

# **EASY GUIDE TO LONG ESSAY/DISSERTATION WRITING**

Lydia Nyantakyi-Baah

# **EASY GUIDE TO LONG ESSAY/DISSERTATION WRITING**

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## **Easy Guide to Long Essay/Dissertation Writing**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE.....	2
SELECTING A RESEARCH TOPIC AND WRITING A PROPOSAL.....	2
Before You Start Your Research .....	2
Interest and Relevance of Your Topic.....	2
Access to Your Study Population.....	2
The Research Proposal.....	3
Purpose of Writing the Research Proposal.....	3
Language of the Research Proposal.....	4
Components of a Research Proposal .....	4
CHAPTER TWO .....	8
GENERAL LAYOUT OF YOUR RESEARCH WORK.....	8
Paper Size .....	8
Fonts.....	8
Page Numbering .....	8
Margins .....	8
Line Spacing .....	8
Citation Style .....	9
Language.....	9
Organisation and Use of Jargon.....	9
Coherence .....	9

Grammar .....	10
Spell-Check.....	10
Tables, Figures and Graphics .....	10
Abbreviations.....	11
Glossary of Terms.....	11
What are the Preliminary Pages?.....	11
Order of Preliminary Pages .....	11
Numbering of Preliminary Pages .....	12
Title Page .....	12
Declaration/Approval Page.....	13
Dedication Page .....	14
Acknowledgements Page.....	15
Table of Contents Page.....	15
List of Tables .....	18
List of Figures .....	18
List of Photographs .....	19
List of Abbreviations .....	19
Guide to Write Your Abstract: .....	20
CHAPTER THREE .....	22
OUTLINE OF THE ESSAY AND TIPS FOR CHAPTER ONE.....	22
Typical Long Essay or Dissertation Structure .....	22
Numbering of the Main Content Pages .....	22

Tips for Chapter One – Introduction .....	22
The Key Elements in Chapter One and Their Arrangement .....	23
Some Tips for Chapter One .....	23
Purpose of Formulating Research Questions or Objectives .....	23
How to Generate Research Questions .....	24
Formulating Your Research Questions/Objectives .....	24
Statement of the Problem.....	25
Key Features of a Statement of the Problem .....	25
What is the Format for Writing a Statement of the Problem?.....	25
CHAPTER FOUR.....	28
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	28
Why is the Literature Review Important? .....	29
Structure of the Literature Review .....	29
Information Sources You can Use for Your Literature Review.....	33
Sources you should avoid .....	34
Document Your Sources of Information .....	34
What is the Reference List/Bibliography?.....	36
Information required for generating the Reference List:.....	36
Tips for Online Searches.....	37
Formulating Your Search Queries.....	37
Search Engines.....	39
CHAPTER FIVE .....	42
TIPS FOR YOUR CHAPTER THREE (METHODOLOGY) .....	42

Introduction.....	42
Some Key Elements in Chapter Three.....	43
The Research Design .....	43
What is a Research Paradigm?.....	43
Types of Paradigm/Philosophical Worldviews .....	44
Which Research Paradigm or Philosophical Worldview Does My Research Belong to?.....	44
Research Approach.....	48
Distinction between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches.....	48
Research Method(s) .....	49
Description of the Case(s) or Study Area.....	49
Study Population or Target Group(s) (Who?) .....	49
Target Population.....	49
Accessible Population.....	50
Sampling Procedures .....	50
Data Collection Techniques.....	50
Tips for Designing Your Questionnaire .....	51
Data Analysis and Interpretation .....	52
Ethical Considerations .....	53
Summary .....	54
Example of Typical Chapter Three Elements.....	54
CHAPTER SIX:.....	56
TIPS FOR CHAPTERS FOUR AND FIVE.....	56

Tips for Chapter Four .....	56
Example of Layout of Chapter Four .....	56
Tips for Chapter Five.....	57
Example of Layout for Chapter Five .....	57
REFERENCES .....	58

## **INTRODUCTION**

The guidelines and examples in this handbook reflect a long essay or a thesis that has five chapters. The purpose of this handbook is to serve as a guide for both undergraduate and postgraduate students when writing their research work. It covers tips on how to select a research topic and write a proposal, general guidelines and layout of the various chapters, that is, chapters one to five and the preliminary pages, abstracting, online searches and information sources that can be useful for literature review. Some examples have been provided in this handbook.

I hope this handbook will offer useful material for your research work. However, this is just a guide; do not replace your supervisors' instructions with this. Remember that in writing your long essay or dissertation, you write under somebody's supervision, that is, your supervisor. Please do follow all the instructions they give.

If you need any clarification, do not hesitate to talk to a librarian or the Research Support Services Department of the library.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **SELECTING A RESEARCH TOPIC AND WRITING A PROPOSAL**

### **Before You Start Your Research**

Before you select your research topic, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it a viable research topic?
- Did I conduct a thorough literature search to establish whether, or to what extent, research has already been done on the topic?
- Is there a need for my proposed research?
- Will my research provide answers to the identified problems?
- Will my research be able to offer new insights?
- Am I familiar and comfortable with the topic?

### **Interest and Relevance of Your Topic**

Select a topic that interests and even probably excites you, or else you will get stuck and have trouble sustaining the inspiration and the zeal needed for the completion of the project. Generally, the topic should also be of interest and relevance to others as well as in your area of study.

### **Access to Your Study Population**

You may have a very good topic in mind, but you can only be successful if you have access to the people from whom to collect data, whether by questionnaire, interview or focus group, amongst others. Even if you think you can get access to the people you need, the time and effort needed must be considered. If your research is going to take place in the organisation where you work, it may not be difficult. But if you need to research third-party organisations, you should ensure that getting access to

data will not be problematic (Fisher 2007:32). To resolve this, do a little background check on the organisation and, if possible, get a contact person who will be ready to offer some form of assistance. Think about this before you start.

## **The Research Proposal**

A research proposal is a brief and coherent summary of your proposed research. It states clearly what your research is about and how you will do it. It involves all the critical issues in designing a completed research study, with adequate information that enables the reader to judge the validity and usefulness of your proposed research.

## **Purpose of Writing the Research Proposal**

It is very important to write a proposal since it communicates to the supervisor the intentions of the researcher. It also serves as a guide to the researcher to help remain focused at the writing stage. It gives a clearer picture to assess whether the objective of the proposed study is feasible in terms of time, resources, access to literature, the study population, and so on.

Irrespective of the topic being studied and the approach you choose for your study, a research proposal must address the following questions:

What exactly do you plan to achieve?

Why do you want to achieve it?

How are you going to achieve it?

## **Language of the Research Proposal**

Let your language be very clear and do not write too much on minor issues. Your tone must be in the future tense. Example: Open- and close-ended questions will be used to...

## **Components of a Research Proposal**

The research proposal should comprise the following components. The components that are not expected to be found in the proposal are the data analysis and findings.

1. Title
2. Introduction
3. Statement of the Problem
4. Objectives (and/or Research Questions)
5. Significance of the Study
6. Scope/Limitation of the Study
7. Initial Literature Review/Theories
8. Research Methodology
9. Theoretical Framework/Models
10. Definition of Key Terms
11. Outline of the Study or Organisation of the Chapters
12. Conclusion

### **Title**

Choose an appropriate title that reflects the theme of the proposed study. Note that per the recommendation of the supervisor the title may change.

