress the importanc well-defined **research question, aim, and objectives**, and students are encouraged to discuss uncertainties with their tutors.

Fresh Insights vs. Completely New Ideas

Fresh insights are deemed valuable in research proposals, and there are various ways to define such insights. However, caution is advised when claiming a completely new research idea, with consideration given to the possibility that **the idea may already exist, misplaced in the literature search, or lack intrinsic value.**

Symmetry of Potential Outcomes

Ensuring symmetry in potential outcomes is highlighted, indicating that findings should hold value regardless of the specific results. prevents investing time in research that may yield insignificant or uninteresting results and emphasizes the importance of having sc for an engaging project report.

Characteristics of good research ideas- Capability

Personal Capability

Ensure your research aligns with your skills and comfort level, recognizing that some skills may be challenging to acquire within the project timeframe.

Resource Availability

Consider the feasibility of obtaining financial and time resources, as some projects may be impractical due to constraints or require resources beyond what is available.

Data Access

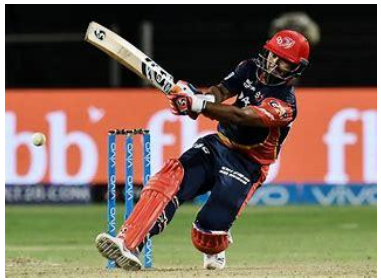
Verify that you can reasonably secure access to the necessary data, especially for topics involving potential access challenges or sensitive information, and discuss any concerns with your project tutor.

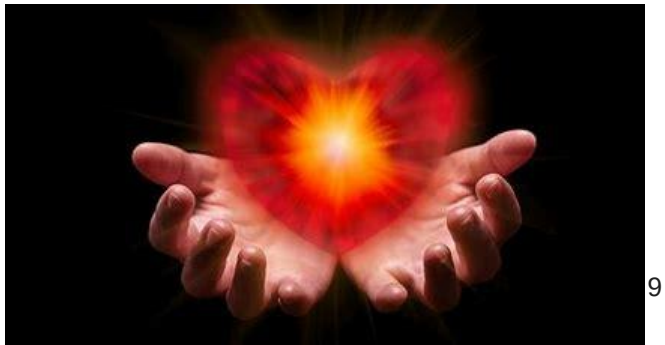
Passion and Genuine Interest

Choose a research idea that genuinely excites your imagination and elicits a real interest, as sustained enthusiasm is crucial for a project spanning at least four months, ensuring the production of your best work.

Consider Future Aspirations

Reflect on your future career goals and aspirations; selecting a research idea aligned with your desired subject area can provide an opportunity to start developing expertise in that field.





Box 2.1 Checklist

Characteristics of a good research idea

Appropriateness

- ✔ Does the idea fit the specifications and meet the standards set by the examining institution?
- ✔ Does the idea contain issues that have a clear link to theory?
- ✔ Are you able to state an overarching research question(s), research aim and research objectives or investigative questions clearly?
- ✔ Will the proposed research be likely to provide fresh insights into this topic?
- ✔ Are the findings likely to be symmetrical: that is, of similar value whatever the outcome?

Capability

- ✔ Do you have, or can you develop within the project time frame, the necessary research skills to undertake the research?
- ✔ Is the research achievable within the available time?
- ✔ Is the research achievable within the financial resources that are likely to be available?
- ✔ Are you reasonably certain of being able to gain access to data you are likely to require for this research?

Fulfilment

- ✔ Does the research idea really interest and motivate you?
- ✔ Will the research help towards the achievement of your future aspirations or career goals?

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Box 1.4
Checklist of questions to ask yourself when making reflective diary entries

In relation to each experience. . .

- ✔ What has gone well?
  - Why has it gone well?
  - So what does this mean in relation to my research?
- ✔ What has not gone so well?
  - Why has it not gone so well?
  - So what does this mean in relation to my research?
- ✔ What adjustments will/did I make to my research following my reflection?

Looking back. . .

- ✔ How could I have improved on the adjustments made?
  - Why?
- ✔ What key themes have emerged over several entries?
- ✔ How will I apply what I have learnt from each experience to new situations?

Generating Good Ideas

Rational thinking	Creative thinking
Examining your own strengths and interests	Keeping a notebook of your ideas
Examining academic staff research interests	Exploring personal preferences using past projects
Looking at past project titles	Exploring relevance to business of ideas in the literature
Discussion	Relevance trees
Searching existing literature	Brainstorming
Scanning the media	

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Personal Strengths and Interests- Select a research idea aligned with your strengths and academic interests. Previous assignments with good grades can serve as a starting point.
Academic Staff Research Interests- Explore the profiles of academic staff on your university's website to identify research areas and interests that align with your own.

