

DOING RESEARCH: AN APPROACH FOR OUR SUCCESS**Dr. Malathi Shri¹**

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ABSTRACT: *In academics, carrying out research is an important and an ongoing process. One must spend quality time researching the areas of his/her interest. What to research? How to start? What and how to read? How to finally decide the topic? How to choose a guide? How to go about the research? Selecting the right structure? How to write thesis? Staying motivated, validity of the research done, all these are the basic important questions and concerns of any upcoming researcher. This paper is an approach to share the experience and approach, which can serve as good tips in doing his/her research work.*

KEYWORDS: *Literature search – Being focused – Narrowing down – writing thesis – staying motivated*

In academics, carrying out research is an important ongoing process. The kind of research you do will depend on your research questions. You will usually need to survey existing literature to get an overview of the knowledge that has been gained so far on the topic; this will enlighten your own research and your interpretations. You may decide to do:

- Primary research (conducting your own experiments, surveys etc., to gain new knowledge)
- Secondary research (collating knowledge from other people's research to produce a new synthesis)
- You may need to do either or both.

Areas of Your interest: What to Research?

Spend quality time researching the areas of your interest and every time you consider a certain subject for your topic ask yourself the questions:

1. Is this something that I see myself doing in the future?
2. Is this something I am willing to work within the selected time?
3. Can it be somehow connected to my future earning?
4. Or can I do this and make a living out of it?

Find an area that interests you not only now but also in the long run because you will utilize most of your resources (such as time, energy, money) to produce knowledge within this particular field. And remember you can re-generate energy, money but you will never be able to reproduce time, so you can't waste it. Try to discover new information about your research and write down all potential topics in order of most interest to you.

HOW TO START?

A very good starting point to research is to review the courses you took during your studies in the past, and the subjects that caught your interest. Look out for keywords or phrases that draw your attention when you go through your materials. By doing these things it will often show you a trend of your interest and preferences and give you an idea and lead you to the right research topic for you.

Another technique is called 'NARROWING DOWN'. A good way of formulating a research topic is through questions. Ask How, What, Why, list down a number of questions that will lead to an interesting thesis topic.

For Eg:

1. How can 'A' as opposed to 'B' better explained relationship between D and C?
2. Can 'A' provide more useful implications...
3. Why is that so....

Make sure that the questions are not broad because it would make it hard for you to focus. Start with issues that concern you. If you think your topic is too broad, you need to do more of literature review. This way you will get more ideas to narrow down your topic. At the same time, don't make your questions too generic. If they sound so, be suspicious because it may be that you have not done enough preliminary research. On the otherhand, make sure your questions are not too narrow either. A successful research should express ideas of general importance through detailed analysis. If the topic is too narrow, read about the topic to find the general concern.

LITERATURE SEARCH: WHAT AND HOW TO READ?

Remember that it's impossible to read everything that might be relevant: instead, read selectively. Scan the title, then the abstract, and try to get a feel for the most important points. Many people find it useful to take notes while they read. To really understand a paper, you have to understand the motivations for the problems posed, the choices made in finding a solution, the assumptions behind the solution, whether the assumptions are realistic and whether they can be removed without invalidating the approach, future directions for research, what was actually

accomplished or implemented, the validity(or lack thereof) of the theoretical justifications or empirical demonstrations, and the potential for extending and scaling the algorithm up.

Keeping a diary of your research activities and ideas is very useful. Write down speculations, interesting problems, possible solutions, random ideas, reference to look up, notes on papers you have read, outlines of papers to write, and interesting quotes. Read back through it periodically. You'll notice that the bits of random thoughts start to come together and form a pattern, often turning into a research topic. Maintain the papers you read filed away so you can find them again later, and set up an online bibliography. This bibliography will be useful for later references, for writing your dissertation, and for sharing with others.

FINDING A THESIS TOPIC: HOW TO FINALLY DECIDE THE TOPIC?

Choosing an appropriately scaled – down topic may be difficult, having the ideal topic is also less important; a good source of ideas for research topic is developing and implementing and extensions to an existing system or techniques.

If you pick a topic that you are not truly interested in simply because it's your guide's preference area, it will be difficult to stay focused and motivated – and you may get fixed if your guide moves on to a different research area before you finish. The same is true for choosing a topic because of its marketability. If you are not personally excited about the topic, you will have a harder time finishing and a harder time convincing other people that your research is interesting. Besides, markets may change more quickly than most people finish their research work. To finish quickly, it's usually best to pick a narrow, well - defined topic. The downside of this approach is that it may not be as exciting to you or to the research community. If you are more of a risk-taker, choose a topic that branches out in a new direction. The threat here is that it can be difficult to carefully define the problem, and to evaluate the solution you develop.