## Introduction

The introduction should clearly state what the study is about, what it seeks to achieve and indicate why it is worth conducting the research. Try as much as possible to convince the reader.

## Statement of the Problem

Let the statement of the problem be brief and clear to help the reader to understand what you are proposing to research. Focus mainly on the research problem. (See pages 25-27) for a guide on how to write the statement of the problem.

## Objectives/Research Questions

This should centre on the problem. Provide a main objective or question that captures the problem wholly, clearly and concisely. Then add sub or specific objectives/questions that support the main question.

## Significance of the Study

Provide convincing proof that it is important to undertake the study and how it will add knowledge to the proposed study area.

## Scope and Limitation

Define the scope of your research (time, place, people, etc.)

## Initial Literature Review

The literature review chapter is a critical part of your research. Conduct an in-depth review of the literature (not necessarily to be theories or models in the initial literature review). Develop an outline for the literature review - structured from

general to specific depending on the topic you are researching on. See chapter four for further details.

### Research Methodology

Describe your research design very well. Research design or approach simply means the overall plan for the study, outlining the broad philosophical orientation and the specific methods to gather and analyse data. See chapter five for further details.

### Theoretical Framework/Models

Mention the theory(ies) or models that you will use for the study. By conducting a thorough literature review, you will be able to identify the appropriate theories or models for the proposed study. Note that not all research begins with a theory; however, a theory or model can be developed out of your study. Discuss this with your supervisor.

### Definition of Key Terms

Define all the key terms or concepts. Note that not all key terms need to be defined because some terms are so obvious. Do this only when it is necessary.

### Outline of the Study or Organisation of Chapters

Indicate how you will arrange the chapters. In not more than two sentences, state what each chapter will consist of.

### Conclusion

The summary should be brief and provide convincing proof that the proposed study is significant and worth studying.

## Citation

The citation for the proposal can be bibliography or references.

1. References - lists only sources that were actually cited in your proposal.
2. Bibliography - lists all resources that were consulted but not necessarily cited in the proposal.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **GENERAL LAYOUT OF YOUR RESEARCH WORK**

#### **Paper Size**

It is ideal to use A4 page size.

#### **Fonts**

Use font type and text size that can easily be read. Font size 12 is acceptable. Be consistent with the font type throughout the essay. Use fonts that will be recommended by your supervisor or use Times New Roman, Arial and Book Antiqua.

#### **Page Numbering**

Use the same font for the text, that is, the font for the essay should be the same for the page numbers.

#### **Margins**

Use at least 1.5 inches on the left margin and 1 inch each on right, bottom and top margins. This makes binding of the long essay/dissertation easy.

#### **Line Spacing**

Line spacing of 2 or 1.5 is recommended. Long quotations may be single-spaced. To avoid extra paragraph breaks, set the spacing to allow 12pts after each paragraph. This helps to improve the look of the content.

## **Citation Style**

You could use “GIJ Harvard 2016” (Copies are available in the GIJ Library). The citation style selected should be consistent throughout the essay. Or you can follow what will be recommended by your supervisor. Never mix different citation styles in one essay.

## **Language**

Set language to English (British) or what is recommended by your supervisor. Avoid using both the American and British spellings in your essay. Stick to one.

Example: behavior and behaviour, organization and organisation, honor and honour, program and programme

## **Organisation and Use of Jargon**

Avoid the use of too many technical words. Write in an easily understood manner. Use short rather than long complex sentences. Avoid paragraphs consisting of one sentence. Academic writing is meant to be clear. Preferably express one idea or thought for each paragraph.

## **Coherence**

Your essay must be coherent. Coherence in writing means that your ideas must flow together. Connect sections, sentences, paragraphs and chapters throughout the essay. Try to break long paragraphs. It is very intimidating to read long paragraphs. Do not discuss anything when you have not yet introduced it. Introductions are very important in academic writing.

## **Grammar**

Check your grammar. Grammatical mistakes put off supervisors and readers.

## **Spell-Check**

Adjust the Microsoft Word spelling setting to include words in ALL CAPS.

How to do this:

- Open Microsoft Word
- Click **Review**
- Click **Spelling & Grammar**
- Click **Options** and uncheck the box that has the inscription **Ignore Words in UPPERCASE**.

This box is always ticked as the default setting, and that is why Microsoft Word will not detect spelling mistakes in words typed in caps. If you uncheck it, then it will enable you to detect spelling mistakes in words typed in caps.

After completing each paragraph or a section, make sure you run a spell-check. It can be complicated when done at the end of the essay. Always remember that nothing displeases a supervisor as much as recurring mistakes. Avoid all careless mistakes.

## **Tables, Figures and Graphics**

Ensure that all tables and figures are appropriately numbered and are referred to properly.

## **Abbreviations**

When you use a term in full that has an acknowledged abbreviation for the first time, put the abbreviation in brackets. Afterwards use the abbreviation but ensure that it is typed correctly.

Example: Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), World Health Organisation (WHO).

Include a list of abbreviations in the preliminary pages; arrange the list in an alphabetical order.

## **Glossary of Terms**

Glossary of terms is the meaning of the terms used in the essay. When a lot of technical terms are used, include a glossary of terms used. It will come after the list of abbreviations.

## **What are the Preliminary Pages?**

Preliminary pages are the pages preceding the first chapter (Introductory Chapter of your essay).

## **Order of Preliminary Pages**

The preliminary pages comprise the following pages:

- Title Page
- Declaration/Approval Page
- Dedication
- Acknowledgements

- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- List of Photographs
- List of Maps
- Abstract

### **Numbering of Preliminary Pages**

Use Roman numerals (example: ii, iii, iv...) beginning with the Declaration Page as ii. The Title Page is counted but is not numbered.

### **Title Page**

The Title Page must cover the following information:

- The title of the long essay or dissertation and the date of submission.
- Full name of the student.
- The name of the department as well as the name of the faculty and the university.
- The correct name of the programme (example: BA in Journalism).

Example of a Title Page:

<p>Customer Perception of Airlines Service Quality: The Case of KLM Airlines in Ghana</p> <p>Desmond Kulala (DSNKL001)</p> <p>A Long Essay/Dissertation Submitted in (Partial, if the degree was by coursework and dissertation) Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Marketing</p> <p>Department of Marketing, Faculty of the Humanities University of Kasoa</p> <p>May 2019</p>
--

**Declaration/Approval Page**

The Declaration Page is not an optional page; it is compulsory to include this page.

**Example:**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this

dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

.....

Kofi Nimo  
(Candidate)

.....

Prof. Kofi Kabobo  
(Supervisor)

.....

Dr. Constance Boateng  
(Supervisor)

.....

Date: May 2019

**OR**

I, Kofi Nimo, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work under the supervision of Professor Kofi Kabobo and Dr. Constance Boateng; and that all sources that have been used or quoted have been duly acknowledged.

**Dedication Page**

The dedication is *not* a compulsory page. It enables the author to dedicate the long essay or dissertation to an individual or a group.

Example: I dedicate this work to my parents and all my course mates.

## **Acknowledgements Page**

The Acknowledgements Page is an optional page that enables the author to express appreciation to those who have provided assistance in writing of the long essay or dissertation.