Past Project Titles- Reviewing past projects, particularly titles that capture your attention, can inspire new ideas within the same general area, fostering fresh insights.

Discussions with Colleagues and Tutors- Engage in discussions with colleagues, friends, and university tutors to gather ideas for potential research projects, tapping into their perspectives and experiences.

Networking and External Discussions- Talk to individuals with direct experience in your topic area, including professionals, practitioners, entrepreneurs, or members of relevant professional groups, to gain insights and generate research ideas.

Notebook of Ideas- Keep a dedicated notebook to record potential research ideas discussed during conversations or generated through various sources to avoid forgetting valuable insights.

Literature Review and Searching- Conduct a comprehensive literature review by exploring articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, trade and professional journals, reports, and books. Look for academic review articles, which often contain rich ideas and insights about specific topic areas.

Use of Social Networking Platforms- Sign up for academic social networking platforms like Academia.edu, IEEE and ResearchGate to access research, papers and articles, expanding your resources beyond traditional databases.

Focus on 'Gap Spotting' Approach- Acknowledge the predominant 'gap spotting' approach in academic management journals, which involves finding new ways to investigate existing theoretical perspectives. Understand that this approach often leads to incremental changes in theory and consider its implications when writing research questions and objectives.

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Colloids and Surfaces A: Physicochemical and Engineering Aspects
Volume 636, 5 March 2022, 128151

Effect of liquid medium and laser processing parameters on the fabrication of carbon nanoparticles via pulsed laser ablation in liquid towards paper electronics

Anesu Nyabadza [a b], Mercedes Vázquez [a b], Brian Fitzpatrick [c], Dermot Brabazon [a b]

Solid State Sciences
Volume 139, May 2023, 107171

Tailored $CuCl_2$ nanoparticles for glutamine and ammonia biochemical sensing applications

Anesu Nyabadza [a b c], Éanna McCarthy [a c], Karsten Fleischer [a c], Sithara Sreenilayam [a c], Ahmed Al-Hamaoy [c d], Mercedes Vazquez [a b c], Dermot Brabazon [a b c]

Open Access Review

Review of Materials and Fabrication Methods for Flexible Nano and Micro-Scale Physical and Chemical Property Sensors

by Anesu Nyabadza [1,2,3,*], Mercedes Vázquez [1,2,3], Shirley Coyle [3], Brian Fitzpatrick [4] and Dermot Brabazon [1,2,3]

[1] I-Form, Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, D04 V1W8 Dublin, Ireland
[2] EPSRC & SFI Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Advanced Metallic Systems, Sheffield S10 2JA, UK
[3] Advanced Processing Technology Research Centre, School of Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering, Electronic Engineering, and Chemical Sciences, Dublin City University, Glasnevin, D09 NA55 Dublin 09, Ireland
[4] Oriel Sea Salt Ltd., Clogherhead, A92 V97C Drogheda, Ireland
* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

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Box 2.2 Focus on management research

Achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

An article first published in 'early view' online in *Decision Sciences* in February 2021 reviews management literature about the emerging nutraceutical (food that provides medical or health benefits) industry within the context of global goals to end hunger, in particular the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Chaurasia et al. 2021). The authors of this review undertook a content analysis (see also Section 12.2) of 138 studies published in peer-reviewed journals to establish the growth of the literature over time, the methodologies adopted, disciplines considered, theoretical lenses used and sustainability issues considered.

Following their analysis, the authors draw their ideas together in a 'conclusions and future directions' framework. In this they summarise trends in the literature and identify potential research areas and gaps to address for the future. These include issues such as sustainable distribution and supply chain network design, which they highlight are not explored in the literature. They also emphasise the need to study public policy-driven issues across geographies in relation to supply chain performance and sustainability practices. Any researcher setting out to explore and generate research ideas relating to supply chains, sustainability and management should therefore consider including this review article in their first batch of reading, after conducting a preliminary search of the existing literature on this topic.

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For each project that you like, note down your first thoughts in response to each of the following questions:
1 What do you like in general about the project?
2 Why do you like the project?
3 Which ideas in the project appeal to you?

