Formulating research question

Clearly linked to overall project aims

Allow the target population to be identified

Guide the appropriate level of aggregation, i.e. Collecting of units of parts into a mass or whole, e.g. bunch into gender, age, etc. (Salary)

A good research question will

Identify outcome variables and key predictors or those variables (independent and dependent variables): independent (manipulated variable), dependent (responding variable)

Determine what type of study

Identify background characteristics that might influence outcomes e.g. race, gender, age , usage, perception

A good research question will

raise questions about how to best collect data, e.g.. questionnaire, interview, experiment

Influence the number of participants in the study e.g., target number of people (20-30 respondents in FYP)

Bordage and Dawson (2003) research questions guide

What topic of study are you interested in?

What has already been done in this area (the literature)?

What major outcome(s) (dependent variable) are you interested in?

What intervention (independent variable) are you interested in?

Are you looking for differences or a relationship (association)?

To what group (population) do you wish to apply your results?

What is your specific research question?

What answer to your question do you expect to find (the research hypothesis)?

Why is this question important today (relevance)?

Writing a good question

What do you want to learn about?

Draft and redraft with increasing specificity using the 8 guidelines listed earlier

Ask for feedback from colleagues/classmates

Build on the work of others by conducting a systematic literature review (evidence)

What makes a good research question?

It addresses a need or a problem that you encounter

It must be important to you and your practice/research

Challenges you to question your own assumptions about teaching, learning, literacy

It is doable given your time and material constraints.

It inspires you and has the potential to hold your interest over several months

It is not too general, resulting in multitude of subquestions.

It is not too narrow

Poorly Written Research Question

It starts with “How can I…”

It suggests a yes or no answer

Formulate the Question

Moving from a question to a problem

Why should the reader care about your study? (Costs of not answering, benefits of answering)

Always ask “so what”

Be sure the research question is feasible (necessary resources, time, cover knowledge area)