Example:

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Professor Emeritus Karin de Jager and Dr. Constance Bitso for their patience, support, guidance and constructive criticism which helped me to make this work a reality.

I also want to acknowledge my dear sisters Mrs. Lucy Odame Gyau and Mrs. Clara Nyalemegbe for their unflinching support and encouragement during this period. I cannot leave out Mrs. Comfort Mumuni, my course mate with whom...

## **Table of Contents Page**

Table of Contents is a mandatory page. The table of contents comprises chapter headings, subdivisions, and all other sections of the essay itemised precisely as they appear in the contents along with the starting page number. Generate the table of contents after you have finished writing the essay. You can use Microsoft Word to generate your table of contents. If you want to learn how to use Microsoft Word to generate your contents, talk to the librarians.

Note: The example below is just a guide to help you organise your table of contents. The elements here may not necessarily be the same in your dissertation or long essay.

Example:

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### PAGE

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.2 Purpose of the Study.....	5
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Methodology.....	6
1.4.1 Research Design.....	6
1.4.2 Population.....	8
1.4.3 Data Collection.....	9
1.4.4 Data Analysis.....	11
1.5 Limitation of the Study.....	11
1.6 Justification for the Study.....	16
1.7 Clarification of Key Terms.....	18

1.7.1	User Satisfaction.....	18
1.7.2	Service Quality.....	18
1.7.3	Impact.....	19
1.8	Organisation of Chapters.....	20
CHAPTER TWO.....		22
2.0	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
2.1	Introduction.....	22
2.2	Conceptual Framework.....	22
2.2.1	The Concept of Quality.....	22
2.2.2	The Concept of Impact.....	27
2.3	The Difference between Quality and Value.....	34
2.4	Approaches to Measuring Service Quality.....	41
2.4.1	Early Approaches to Measuring Quality.....	43
2.4.2	Recent Trends in Quality Assessment.....	49
2.4.3	Quality Assessment in the Developing World.....	52
2.5	Conclusion.....	55
CHAPTER THREE.....		57
3.0	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	57
CHAPTER FOUR.....		78
4.0	PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS .....	78
CHAPTER FIVE.....		137
5.0	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	137
REFERENCES.....		163
APPENDICES.....		181
APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire for Students.....		182
APPENDIX 2: Interview Questions for Faculty Staff.....		183

APPENDIX 3: COVER LETTER.....185

**List of Tables**

The List of Tables page contains table titles and their corresponding page numbers.

**Note:** Do not include list of tables when you do not have any tables in your long essay or dissertation.

Example:

Table 2.1 Stakeholder’s Perception of Quality.....	38
Table 3.2 Population of Students and Faculty Staff .....	63
Table 4.1 Students’ Use of Services.....	84
Table 4.2 Purpose of Use of Services by Students .....	86
Table 4.3 Students’ Perception of Service Quality .....	89

**List of Figures**

The List of Figures page contains figure titles and their corresponding page numbers.

Example of List of Figures:

Figure 4.1 Library Visits and Computer Use .....	81
Figure 4.2 Students’ Awareness of Library Services.....	83
Figure 4.3 Students’ Perception of Service Quality .....	88
Figure 4.4 Satisfaction with Journals.....	94
Figure 4.5 Satisfaction with Library Environment .....	98

## List of Photographs

The List of Photographs page should include photograph titles and their corresponding page numbers.

Example:

Richard McMillan Library (Ghana Institute of Journalism).....14

Todd and Ruth Warren Library (Ashesi University College)...17

## List of Abbreviations

Include a list of abbreviations and their corresponding definitions, that is, if you have used acronyms. List them in an alphabetical order.

Example:

ARL Association of Research Libraries

CARLGH Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in  
Ghana

CIT Critical Incident Technique

GIJ Ghana Institute of Journalism

IEA Institute of Economic Affairs

NCTE National Council for Tertiary Education

## **Guide to Write Your Abstract:**

Consider the following points when writing your abstract:

- An abstract either summarises or describes an academic work such as an article, a long essay, dissertation, etc. The abstract should be understandable as an independent statement.
- It should reflect the emphasis of the original study.
- It must at the same time conform to logical steps or sequence of abstract writing; namely: brief introduction of the subject under discussion, an indicative statement of the investigated problem, the theoretical and/or conceptual framework, study design, study population and sample size, findings of the study as well as the study recommendations.
- An abstract ought to be precise and informative.
- Complete sentences should be used not telegraphic phrases.
- Do not use abbreviations; your essay is of potential interest to scholars working in other fields who may be ignorant of abbreviations or acronyms common to your discipline.
- It is insufficient to state that a questionnaire was used. The type of questions (open-ended, multiple-choice, etc.) and the manner of administration should be indicated. Important characteristics of the subjects involved, studied or described should be specified. Scales or tests should always be identified by name.
- It should not exceed 350 words (350 words is one full page).

**Example:** The word count of the sample abstract below is 205 words.

**Abstract**

This study explored the users' perception of the service quality and value of the libraries of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) and Ashesi University College (AUC). Concepts like value, impact, quality and academic library service quality formed the conceptual framework of the study. The study is a comparative case study that solicited information from the perspectives of students, faculty and library staff. Open- and close-ended questions were adopted to gather data from 185 and 147 third year students of GIJ and AUC respectively. All library staff and 15 faculty staff each from the two institutions were interviewed to augment the responses from the students. Statistical Package for Social Science was used to analyse the close-ended questions, and descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to present the data analysis. Data from the interviews was analysed qualitatively. Findings from the study showed that the perceptions of the quality of library staff services were found to be satisfactory in both libraries. The library environment and information resources were considered adequate by AUC library users, whereas they were considered as inadequate and poor at GIJ. In all, it was found that the quality of services and the value users derived from AUC exceeds that of GIJ.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **OUTLINE OF THE ESSAY AND TIPS FOR CHAPTER ONE**

The following outline is an example of a long essay or a dissertation that has five chapters.

#### **Typical Long Essay or Dissertation Structure**

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 5: Findings, Recommendations, Conclusion

References

Appendices

#### **Numbering of the Main Content Pages**

Arabic numerals must be used. For example: 1, 2, 3.... Number all the pages of the main content, beginning with the Arabic numeral 1. The main content of the essay begins after the abstract.

#### **Tips for Chapter One – Introduction**

In Chapter One you introduce the topic, formulate a clear problem statement, research questions and/or objectives. The objectives of the research are always in statement form, and the research questions are the same statement framed in question form. Some supervisors prefer that you use either objectives or research questions; some also may ask you to use both. Chapter One is a protocol chapter that follows a kind of template style, that is, all the key elements should appear.

## **The Key Elements in Chapter One and Their Arrangement**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

1.2 Objectives (and/or)

1.3 Research questions

1.4 Research methodology

1.5 Significance of the study

1.6 Scope of the study

1.7 Definition of key terms used in the study

1.8 Outline of the study or organisation of the chapters

1.9 Conclusion

**Note:** Apart from the above elements, if there is the need to do away or add other elements, discuss it with your supervisor or he/she may advise. Elements such as background history of the organisation or case being studied can be in Chapter One and referred to in Chapter Three. Remember, you are writing under somebody's supervision so listen to his/her instructions.