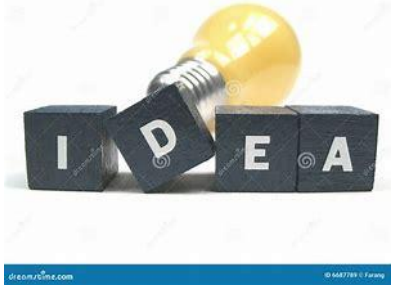
For each project that you do not like, note down your first thoughts in response to each

of the following questions:
1 What do you dislike in general about the project?
2 Why do you dislike the project?
3 Which ideas in the project do not appeal to you?

Exploring Business Relevance in Literature Delve into the vast amount of research published in business and management journals, ranging from applied to more esoteric perspectives, seeking ideas with potential relevance to business practice.

Translating Ideas from Esoteric Journals Even esoteric journal articles can contain valuable ideas that can be translated, operationalized, and tested in practical settings, such as specific organizations, using a simpler methodology than the original study.

Utilizing Empirical Studies for Inspiration Articles based on empirical studies, especially those with 'Implications for practice' sections, can guide you in developing research ideas that explore the relevance of theoretical concepts to real-world business settings, allowing for potential application and testing in different contexts.



Brainstorming

The brainstorming technique, commonly taught as a problem-solving method in business and management courses, is applicable for generating and refining research ideas. While it is typically more effective in a group setting, individual brainstorming is also feasible. The process involves several stages:

1 Defining the problem. This will focus on the sorts of ideas you are interested in – as precisely as possible. In the early stages of formulating a topic this may be as vague as, 'I am interested in marketing but don't have any ideas for my research.'

2 Asking for suggestions. These will relate to the problem.

3 Recording suggestions. As you record these you will need to observe the following rules:
- No suggestion should be criticised or evaluated in any way before all ideas have been considered.
- All suggestions, however wild, should be recorded and considered.
- As many suggestions as possible should be recorded.

4 Reviewing suggestions. You will seek to explore what is meant by each as you review these.

5 Analysing suggestions. Work through the list of ideas and decide which appeal to you most as research ideas and why.

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Box 2.4 Focus on student research

Brainstorming

George's main interest was football. In his university city, he worked part-time in the retail store of the local football club and thought he would like to carry out his research project in this setting.

When he finished university, he wanted to work in marketing, preferably for a sports goods manufacturer or retailer. He had examined his own strengths and discovered that his highest marks were in marketing. He wanted to do his research project on some aspect of marketing, preferably linked to the football club, but had no real research idea. He asked three friends, all taking business management degrees, to help him brainstorm the problem.

George began by explaining the problem in some detail. At first the suggestions emerged slowly. He noted them down on some flipchart sheets. Soon a number of sheets of paper were covered with suggestions and pinned up around the room. George counted these and discovered there were over 100.

Reviewing individual suggestions produced nothing that any of the group felt to be of sufficient merit for a research project. However, George recalled an article they had been asked to read based on a case study of an English Premier League football club (Ogbonna and Harris 2014). He had found this interesting because of its subject. He recalled that it was about organisational culture being perpetuated within organisations that have a long history of success, and stakeholder groups such as football fans who have a strong sense of identity.

George's recollections of this article encouraged the group to discuss their suggestions further. Combining a number of suggestions from the flipchart sheets with their discussion about organisational cultural perpetuation, George noted a possible research idea as: 'The impact of factors that perpetuate organisational culture on the development of marketing strategies – help or hindrance?'

George thought this idea could be based on his local football club.

George arranged to see his project tutor to discuss how to refine the idea they had just generated.

Take 10 minutes to write down a list of as many ideas as possible (at least 20 ideas)

- Place your name at the top of the page
- Write 20 ideas
- Select the top 2 ideas and reasons why you selected these

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Focus on student research

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The Delphi Technique

Utilize the Delphi technique as a valuable ideas. This approach for refining research involves **gathering opinions and perceptions anonymously from a knowledgeable group of participants through multiple rounds of questions** until a consensus is reached, facilitating decision-making, policy development, or practical applications.

Preliminary Inquiry

After generating a research idea, conduct a **preliminary inquiry** to refine and express it as clear overarching research questions, aims, and objectives. This involves searching and evaluating literature, potentially leading to the first iteration of a critical literature review or providing insights for further refinement.

Integrating Ideas

Integrate ideas generated through various techniques to refine and focus the research idea into clear purposes and directions. Employ a process like **'working up and narrowing down**,' classifying ideas by **area, field, and specific aspects of interest** for a detailed description of the research idea.

Refining Ideas from Employing Organization

If your employing organization provides a research idea, evaluate its feasibility and your personal interest. Achieve a balance by isolating an element of a larger organizational project that aligns with your interest and is suitable for your course. Be mindful of potential challenges related to political relationships and the delivery of promised outcomes.

