

## **SELECTING A PROBLEM AND PREPARING RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

Whenever any patient goes to doctor, he will see all the symptoms of the disease and after that he will prescribe the medicine. Like-wise here also first important step in the research is to find out what the problem is? And also to define a problem or selecting a problem researcher must know WHAT THE PROBLEM IS?

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.

There must be some objective which is an individual or any organization to which the problematic condition arises. For that they will take course of action in which various choices can be provided. Also environmental variables affecting all the actions. And by this all actions there will be some outcomes.

Now problem can be defined as the condition in which desire outcomes researcher can't able to obtain. This condition is only possible when below described problems are present.

- There must be an individual or a group which has some difficulty or the problem.
- There must be some objective(s) to be attained at. If one wants nothing, one cannot have a problem.
- 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 for if he has no choice of means, he cannot have a problem.
- 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.

- There must be some environment(s) to which the difficulty pertains.

### **SELECTING THE PROBLEM**

It is very difficult task. The research problem undertaken for the study must be carefully selected. Research guide can help us in selecting the problem.

The following points may be considered or observed by the researcher in selecting the problem:

- Subject which is already overdone should not be normally chosen. For that it will be difficult task to throw any light in such a case.
- Controversial subject should not become the choice of an average researcher.
- Too narrow or too vague problems should be avoided.
- The subject selected for research should be familiar and feasible so that the related research material or sources of research are within one's reach. Even then it is quite difficult to supply definitive ideas concerning how a researcher should obtain ideas for his research. For this purpose, a researcher should contact an expert or a professor in the University who is already engaged in research. He may as well read articles published in current literature available on the subject and may think how the techniques and ideas discussed therein might be applied to the solution of other problems. He may discuss with others what he has in mind concerning a problem. In this way he should make all possible efforts in selecting a problem.
- The importance of the subject, the qualifications and the training of a researcher, the costs involved, and the time factor are few other criteria that must also be considered in selecting a problem. In other words, before the final selection of a problem is done, a researcher must ask himself the following questions:
  - Whether he is well equipped in terms of his background to carry out the research?
  - Whether the study falls within the budget he can afford?
  - Whether the necessary cooperation can be obtained from those who must participate in research as subjects?

If the answers to all these questions are in the affirmative, one may become sure so far as the practicability of the study is concerned.

- The selection of a problem must be preceded by a preliminary study. This may not be necessary when the problem requires the conduct of a research

closely similar to one that has already been done. But when the field of inquiry is relatively new and does not have available a set of well developed techniques, a brief feasibility study must always be undertaken.

### **NECESSITY OF DEFINING THE PROBLEM**

Quite often we all hear that a problem clearly stated is a problem half solved. This statement signifies the need for defining a research problem.

The problem to be investigated must be defined unambiguously for that will help to discriminate relevant data from the irrelevant ones. A proper Definition of research problem will enable the researcher to be on the track whereas an ill-defined problem may create hurdles.

Questions like: What data are to be collected? What characteristics of Data are relevant and need to be studied? What relations are to be explored? What techniques are to be used for the purpose? And similar other questions crop up in the mind of the researcher who can well plan his strategy and find answers to all such questions only when the research problem has been well defined.

Thus, defining a research problem properly is a prerequisite for any study and is a step of the highest importance. In fact, formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution. It is only on careful detailing the research problem that we can work out the research design and can smoothly carry on all the consequential steps involved while doing research.

### **TECHNIQUES INVOLVED IN DEFINING A PROBLEM**

Defining a research problem properly and clearly is a crucial part of a research study and must in no case be accomplished hurriedly. However, in practice this frequently overlooked which causes a lot of problems later on. Hence, the research problem should be defined in a systematic manner, giving due weight age to all relating points.

The technique for the purpose involves the undertaking of the following steps generally one after the other:

- i) **Statement of the problem in a general way:** First of all the problem should be stated in a broad general way, keeping in view either some

practical concern or some scientific or intellectual interest. For this purpose, the researcher must immerse himself thoroughly in the subject matter concerning which he wishes to pose a problem. The problem stated in a broad general way may contain various ambiguities which must be resolved by cool thinking and rethinking over the problem. At the same time the feasibility of a particular solution has to be considered and the same should be kept in view while stating the problem.