### **Some Tips for Chapter One**

You are making an argument for (inspiring) an investigation, so adapt your writing style accordingly. Avoid voicing your opinions and acknowledge the authorities or literature; your own voice should emerge in later chapters.

### **Purpose of Formulating Research Questions or Objectives**

Make your topic researchable

Make your problem answerable and your aims achievable

Make your project manageable

Guide your search for relevant literature

Shape your methodology-data collection instruments

Inform your findings

## How to Generate Research Questions

Start with your topic, then form objectives or aims from the topic and out of the objectives generate the research questions.

Example:

**Topic:** Community Radio and Rural Health Information Needs: The Case of GIJ Community Radio

**Objective/Aim:** To explore how community radio can supply the health information that breastfeeding Ghanaian rural mothers need.

**Question:** In which ways (how) can GIJ Community Radio (adapt to) meet the health information needs of breastfeeding Ghanaian rural mothers?

## Formulating Your Research Questions/Objectives

Structure your research questions/objectives in such a way that you will have:

- A main question that captures the problem wholly, clearly and concisely.
- Sub-questions that support the main question.
- Now tackle the smaller aspects of the main question.
- The sub-questions should relate to each other and to the main question.
- The research questions should be clear and concise - limit them to one sentence.
- Avoid technical jargon because it can be confusing and misunderstood (Dick, 2016).

## **Statement of the Problem**

A statement of the problem is used in research work as a claim that underpins the problem addressed by a study. The statement of the problem must briefly address the research question: Always ask yourself the problem the research will address.

The main goal of a statement of the problem is to change a generalised problem (something that bothers you; a perceived lack) into a well-defined problem so that it can be answered by conducting dedicated research (Bwisa, 2018: para. 2).

The statement of the problem should not be long. One page is enough for a long essay, and a maximum of two pages for a dissertation.

## **Key Features of a Statement of the Problem**

According to Bwisa (2018: para. 3), a good research problem should have the following characteristics:

- Address a gap in knowledge.
- Significant enough to contribute to the existing body of research.
- Lead to further research.
- Be of interest to the researcher and suit his/her skills, time, and resources.
- Approach towards solving the problem should be ethical.

## **What is the Format for Writing a Statement of the Problem?**

A statement of the problem should fill a gap in the body of knowledge you are researching into. According to (Bwisa, 2018), a good statement of the problem is generally written in three parts:

**Part A (The Ideal Situation):** This refers to how under normal circumstances things should be: the desired goal or ideal situation.

**Part B (The Real Situation):** Refers to the condition that prevents the ideal situation, state, or importance in Part A from being achieved or realised at this time. Describes how the current situation falls short of the ideal situation. Describe the situation well for the examiner or the reader to appreciate the problem is worth investigating into.

**Part C (The Consequences):** Identify ways to improve the current situation for it to become ideal or closer to the ideal. At this stage, indicate clearly how your procedure for solving the problem is distinctive from earlier works (by this you are filling the gaps in earlier studies).

Example:

**Part A:** According to the University of Industry and Manufacturing, the University seeks to produce students that are skilful in information gathering and use. Libraries are one of the significant resource centres where students are taught how to search and use information. Since not all students are in residence, the majority of them would prefer to spend a significant amount of time in the library while on campus. However,...

**Part B:** The library seating capacity is 250 while there are 9,000 students, so the library is not able to accommodate even 10% of the student population. It is very common for students to sit outside and do their assignments and class projects. Many students report that the electronic resources are also not accessible off campus. Others report that they are unable to read in the library during the night since the

lighting condition is poor. The computers for information literacy sessions are too few, and the Internet is very slow.

**Part C:**

In resolving similar challenges in academic libraries, earlier studies (Abrokwah, 2009; Konu, 2010; Akoto, 2018) focused only on the views of librarians and faculty staff without involving students. The study plans to carry out an all-inclusive participatory research to find out means to make the library a well-resourced information centre to assist students. It will also consider the possibility of raising funds from both government and non-governmental institutions to enable the University expand the library to provide better study areas and effective and efficient Internet connectivity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In your Chapter Two, you will review what earlier authors have said about your topic. Literature review is the discussion of published and unpublished relevant information in a specific subject area you are researching into.

The literature review can simply be a summary of the sources. However, it has to follow an organisational pattern and combine both summary and synthesis.

Summary is a recap of the important information of the sources gathered for the study.

Synthesising is reorganisation of the information. In doing so, it might give a new explanation to old materials or combine new with old to give a clearer interpretation. It may also reveal the intellectual progression of the topic being studied in addition to the major discussions.

#### **Tips for Chapter Two**

- The literature review chapter is a critical part of your research. At this stage of your research, you must show evidence that you have gained mastery over the subject area. This can only be achieved through enough background reading into the issues, theories or models and the ability to connect results from related studies.
- Develop an outline for the literature review -- structured from general to specific depending on the topic you are researching into.

- Read widely on the topic. You cannot argue from ‘silence’; read widely on the topic throughout the period of study to support your arguments, or to challenge those of others.
- Remain focused on your topic and do not deviate.
- Ensure that literature selected are related and relevant to the study.

### **Why is the Literature Review Important?**

- It provides a solid background for the study.
- It gives detailed knowledge of the literature of the area of a study. It is very important for academic research.
- It serves as a basis and support for a new discovery that your research will contribute to existing knowledge.

### **What Will the Examiners Look for in Your Literature Review?**

Your assessors will check to see if your literature review:

- Demonstrates your understanding of the topic and why it is significant.
- Shows your ability to access relevant and recent literature in the area of the study.
- Correctly evaluates research and highlight trends in the area.
- Highlights what you found and did not find in the literature and how your study will fill that gap.

### **Structure of the Literature Review**

Ideally, your Literature Review must have three parts:

(a) An introduction (b) A body, and (c) A summary or conclusion

### (a) Introduction

Provide a brief idea of the subject being reviewed, by indicating the main theme, some of the sub-themes and the organisational pattern (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina, n.d.). See an example in the box.

#### Example of an Introduction:

This chapter presents the conceptual framework for the study by exploring further the key concepts that were clarified in section 1.7, particularly the concepts of quality, impact and value. It goes further to review relevant literature on measuring service quality and value. This includes literature on library stakeholders' approaches to measuring service quality, clarification of the difference between quality and value, the need to measure quality and value, the early approaches of measuring quality, recent trends in quality assessment, and ends with a discussion on quality assessment in developing countries.

### (b) Writing the Body of Your Literature Review

The body contains your discussion of sources of information, and it must be well structured around a recognisable outline with main and sub-themes. It can also be organised chronologically (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina, n.d).

If **Chronological**, be careful not just to list sources. Write critically, not just descriptively.

If **Thematic**, organise around the topic or issues being researched into.

## How to Organise the Body of Your Literature Review

- Look for themes or issues that connect the sources together to enhance coherence.
- Look for models (good examples).
- Do not just list your sources. Evaluate your sources by deliberating on the common theme or issue in the sources.
- Do not leave out notable studies in the area of the research you are conducting.
- Summarise and synthesise your sources within each paragraph.
- Literature review considers the views of other authors, however, your voice must also be heard. Keep your voice at the beginning of discussing an idea and/or at the end. Start and end a paragraph with your own ideas or words. The views of other authors only support the point or idea you are discussing.
- Convince the reader that your research area is significant and will fill some important knowledge gap in the area of study.
- Finally, the review should explain why the theories or models used are suitable for the study.
- Read and re-read your work; connect section to section, paragraph to paragraph, line to line for you to drive your readers on.