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Take 10 minutes to implement the Delphi Technique

In-person:
Submit your page to me, and you will receive another person's page
Annonimously analyze the other person's ideas (especially the top 2)
Give written feedback(at least one positive and one negative)

Online:
3 people will be selected at random to type in their top 2 ideas
Everyone else will need to type in a response, Negative or Positive to those ideas

The Delphi Technique

Utilize the Delphi technique as a valuable idea. This approach for refining research involves **gathering opinions and perceptions anonymously from a knowledgeable group of participants through multiple rounds of questions** until a consensus is reached, facilitating decision-making, policy development, or practical applications.

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Box 2.6 Focus on student research

Defining the overarching research question

Imran was studying for a BSc in Business Management and undertaking his placement year in an advanced consumer electronics company. When he first joined the company, he was surprised to note that the company's business strategy, which was announced in the company newsletter, seemed to be inconsistent with what Imran knew of the product market.

Imran had become particularly interested in corporate strategy in his degree. He was familiar with some of the academic literature that emphasised the importance of 'fit' between the corporate strategy and the external environment in which the organisation operated. He wanted to do some research on corporate strategy in his organisation for his research project to better understand the concept of 'fit'.

After talking this over with his project tutor, Imran decided on the following overarching research question: 'To what extent does [organisation's name]'s corporate strategy "fit" their external operating environment and why?'

Brainstorming Ideas

Research idea	(Initial) overarching research question	(More focused) overarching research question
Media campaign following product recalls	In what ways can media campaigns be designed to increase consumer trust, value and loyalty in exchange relationships following product recalls?	How does **brand equity** in media campaigns increase **consumer trust, value and loyalty** *following product recalls*?
Graduate recruitment post pandemic	How have firms responded post pandemic to ensure effective recruitment and selection of graduates?	Can **cybervetting** predict **person environment fit and competence** in *post-pandemic graduate recruitment*?
Supermarket coupons as a promotional device	To what extent do supermarket coupon promotions influence buyer behaviour?	Does **couponing** affect **buyer motivation** in *supermarkets*?
Small business start-up funding	To what extent is small business start-up borrowing influenced by the characteristics of the owner?	To what extent are **small business start-ups'** *borrowing decisions* influenced by the *owners' need for independence*?

In addition to the overarching research question, formulating a **research aim is a requirement (2-5 aims)**. The research **aim is a concise statement outlining the purpose of the research project, typically expressed in a sentence that articulates the intended achievements through the research**.

The relationship between research questions and corresponding research aims is evident, with the former posed as questions and the latter framed as overarching objectives.

Aims

Overarching research question	Research aim
How does brand equity in media campaigns increase consumer trust, value and loyalty following product recalls?	. . . to assess the impact of brand equity on consumer trust, value and loyalty relationships in media campaigns following a series of product recalls.
Can cybervetting predict person environment fit and competence in post pandemic graduate recruitment?	. . . to explore and explain the relationship between cybervetting and graduates' person-environment fit and competence in post-pandemic recruitment.
Does couponing affect motivation to purchase products in supermarkets?	. . . to establish the impact of supermarket couponing on buyer motivation.
To what extent are small business start-ups' borrowing decisions influenced by the owners' need for independence?	. . . to examine the extent to which small business start-ups' borrowing decisions are affected by the owners' need for independence.

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Criterion	Purpose
Transparency (What does it mean?)	The meaning is clear and unambiguous.
Specificity (What I am going to do?)	The purpose is clear and easily understood, as are the actions required to fulfil it.
Relevance (Why I am going to do this?)	The link to the aim and overarching research question and wider research project is clear.
Interconnectivity (How will it help to complete the research project?)	Taken together as a set, the research objectives and/or investigative questions outline the steps in the research process from its start to its conclusion, without leaving any gaps. In this way, they form a coherent whole.
Answerability (Will this be possible?) (Where shall I obtain data?)	The intended outcome is achievable. Where this relates to data, the nature of the data required will be clear or at least implied.
Measurability (When will it be done?)	The intended outcome will be evident when it has been achieved.

Objectives vs Aims, what's the difference??