FINDING A GIUDE: HOW TO CHOOSE A GUIDE?

The ideal guide will be in the area you've interested in working in, and will actively be doing high-quality research and be involved in and respected by the research community. Multiple mentors are common and useful; they may include other faculty members in your department or elsewhere, senior graduate students, or other colleagues.

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR GUIDE:

Your guide can give you expert guidance, but they can't formulate and plan your project for you. Have some questions to ask your guide like 'How can I narrow down my question?'. Or specific such as 'Am I interpreting this result correctly?'. If you are unsure of an idea or approach, don't be afraid to talk it through with your guide. Just explaining it to someone else can help to sort out your own thinking. It is easier for a guide to give advice on a specific place of work, so

bring your research proposal, or chapter drafts, to the meetings your guide might not have time to read it all, so highlight places you would like feedback on.

METHODOLOGY: HOW TO GO ABOUT THE RESEARCH?

The method you choose will be the model for how you go about your research:

- Why is the method you chose the most appropriate way of finding an answer to your research question?
 - Are there any other methods you might have used?
 - Why didn't you choose them?
 - Throughout your research be aware of the decisions you make and note them down explaining why you made them.
 - Did you change your plans when you encountered a problem?
 - Did you have to adjust sample size, questions, and approach?
- This awareness of why you did your research in a certain way and your ability to explain and justify these choices is a vital part of your research.

THINKING ABOUT A STRUCTURE: WHAT IS THE RIGHT STRUCTURE?

Thesis are usually structured in one of two ways. They may have a formal structure similar to a report (more usual for projects involving primary research) or alternatively they may be based around discussions of themes or texts. Do bear in mind that no structure, title or question is set in stone until you submit your completed work. If you find a more interesting or productive way to discuss your topic, don't be afraid to change your structure providing you have time to do any extra work.

WRITING A THESIS: HOW TO WRITE?

Sometimes it's difficult to formalize an idea well enough to test and prove it until you have written it up; the results of your test often require you to make changes that mean that you have to go back and rewrite parts of the thesis; and the process of developing and testing your ideas is almost never complete (there is always more that you 'could' do) so that many researcher end up "doing research" right up until the day or two before the thesis is turned in.

The divide-and-conquer approach works as well for writing as it does for research. It is essential that you break this down into manageable stages, both in terms of doing the research and when writing the thesis. Try to come up with a range of tasks, both in terms of duration and difficulty. On days when you feel energetic and enthusiastic, you can sink your teeth into a solid problem, but on days when you are run-down and unmotivated; you can at least accomplish a few small tasks and get them off your queue.

Don't sit down and try to start writing the entire thesis from beginning to end. First jot down notes on what you want to cover; then organize these into an outline. Start drafting sections ; beginning with those you are most confident about. Don't feel obligated to write it perfectly the first time: if you can't get a paragraph or phrase right, just write 'something' (a rough cut, a note to yourself, a list of bulleted points) and move on.

STAYING MOTIVATED:

To stay focused and motivated is the most important subject matter. It often helps to have organized activities to force you to manage your time and to do something every day. Setting up regular meetings with your guide, attending seminars, or even extracurricular activities such as sports or music can help you to maintain a regular schedule. Setting daily, weekly, and monthly goals is a good idea, and works even better if you use a "buddy system" where you and another researcher meet at regular intervals to review your progress. Instead of writing an entire thesis, focus on the goal of writing a chapter, section, or outline. Instead of implementing a large system, break off pieces and implement one module at a time. Identify tasks that you can do in an hour or less; then you can come up with a realistic daily schedule. Learn to listen to valid , constructive criticism and to ignore destructive , pointless criticism.

VIABILITY

Finally, after you know the best topic that engages your interest it is also important to check its visibility. Even if your topic is something you are passionate about but if the study is not feasible, it will bring you to a dead end, which will be a very frustrating experience for you and it will not yield productive results.

Checking into library archives about previous studies and thesis written about the topic will help you project the viability of the project. Go to your library and find similar studies. Begin with resources at your reach. With internet you can access any major library. Use online resources such as JSTOR, Blackwell reference, Britanica, Sage Publications, Science Direct and so on. If you don't know how to access them, ask your librarian. They should help you with that.

A SMALL GLIMPSE: TO SUM UP

Doing research is a long process and it requires your patience and persistence. It is very important that you find not only something you can stretch into an interesting study, but also work with something that will sustain your own interest through it all. Your successful completion is directly proportionate to your ability to select a research topic that will keep you interested during the entire writing process. In other words, the more thought you give to selecting a topic or the more properly you research areas of your interest the more likely you wind up being fully engaged in your research with passion and enthusiasm.

Reference:

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