## Use Linking Words or Phrases

- Use linking words when discussing authors with similar opinions. Use words or phrases such as **similarly, in addition, also, again**.
- Where authors disagree, let it be clearly known to the reader by the use of linkers such as **however, on the other hand, conversely, nevertheless**.

## Use Evidence in Your Literature Review

In discussing a point or an idea, refer to several sources (maximum three). This helps make your interpretations of the sources valid.

### Example:

However, several authors are of the opinion that only librarians have the skills to assess the quality of library services (Kumah, 2000:23; Ntem, 2006:26; Oko, 2009:10).

## Be Selective with the Kind of Information You Review

When you find a literature that can be useful for your study, note that you may not need the full document, so carefully select only the most important points to discuss in the review. The information selected from each document must relate directly to the themes being reviewed.

## Conveying the Information to the Reader

Tell the reader what to expect. Try writing a simple statement that lets the reader know what your main organising principle is (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina, n.d.).

### Examples:

- The current trend in managing academic libraries' resources combines traditional and modern practices.
- Increasingly, information science professionals are accepting Wikipedia as a credible source of information for conducting academic research.

### (c) A Summary (or Conclusion) of Your Literature Review

Provide a summary that highlights what you found and did not find in the literature on your topic and suggest how your study will fill that gap.

#### Example of Summary of Literature Review:

This research explored the use of different typologies and reviewed the merits and practicalities of each. The review revealed that the special characteristics of Indigenous Knowledge do not fit well within discrete boundaries (as is perhaps true for many sources of information), and presents some other challenges as well. These issues are addressed more fully in the next chapter's discussion of the process of selecting the research methods used in this study.

Source: (Capponi, 2019)

### **Information Sources You can Use for Your Literature Review**

- Not all sources are equal. Scholarly sources such as peer reviewed journal articles and books are very good. Use the resources in your library or talk to your librarians.
- If possible, use the most recent and most authoritative sources.
- The literature review must be clear, concise and written in formal language.

Use the following sources:

- Books
- Journal articles
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Dissertations
- Radio or television documentaries
- Conference proceedings
- Research papers
- Encyclopaedias

Letters, lecture notes, memoirs, speeches, manuscripts, interviews and others of such unpublished works may also be used.

### **Sources you should avoid**

- Sources that are biased
- Sources full of errors

### **Document Your Sources of Information**

- Provide references for all your sources, in both in-text and the reference list. “GIJ Harvard 2016” is available in the Richard McMillan Library at GIJ as a primary guide. Better still, use a guide recommended by your supervisor.
- Do not plagiarise.
- Use long quotations sparingly.
- When paraphrasing a source, be sure to represent the author’s ideas precisely.

- Document the sources as you go along. Do not finish writing the literature review before you document the sources. It creates a lot of problems.
- Write down the necessary information about any relevant literature you find. You will need this for the citation. It does not matter whether you are using a printed style manual, Microsoft Word or reference software to generate your reference sources, you need the full bibliographic information of the material for both in-text and the reference list.

### In-Text Citation

It is the sources you put within the body of your research work.

Information required for in-text citation:

Author/Editor

Date

Page Number (if it is a direct quotation)

Example:

Ghanaian men are more responsible than... (Idrissu, 2006: 23)

OR

According to Idrissu (2006:23) “Ghanaian men are more responsible than...”

## What is the Reference List/Bibliography?

**The Reference List** is all the sources you refer to in your writing. The aim of generating the reference list is to give full bibliographic information of all the sources cited in your essay. This helps the reader to verify all the sources used. It also gives credit to authors you have consulted for their ideas.

**Bibliography** is the list of all sources you consulted that are not necessarily cited in your work.

## Information required for generating the Reference List:

### Books

Author/Editor

Date

Title of a book

Edition (if not the first edition)

Place of publication

Publisher

Web address and date accessed (if electronic)

Example:

Asante, K. & Adu, J. 2006. *Journalism today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Accra: Asempa.

Retrieved February 9, 2018 from: [www.kkpp.org.com](http://www.kkpp.org.com)

### Journal Articles

Author

Date

Title of article

Title of journal

Volume number of journal

Issue number

Beginning and ending page number of the article

Web address and date accessed (if electronic)

Example:

Fosu, M. 2009. English in tertiary institutions and the issue of falling standards: Expectations, lessons and challenges. *Journal of Communications, Media & Society*, 1(1):21-29. Retrieved February 9, 2018 from: [www.gij.edu.gh/articles](http://www.gij.edu.gh/articles)

Consult the library if you want to learn how to cite manually, use Microsoft Word or Mendeley - a reference-management software to generate reference sources.

### **Tips for Online Searches**

Online searches can be difficult, time consuming and expensive if you do not know how to navigate the vast amount of information available online. Your ability to formulate your search queries well, understand search engines and evaluate information determines your success in retrieving the required information.

### **Formulating Your Search Queries**

Search queries are simply the key words you enter into a search engine. Follow the steps below to formulate good search queries.

Define your search topic. Example: media literacy in Japan

- What do you know about the topic?
- Define the scope of the topic. Example:  
Regional coverage (continent, region, country, etc.). Example: in Asia, in Japan, in Northern Japan
- Identify the key words in your topic that can be used for the search. Example:  
Media literacy and Japan
- Consider the use of the following as well:
  - Synonyms (media/press, Japan/Nippon, lawyer/ barrister/attorney,)
  - Plural/singular forms (man, men)
  - Spelling variations (programme/program)
  - Variations of root word (educate, education, educating, educational)
  - Acronyms (CEO, Chief Executive Office...)
  - Lower/upper cases

Any key word identified in your research topic and related words can be used to search for information independently, but the results will be overwhelming and it can be time consuming. To improve accuracy and save time, refine the search by combining search terms by using the Boolean Operators to connect and define the relationship between the key words in your search. **Boolean Operators** can be used to either narrow or broaden your search results. The three **Boolean Operators** are: **AND, OR** and **NOT**.

When to Use **AND**

- **AND** combines two *different* concepts and retrieves the intersection.  
Example: “*media literacy*” **AND** “*Japan*”

- Results will include only documents that have both *media literacy* and *Japan*

This will help narrow the search and enhance precision.