Aim: The research aim is a concise and overarching statement that defines the overall purpose or intention of the research. It outlines the general goal the researcher aims to achieve.
Objectives: Objectives are specific, measurable, and time-bound goals that break down the aim into smaller, manageable tasks. They provide a detailed roadmap for conducting the research.
Scope:

Aim: The aim is broader in scope, offering a general perspective on what the researcher wants to accomplish.
Objectives: Objectives are more specific and focus on the individual steps or tasks needed to achieve the aim.
Focus:

Aim: Aims focus on the overall purpose and desired outcome of the research, providing a high-level view.
Objectives: Objectives focus on the practical, actionable elements of the research. They specify how the aim will be accomplished.
Level of Detail:

Aim: Aims are less detailed, providing a broad sense of direction without specifying the precise steps.
Objectives: Objectives are detailed, outlining specific criteria and actions that must be taken to fulfill the aim.
Timeframe:

Aim: Aims are often timeless and may not have a specific timeframe attached to them.
Objectives: Objectives are time-bound, indicating when each specific task or goal should be achieved.
Measurability:

Aim: Aims are not easily measurable, as they represent broader intentions or purposes.
Objectives: Objectives are measurable, allowing for a clear evaluation of whether each specific task has been accomplished.
Example:

Aim: To investigate the impact of social media on consumer purchasing behavior.
Objectives:
Conduct a literature review on social media's influence on consumer behavior within the last five years.
Analyze survey responses from 500 participants to identify patterns in purchasing decisions.
Compare the buying behavior of participants exposed to social media marketing with those who are not.

Quick Quiz

1 What is the primary purpose of basic research?
A. Immediate application in practice
B. Solving real-world problems
C. Exploration and understanding of fundamental concepts

2 Applied research is characterized by its emphasis on:
A. Immediate usefulness and application
B. Generating new theoretical frameworks
C. Investigating fundamental principles

3 What distinguishes applied research from basic research?
A. Impact on practitioner communities
B. Theoretical orientation
C. Rigorous methodology

4 Basic research often contributes significantly to which community?
A. Both equally
B. Practitioner communities
C. Academic communities

Quick Quiz

Which aspect is crucial in responsible research according to Tsui's principles?
A. Rigorous methodology
B. Direct and immediate use for managers
C. Academic orientation

Applied research is likened to consultancy when:
A. It focuses on generating new theories
B. It is conducted thoroughly and is directly useful to practitioners
C. It is exploratory in nature

What is an example of a purpose for research projects on the applied end of the continuum?
A. Understanding and explaining fundamental concepts
B. Exploring organizational differences
C. In-depth investigations within a broader context

Regardless of the research project's position on the continuum, what is essential?
A. Rapid application of findings
B. Attention to the entire research process with rigour
C. Sole focus on academic impact

Quick Quiz

5 Who are the ultimate users emphasized in responsible research?
A. Researchers and academics
B. Practitioners, policymakers, and students
C. General public

6 Basic research primarily focuses on:
A. Immediate problem-solving
B. Understanding and exploring fundamental principles
C. Direct application in practice

Quick Quiz 2

1.What is the purpose of a research aim?
A. To ask a specific question
B. Clearly define the issue or problem to be studied
C. List research objectives
2.When developing a research question, what should you ensure for clarity and success?
A. Make it vague and open-ended
B. Keep it broad and unspecific
C. Clearly define the issue or problem to be studied
3.What is the primary focus of basic research?
A. Immediate problem-solving
B. Understanding and exploring fundamental principles
C. Direct application in practice
4.Who are the ultimate users emphasized in responsible research?
A. Researchers and academics
B. Practitioners, policymakers, and students
C. General public
5.Why is it important to refine and focus your research idea?
A. It's not necessary
B. To complicate the research process
C. Develop a clear overarching research question and set of objectives

Quick Quiz 2

6. What is a key characteristic of a good research proposal according to most project tutors?

A. Ambiguous research question
B. Lack of literature review
C. Clearly defined research question, aim, and set of objectives

7. How can brainstorming be utilized in research?

A. To create confusion
B. Generate and refine research ideas
C. Discourage collaboration

9.What is the Delphi technique used for in research?

A. Generating random ideas
B. Refining research ideas through consensus
C. Avoiding collaboration

Write up a reflection 100-200 words based on this class

Box 1.4 Checklist of questions to ask yourself when making reflective diary entries

In relation to each experience. . .

- ✔ What has gone well?
  - Why has it gone well?
  - So what does this mean in relation to my research?
- ✔ What has not gone so well?
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- ✔ What adjustments will/did I make to my research following my reflection?

Looking back. . .

- ✔ How could I have improved on the adjustments made?
  - Why?
- ✔ What key themes have emerged over several entries?
- ✔ How will I apply what I have learnt from each experience to new situations?

up next….

Lecture 3:

Structuring Your Research Proposal