

# Defining the Research Problem

# What Is a Research Problem:–

A research problem, in general refers to some difficulty which a researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation and wants to obtain a solution for the same.

## Conditions to be met:–

- There must be an individual (or a group or an organization), let us call it 'I', to whom the problem can be attributed. The individual or the organization as the case may be occupies an environment, say 'N', which is defined by values of uncontrolled variables,  $Y_j$ .
- There must be at least two courses of action, say C1 and C2, to be pursued. A course of action is defined by one or more values of the controlled variables. For example, the number of items purchased at a specified time is said to be one course of action.

# Conditions to be met:– (Contd.)

- There must be at least two possible outcomes, say O1 and O2, of the course of action, of which one should be preferable to the other. In other words, this means that there must be at least one outcome that the researcher wants, i.e., an objective.
- The courses of action available must provides some chance of obtaining the objective, but they cannot provide the same chance, otherwise the choice would not matter.

# Components of research problem:–

- 1) There must be an individual or group which has some difficulty or the problem.
- 2) There must be some objectives to be attained at. If one wants nothing, one cannot have a problem.
- 3) There must be alternative means (or the courses of action) for obtaining the objective (S) one wishes to attain. This means that there must be at least two means available to a researcher, if he has no choice of means, he cannot have a problem.

# Components of research problem:– (Contd.)

- 4) There must remain some doubt in the mind of a researcher with regard to the selection of alternatives. This means that research must answer the question concerning the relative efficiency of the possible alternatives.
- 5) There must be some environment (S) to which the difficulty pertains.

# Selecting the problem:–

- 1) Subject which is overdone should not be normally chosen, for it will be a difficult task to throw any new light in such a case.
- 2) Controversial subject should not become the choice of an average researcher.
- 3) Too narrow or too vague problems should be avoided.
- 4) The subject selected for research should be familiar and feasible so that the relative research material or sources of research are within one's reach.

# Selecting the problem:– (Contd.)

- 5) The importance of the subject, the qualifications and the training of a researcher, the cost involved, the time factor are few other criteria that must also be considered in selecting a problem.
- 6) The selection of a problem must be preceded by a preliminary study. Thus may not be necessary when the problem requires the conduct of a research closely similar to one that has already been done



# Technique involved in defining a problem:–

- 1) Statement of a problem in general way.
- 2) Understanding the nature of the problem.
- 3) Surveying the available literature.
- 4) Developing the ideas through discussions.
- 5) Rephrasing the research problem into a working proposition.

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