### When to Use **OR**

Use **OR** to search for synonymous terms or concepts. Example: “*Press*” OR “*Media*” (Either term)

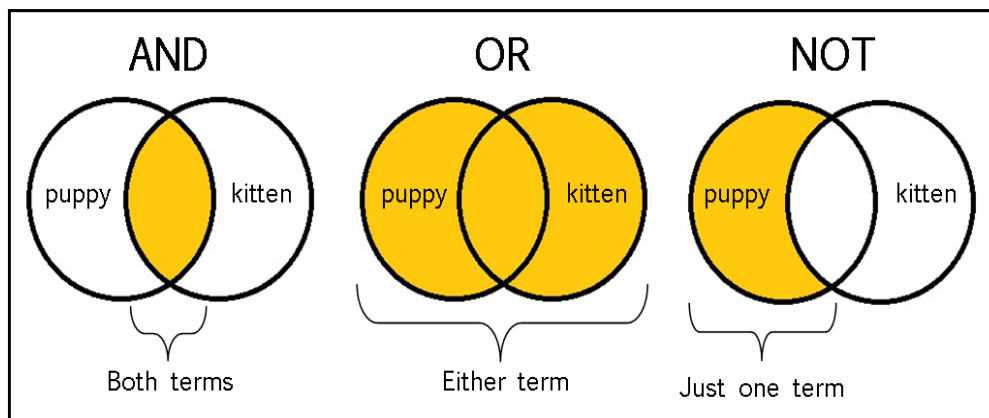
It collates the results to retrieve all unique records containing either or both of them.

**OR** widens your search.

### When to use **NOT**

Use **NOT** to exclude term(s) from your search results. (Just one term)

Example: higher education NOT community colleges



### Search Engines

A search engine is a tool that enables us to search for information from the Internet.

Some examples are discussed below:

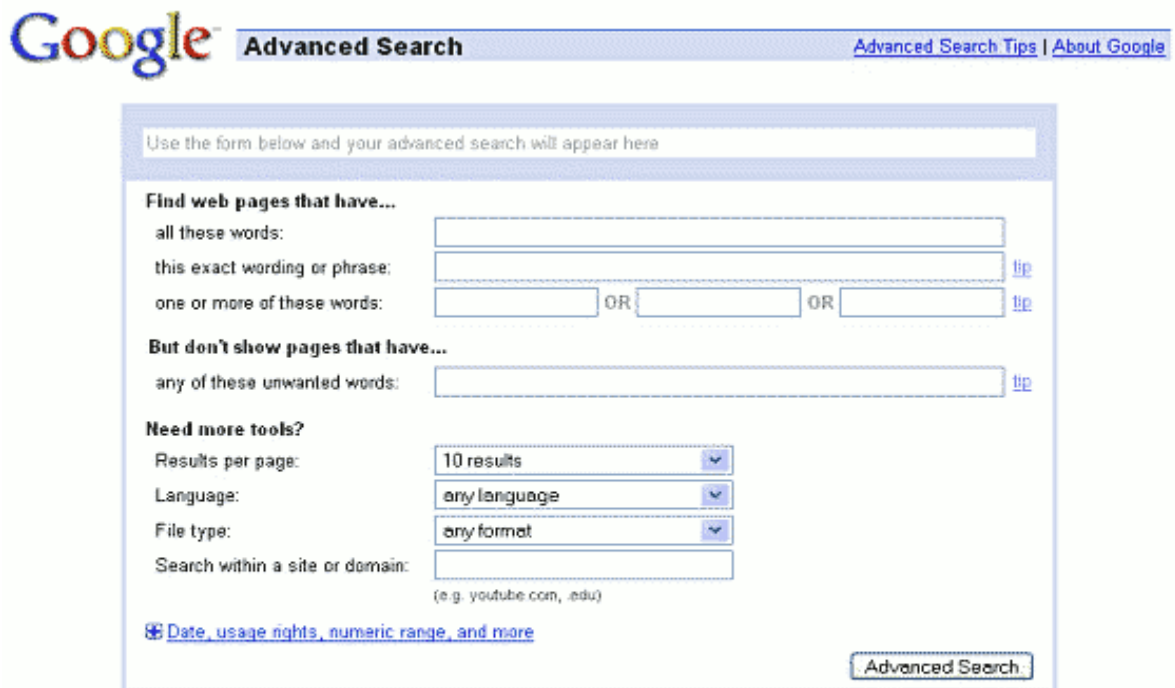
#### Google Advanced Search

If you use Google and you do not find the information needed, use Google Advanced Search. It enables you to refine the search by date, language, format and domain.

The domain is the server hosting the information (where the information is coming from). For the purpose of academic work, search for information from only educational institutions' sites or domains. To do this, type (.edu) in the site or domain field in the Google Advanced Search Fields.

**Link - [https://www.google.com.gh/advanced\\_search](https://www.google.com.gh/advanced_search)**

## Google Advanced Search Fields



The screenshot shows the Google Advanced Search page. At the top left is the Google logo, followed by the text "Advanced Search". On the top right, there are links for "Advanced Search Tips" and "About Google". Below this is a light blue box containing the search form. The form has a header that says "Use the form below and your advanced search will appear here". The main section is titled "Find web pages that have..." and includes three input fields: "all these words:", "this exact wording or phrase:" (with a "tip" link), and "one or more of these words:" (with "OR" separators and "tip" links). Below this is another section titled "But don't show pages that have..." with an input field for "any of these unwanted words:" (with a "tip" link). The "Need more tools?" section includes dropdown menus for "Results per page:" (set to "10 results"), "Language:" (set to "any language"), and "File type:" (set to "any format"). There is also a text input field for "Search within a site or domain:" with the example "(e.g. youtube.com, .edu)". At the bottom left of the form is a link for "Date, usage rights, numeric range, and more". At the bottom right is a button labeled "Advanced Search".

### Topic-specific search engines from Google:

[Google Book Search](#)  
[Google Code Search](#) **New!**  
[Google Scholar](#)  
[Google News archive search](#)

[Apple Macintosh](#)  
[BSD Unix](#)  
[Linux](#)  
[Microsoft](#)

[U.S. Government](#)  
[Universities](#)

## Google Scholar

Use Google Scholar for peer reviewed articles. It is a very good source, but most of the articles are not for free.

**Link - <https://scholar.google.com/>**

## **Subject Directories**

Use subject directories to retrieve related terms. Example of a subject directory is “Yahoo”

Link - <https://search.yahoo.com/>

## **Meta Search Engines**

Meta Search Engines are able to search several search engines at the same time and release a single result. When it becomes very difficult to find electronic information, use Meta Search Engine. Examples: Metacrawler, Excite, Dogpile, Mamma.

**Links:**        <https://www.metacrawler.com>  
                  <http://www.excite.com>  
                  <https://www.dogpile.com>  
                  <http://mamma.com>

## **Example of Arrangement of Headings and Sub-headings in Chapter Two.**

### CHAPTER TWO

#### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

#### 2.2 Concepts

##### 2.2.1 The Concept of Quality

##### 2.2.2 The Concept of Impact

#### 2.3 The Need to Measure Quality and Value

#### 2.4 Approaches to Measuring Service Quality

##### 2.4.1 Early Approaches to Measuring Service Quality

##### 2.4.2 Recent Trends in Quality Assessment

##### 2.4.3 Quality Assessment in the Developing World

#### 2.5 Conclusion or Summary

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TIPS FOR YOUR CHAPTER THREE (METHODOLOGY)

Methodology considers and explains the logic behind research methods and techniques. It includes the methods, procedures, and techniques used to collect and analyse data.

At this stage take a step back and ask where you are in the research process. In Chapter One you introduced the topic and formulated research questions. In Chapter Two you reviewed what the literature (secondary sources) says on the topic.

In Chapter Three you present a plan (research design) to discover data/evidence (primary sources), the main question and sub-questions.

