

Research Dissertation Process

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Introduction

Why research

“Research is what I am doing when I do not know what I am doing.” -
Wernher von Braun

“The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before.” - *Thorstein Veblen*

No one undertakes research in Physics with the intention of winning a prize. It is the joy of discovering something no one knew before. - *Stephen Hawking*

Why research

Creation of knowledge

Basic research - Exploration to expand knowledge base.

Promote scholarship

- (1) Engagement of students in the co-creation of knowledge.
- (2) Enhancement of teaching practice and insights

Enhance decision making - Applied research

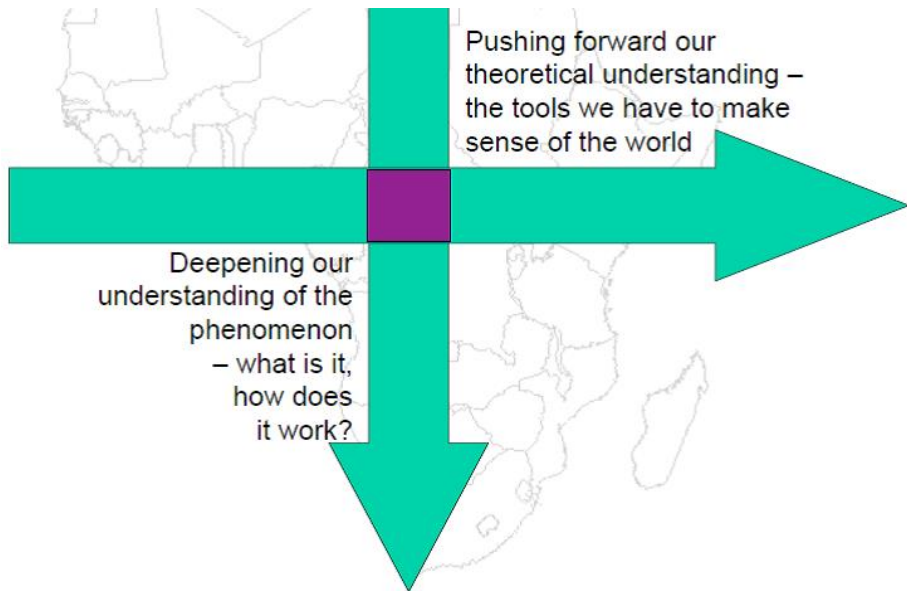
- (1) Provide solutions for practitioners and technocrats.
- (2) Provide evidence for policy makers

Phenomena Versus Theory

Good applied research ideally does two things simultaneously.

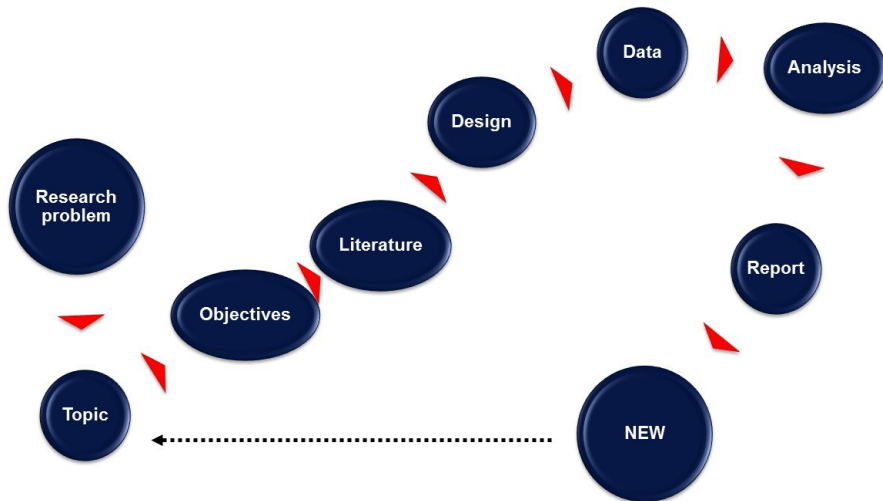
- 1 It insightfully analyzes a phenomenon
- 2 It advances our theoretical understanding for how to deal with (an aspect of) that phenomenon