- ii) **Understanding the nature of the problem:** The next step in defining the problem is to understand its origin and nature clearly. The best way of understanding the problem is to discuss it with those who first raised it in order to find out how the problem originally came about and with what objectives in view. If the researcher has stated the problem himself, he should consider once again all those points that induced him to make a general statement concerning the problem. For a better understanding of the nature of the problem involved, he can enter into discussion with those who have a good knowledge of the problem concerned or similar other problems. The researcher should also keep in view the environment within which the problem is to be studied and understood.
  
- iii) **Surveying the available literature:** All available literature concerning the problem at hand must necessarily be surveyed and examined before a definition of the research problem is given. This means that the researcher must be well-conversant with relevant theories in the field, reports and records as also all other relevant literature. This is done to find out what data and other materials, if any, are available for operational purposes. "Knowing what data are available often serves to narrow the problem itself as well as the technique that might be used." All this will enable a researcher to take new strides in the field for furtherance of knowledge i.e., he can move up starting from the existing premise. Studies on related problems are useful for indicating the type of difficulties that may be encountered in the present study as also the possible analytical shortcomings. At times such studies may also suggest useful and even new lines of approach to the present problem.

- (iv) **Developing the ideas through discussions:** Discussion concerning a problem often produces useful information. Various new ideas can be developed through such an exercise. This is quite often known as an experience survey. People with rich experience are in a position to enlighten the researcher on different aspects of his proposed study and their advice and comments are usually invaluable to the researcher. They help him sharpen his focus of attention on specific aspects within the field. Discussions with such persons should not only be confined to the formulation of the specific problem at hand, but should also be concerned with the general approach to the given problem, techniques that might be used, possible solutions, etc.
- (v) **Rephrasing the research problem:** Finally, the researcher must sit to rephrase the research problem into a working proposition. Once the nature of the problem has been clearly understood, the environment (within which the problem has got to be studied) has been defined, discussions over the problem have taken place and the available literature has been surveyed and examined, rephrasing the problem into analytical or operational terms is not a difficult task. Through rephrasing, the researcher puts the research problem in as specific terms as possible so that it may become operationally viable and may help in the development of working hypotheses.

## RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The preparation of a research proposal is an important step in the research process. Many institutes require that a proposal be submitted before any project is approved. This provides a basis for the evaluation of the project gives the advisor a basis for assistance during the period of his direction for the researcher to follow.

### Part 1: the statement of the problem

- This is often a declarative statement but may be in question form.
- It provides a stated goal that gives direction to the research process. It must be limited enough in scope to make a definite conclusion.
- A problem often implies that a controversy of opinion exists. It involve information gathering.

- It is important to define all unusual term and the variables in operational definition.
- Assumptions are statements of what the researcher believes to be facts but cannot verify.
- Limitation is that condition beyond the central of the researcher that may place restriction on the conclusion of the study and their application to other situation.
- Limitations are the boundaries of the study.

### **Part 2: review of literature and hypotheses.**

Review of the writings of recognized authorities and of previous research provides some useful hint:

- Researcher is familiar with what is already known.
- What is still unknown and untested.
- Helpful suggestion for significant investigation.

In searching related related literature the researcher should not contain important element

- Reports of studies of closely related problems that have been investigated.
- Design of study procedures used and data gathering equipment used.
- Population that were sampled and methods of sampling.
- Variables that were defined.
- Faults that could have been avoided.
- Recommendation for the further research.

### **Hypotheses**

It is appropriate to formulate a major hypotheses and possibly several minor hypothesis.

This approach

- Clarifies the nature of the problem
- The logic underlying the investigation.
- Gives direction to the data gathering.

It should be consistent, reasonable, simple and clearly stated.

It should be developed before data gathering process as necessary for an unbiased investigation.

**Part 3: Methodology**

This part is categorized in three parts:

- SUBJECTS
  - It details the population from which the researcher plans to select the sample.
  - Also includes variable that are frequently included like age, sex, race, mental ability
  
- PROCEDURE
  - Outlines the research plan.
  - What & how it will be done.
  - What data will be needed and what data gathering devices will be used.
  
- DATA ANALYSIS
  - Specific and detailed enough to demonstrate to the reader exactly what is planned.
  - No details should be left open to question.