Begin your Chapter Three with an introduction. Always introduce each chapter. See an example below:

Example of Introduction to a Chapter:

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research process that was followed when conducting the study. It begins with the research paradigm, the methodological approach and the research design that was followed. The chapter outlines the population, the sampling techniques as well as the data collection process and the methods of data analysis that were employed for this investigation. The justification for the selection of the research design, development of research instruments, pre-testing of instruments, study population and sample size, and mode of administering instruments are discussed and explained.

Example: The main objective of the research was to find out...

## **Some Key Elements in Chapter Three**

### **The Research Design**

The term can be sometimes confusing to students. Research design or approach simply means the overall plan for the study, outlining the broad method or strategy to gather data for an assessment or evaluation. The research design refers to how the study will be carried out. The research design generally involves:

- Your Research Paradigm/Worldview.
- Your Research Approach best suited for the research design.
- Your Research Method(s) or Method of Inquiry: How do you go about finding it out?
- Data Collection Techniques: How will you collect your data? Identifying the instruments to be used/created, how the instruments will be administered.
- Data Analysis and Interpretation: What steps will you take to analyse your data? How the data will be presented, analysed, and interpreted.

### **What is a Research Paradigm?**

A Research Paradigm is the study's broad philosophical assumptions. It is the same as worldviews. I prefer the term paradigm. A research paradigm is the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed (Kuhn, 1962). Rossman and Rallis (2003: 36) referred to it as "a worldview and a shared understanding of reality". It also means a "logical framework for observation and understanding, which shapes both what we see and how we understand it" (Babbie, 2014: 31). Creswell (2009: 6) defined paradigm as "a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds". Therefore, it is the individual assumption of how things work in the world, and the assumptions are affected by the beliefs and experiences of the researcher.

## **Types of Paradigm/Philosophical Worldviews**

There are different research paradigms in social science which generally represent different worldviews, with each paradigm having a distinctive way of understanding human social life. Each of these paradigms puts emphasis on specific types of research procedure.

## **Which Research Paradigm or Philosophical Worldview Does My Research Belong to?**

<b>Interpretive and Constructivism Paradigms/Philosophical Worldviews</b>
<p><b>Interpretive</b></p> <p>The interpretive is of the conviction that reality or truth can be achieved through subjective perceptions and interpretations of reality (Croucher &amp; Cronn-Mills, 2015: 40). Interpretive research typically tries to understand the social world as it is from the perspective of individual experience of the social world, and they use qualitative methods to find out the truth (Rossman &amp; Rallis, 2003: 46).</p>
<p><b>Constructivism</b></p> <p>Constructivism considers that there is no single reality or truth, and therefore, reality needs to be interpreted, and hence, they use qualitative methods to find out realities from different views (Patel, 2015:2).</p>
<p><b>Ontology</b></p> <p>What is reality? There is no single reality or truth. Reality is constructed through subjective perceptions and interpretations (Patel, 2015).</p>
<p><b>Epistemology</b></p> <p>How do you know reality? Reality needs to be interpreted (Patel, 2015).</p>
<p><b>Research Approaches:</b> Qualitative research attempts to comprehend why participants react as they do. Qualitative research tends to apply a more holistic and natural approach to the resolution of a problem than quantitative research.</p>

Qualitative research also gives more attention to the subjective aspects of human experience and behaviour (Powell & Connaway, 2004: 59).

It permits respondents to communicate freely about their understandings, selecting their own responses, their own language and even their own questions. It also allows the gathering of data about naturally occurring behaviour, without the interference of the researcher (Gunter, 2000: 42).

Qualitative research enables the researcher to learn about a problem from the perspective of participants. This helps in finding appropriate solutions to the problem.

**Strategies of Inquiry (Methods):** How do you go about finding it out?

Creswell's (1994) five modes of inquiry into Qualitative Research:

1. Case Studies
2. Ethnography (a researcher studies a whole cultural group in a natural setting for a long period of time by collecting data through observation and interviews)
3. Biography
4. Phenomenology
5. Grounded Theory

**Data Collection Techniques:** What technique do I use to find out?

Text and Image Data

Interviews

Open-ended Questions

Focus Group Discussions

Discourse Analysis

Observation – both participant and direct

In-depth interviews

Group Interviews

The collection of relevant documents

Photographs and Video Tapes

## **Positivism Paradigm/Philosophical Worldview**

### **Positivism**

The Positivists admit that there is a single truth or reality, and it can be measured and known. They use quantitative methods to measure truth or reality (Patel, 2015:2).

**Ontology:** What is reality or truth? There is a single reality (Patel, 2015).

**Epistemology:** How do you find out reality or truth? Reality can be measured and known (Patel, 2015).

**Research Approaches:** Quantitative approaches are intended to produce numerically-scored data about social behaviour, reactions and impacts. It offers processes that make it possible to gather large quantities of data from large numbers of people. This is done by placing restrictions on research respondents, either in the way such individuals are required to think about and report upon their personal experiences or in a way their behaviour is operationally defined and measured (Gunter, 2000: 42).

The quantitative approach is “an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true” (Creswell, 1994:2). It can be measured, observed (experimented) and involves large scale data collection.

**Strategies of Inquiry (Methods):** How do you go about finding it out? Surveys and experiments.

**Data Collection Techniques (Instruments):** What technique do I use to find out? Close-ended questions.

## **Pragmatists Paradigm/Philosophical Worldview**

**Pragmatists:** To the Pragmatists, reality can always be renegotiated, debated, deduced, and, therefore, the appropriate means to find reality is to use the method that best solves the problem (Patel, 2015: 2).

**Ontology:** What is reality? Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted (Patel, 2015).

**Epistemology:** How can I know reality? The appropriate method to employ to unravel the truth or reality is the one that resolves the problem. Finding out is the means and change is the primary aim (Patel, 2015).

**Research Approaches:** Mixed Methods

Combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to strengthen the research.

**Strategies of Inquiry (Methods):** How do you go about finding it out? Any of the above or more that can best solve the problem.

**Data Collection Techniques:** What technique do I use to find out? Any of the techniques discussed in the two paradigms above.

### **Please Note:**

If you are required to use a particular paradigm, make sure you understand it thoroughly, especially for undergraduate students.

## **Research Approach**

After introducing the chapter, you have to indicate whether your research approach is **quantitative**, **qualitative** or **mixed methods**. Clearly state which research approach you have selected for your study. The choice of your research approach depends largely on the nature of the research problem. The research approach also informs the paradigm, methods and strategies to adopt to collect data (Creswell, 2009:3).

### **Distinction between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches**

According to Shekedi (2005:7) “Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records”.

Qualitative research finds the patterns of meaning which emerged out of data collected from respondents or participants in their own words. The duty of the qualitative researcher is to find patterns within the participants’ words and to present those patterns for others to examine while at the same time not deviating from the viewpoint of the participants. The researcher must try as much as possible to stay close to the original experience of the participants (Gunter, 2000: 42).

The quantitative approach however, intends to produce numerically-scored data or the mathematical significance about social behaviour, reactions and impacts (words and actions). It offers processes that make it possible to gather large quantities of data from large numbers of people. This is done by placing restrictions “on research respondents, either in the way such individuals are required to think about and report upon their personal experiences or in a way their behaviour is operationally defined and measured” (Gunter, 2000:42).