Good Applied Research



The Research Process

The research process



SFAE 2015 Research Project Calendar

SFAE 2015 Research Project Calendar

Activity	Timeline
Submission of Research Topic	30 March 2015
Confirmation of Assigned Supervisors	22 April 2015
Submission of Research Proposals	3 July 2015
Proposal Defenses	27 - 31 July 2015
Submission of Research Project	2 November 2015

Problem Statement

A Research Problem is not the same as a business problem

Differentiate problem from symptom.

- ① Insightfully analyze a phenomenon
- ② Determine if problem or opportunity

Differentiate business OR Market OR Policy problem from research problem. Always!

- ① Business problems are sometimes symptoms of research problems
- ② Think of your Research Problem as the unknown part of the business problem.

Problem statement - some reflections

- ① A "Problem Statement" is a description of a difficulty or lack that needs to be solved or at least researched to see whether a solution can be found.
- ② Can also be described as either a gap between the real and the desired or a contradiction between principle and practice.
- ③ Research Problem statements to have an outcomes based verb at or near the beginning.
 - Some good verbs - identify, formulate, construct, create etc
 - Bad verbs -understand, explore, investigate, discuss

Problem statement - Qualities

- 1 Address a gap
- 2 Be significant enough to contribute to the existing body of research
- 3 Be one that will lead to more research
- 4 Render itself to be investigated via collection of data
- 5 Be interesting to the researcher and suit his/her skills, time and resources
- 6 Should not have YES or NO answer
- 7 Should not suggest the solution OR finding that you expect, otherwise you are introducing bias.
- 8 Be ethical

Problem statement - Format

A persuasive problem statement has at least three parts

- 1 **The ideal:** Describes a desired goal or ideal situation; explains how things should be
- 2 **The reality:** Describes a condition that prevents the goal, state, or value in 1 from being achieved or realized at this time; explains how the current situation falls short of the goal or ideal.
- 3 **The consequences:** Identifies the way you propose to improve the current situation and move it closer to the goal or ideal.

Problem statement - Example

Persistent missing middle in Kenya - The ideal

The government of Kenya has a goal to industrialize by the year 2030. In this regard it has encouraged growth oriented micro and small enterprises that should graduate into medium and large enterprises capable of contributing to the industrialization goal. There are several sessional papers (quote/cite) that contain specific measures to encourage and support MSEs.

Problem statement - Example

Persistent missing middle in Kenya - The reality

Despite the said government efforts there is slow growth of micro into small enterprises and even slower growth of small into medium scale enterprises (quote, show statistics). The government has officially acknowledged that there exists a "missing middle" in Kenya meaning that there is a gap between small and large enterprises in the country (cite, quote).

Problem statement - Example

Persistent missing middle in Kenya - The consequences

Should the missing middle gap persist then the industrialization goal may be difficult to achieve. Need therefore arises to ascertain why despite government efforts there is a persistent missing middle

Problem statement - Exercise

What would be your corrected version?

The large corporate companies need to be encouraged to assist small businesses in empowering them with the necessary skills and resources to grow. Corporate Social Responsibility is one avenue that small business can benefit from big business in this regard. My aim in this research is to establish if large companies are using corporate social responsibility to empower small business and, if not, how this can be done. Therefore the topic of this research is to identify the role of corporate social responsibility in empowering small business.

Suggeste version

The intention of this research is to establish the purposes for which large corporate are using their CSI / CSR programmes, with particular reference to whether and how they are using such programmes to empower small businesses, and, further, to gather ideas to expand such investments.

No shortcuts

Prepare to do a LOT of reading around your topic. To be a “Master” of your topic, you need to know most of what has been written about it, what the main ideas are, who the most important authors are, and be able to differentiate credible sources from those that are not.

Any questions OR Clarification



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