Qualitative is more of subjective views while quantitative is objective views.  
Qualitative discovers while quantitative is proof.

### **Research Method(s)**

Your research method(s) could be a survey, case study, content analysis, textual analysis, field research, experimental research, historical research, amongst others, depending on the research problem you wish to solve. Clearly state which research method(s) you have selected and justify why.

### **Description of the Case(s) or Study Area**

Give a brief description of the case or the entity you are conducting the study about in Chapter Three. It can also be in the introductory chapter and referred to in Chapter Three. Always follow your supervisor's instructions.

### **Study Population or Target Group(s) (Who?)**

The population of a study is the total of all the subjects or members that fit into a set of specifications for the research. It is made up of two groups - target population and accessible population.

### **Target Population**

Target Population is the entire group of people or objects to which the researcher wants to generalise the study findings. Example: GIJ Students.

## **Accessible Population**

Accessible Population is the part of the population the researcher can really access for the study. It can be a subset or a section of the target population. Example: Level 400 regular students out of all GIJ students.

## **Sampling Procedures**

How are you going to select a portion of the accessible population?

In sampling, the main objective is to select a portion of a population that enables you to gather detailed information about the subject. Use probability sampling (random sampling) techniques such as Simple, Systematic, Stratified and Cluster samplings or non-probability sampling techniques such as Convenience or Accidental, Purposive, Quota, etc.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

In this section you need to discuss and explain your choices with regard to data collection techniques. Your techniques must be appropriate for your research problem statement and research method.

Clearly state how you will collect your data (for example, taping all episodes of a television/radio programme or using a questionnaire to collect data from students) and explain why you have selected this technique. Data collection techniques include (but are not limited to the following):

- Questionnaire for a survey
- Biographies/memoirs
- Interview schedule for interviews
- Moderator's guide for focus groups

- Journals
- Films
- Television programmes

### **Tips for Designing Your Questionnaire**

Designing a questionnaire is a skill. The success of finding answers to the research questions or objectives depends on designing the appropriate questions. Consider the following points when drafting your questionnaire:

- **Declare the Intention of Collecting Data:** Every respondent should be assured that information provided will be kept secret.
- **Clear Instructions:** Give clear instructions with respect to how to complete the questionnaire.
- **Relevance:** The number of questions should be brief and relevant to the problem under investigation. Elicit the data and information required only.
- **All Questions Must Address Objectives/Research Questions:** Ensure that all questions address the objectives or the research questions.
- **Simple and Clear:** The questions should be simple, clear and precise. The language should be very simple for the respondents to easily understand.
- **Avoid Ambiguous Questions: Make sure the questions are free of ambiguity.** Complex and long-worded questions annoy respondents and can lead to careless responses.
- **Sequence of the Questions:** Must be organised systematically and sequentially around the subject of investigation. Arrange the questions such that no question is omitted or repeated.

- **No Long Questions:** The questions must be short in terms of the length of questions. Long questions create problems for respondents.
- **Personal Questions:** Avoid personal and sensitive matters unless they are relevant to the research. In this case, make sure all ethical procedures are duly followed. See page 53.
- **Use Appropriate Words:** Frame the questions with appropriate words to bring out the meaning clearly.
- **Pre-Testing:** Pre-test your questionnaire before sending it to the respondents. This is very important. To increase the validity of the data collection instruments, conduct a pilot to test the questions before completing the questionnaire for your study.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In this section you are not going to analyse the data (which will only be done after the empirical part of your study has been completed). However, at this stage you must have some idea of how you will present your data, for example:

- Images
- Charts
- Tables
- Graphs
- Statistical summaries

In addition, you should also indicate your data analysis method, for example:

- Descriptive and/or inferential statistics
- Discourse analysis
- Thematic analysis

- Content analysis

## **Ethical Considerations**

Write the ethical consideration with the following points in mind:

- Always seek approval to conduct the research from the institution
- No potentially harmful or intrusive questions must be included in the instruments
- Seek ethics approval from the institution being studied. Discuss all ethical issues involving the use of human subjects for the study.
- Explain the aim of the research and make it clear that it is purely an academic research project. All participants must be assured that information gathered from the study would be treated with the strictest confidence and would be used for the intended purpose only.

In collecting data, have the following in mind:

- Participation must be voluntary.
- Do not disclose the identity of participants.
- The research should not disadvantage participants or tarnish the image of the institution you are studying.
- Let respondents give their consent by signing a consent form before interviews are conducted or questionnaires are given out.
- Inform respondents that they are free to withdraw at any stage of the research.

## Summary

Always remember to end each chapter with a conclusion which summarises the chapter and also introduces the next chapter. See an example below:

This chapter discussed the research methodology and the processes that were employed for the study. Detailed descriptions of the situation were given, the research design, the people who constituted the population of the study, the sampling technique and sample size selected, data gathering methods, mode of administering questionnaire and collection and the analysis of the various types of data collected were also explained. The next chapter discusses the presentation and analysis of results from the...

## Example of Typical Chapter Three Elements

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

#### 3.2 Research Design

#### 3.3 Research Paradigm

#### 3.4 Research Site(s) or Description of the Case(s) or Study Area

#### 3.5 Study Population or Target Group(s)

##### 3.5.1 Sampling Procedures

#### 3.6 Data Collection Instruments

##### 3.6.1 Advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires

##### 3.6.2 Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

- 3.6.3 Pre-testing data collection instruments
- 3.6.4 Mode of data administration
- 3.7 Data Analysis
- 3.8 Ethical Considerations
- 3.9 Summary

## **CHAPTER SIX: TIPS FOR CHAPTERS FOUR AND FIVE**

Your Chapter Four describes the presentation and analysis of data followed by a discussion of the research findings in your Chapter Five. Data is analysed purposely to discover, describe and explore the link between variables.

### **Tips for Chapter Four**

- Remind the reader what your research questions were.
- If the study is a qualitative type, analyse according to the themes that have emerged from the data you collected. That is, the views of the people you interviewed. (If done properly, all the themes that emerged from interviews will address all your research questions or objectives).
- If the study is a quantitative study, present the results in a graphical form such as tables, graphs, bi-charts, pie charts and quantify the results in terms of percentages.
- Title all tables and figures.
- All tables and figures should relate to the issue being discussed or the research question the data is addressing.
- Add very few connections to the literature reviewed in your Chapter Two since you have to do the main connections in your Chapter Five.

### **Example of Layout of Chapter Four**

#### **4.0 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

##### **4.1.1 Background Data of Respondents**

##### **4.1.2 Awareness of Service, Evidence and Purpose of Use**

4.1.3 Perception of Quality

4.1.4 Evidence and Perception of Value

4.2 Summary

### **Tips for Chapter Five**

- Discuss all the major findings that emerged out of the study.
- Your voice must be heard in this chapter.
- Critique your findings.
- Relate your findings to the Chapter Two and the theories or models used.
- Provide conclusion.
- Provide general recommendations based on the findings and recommendation for further research.

### **Example of Layout for Chapter Five**

#### **5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Computer Use

5.2.2 Awareness of Services

5.2.3 Quality of Information Resources

5.2.4 Satisfaction with Services

5.3 Summary of Findings

5.4 Recommendations

5.5 Conclusion

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