

# Identifying and Stating the Problem through the Use of a Research Outline Proposal in the Research Writing Process

**Almighty C. Tabuena**

Senior High School Faculty Member, High School Department, Espiritu Santo Parochial School of Manila Inc.,  
Manila, Philippines  
Email – almighty.tabuena@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *The main goal of the research process is to preserve and improve the quality of human life. In this circumstance, there is a need to look at the teaching of research methods, since equipping the students with these research literacy skills leads to increased research output by the individual, particularly on the preliminary steps in identifying the inquiry. Thus, this research article takes initiative in research education to help the students in establishing and maintaining the research skills with the adoption of the research outline proposal as a method in identifying the inquiry and stating the problem in the research writing process. The research student who is contemplating an investigation, be it a research paper or a case study, must surely necessarily write a proposal. Understanding research from the perspective of researchers is very important, from its nature to important guidelines, as well as to the research process itself. To ensure consistency and efficiency in doing research, certain steps must be observed: determine the research topic, and identify the research problem or the statement of the purpose. In this part, the student should think of a broad topic for a possible research study and breakdown what they have conceptualized into smaller details. A student-researcher may use factor–isolating questions, factor–relating questions, situation–relating questions, and situation–producing questions to conceptualize a statement of the problem. In completing the research outline proposal, research designs and data collection techniques help to describe how the researcher will process the research questions. This research outline proposal format and guidelines might help students in identifying the inquiry and stating the problem in the research writing process as it is beneficial to them to promote and sustain research endeavors.*

**Keywords:** *inquiry, outline, proposal, process, research, research writing.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

Research education promotes the uniform conduction, interpretation, and response to research findings reported using familiar standard formats of scientific writing. According to Aravamudhan and Frantsve (2009), research education and the adoption of uniform formats of scientific writing promotes evidence-based practice by improving information awareness, seeking, and eventual application of new practices. Thus, this research article takes initiative in research education to help the student in establishing and maintaining the research skills with the adoption of the research outline proposal as a method in identifying the inquiry and stating the problem in the research writing process.

In the emergence of the K-12 curriculum, the students should develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through research, and one of the performance standards is that the learners should be able to formulate the statement of the research problem. The teaching of research methods has received a limited amount of attention (Earley, 2014; Wagner et al., 2011). Much of the institutions teaching on research methods focus more on knowledge transfer while giving little or no attention to context and application of the acquired knowledge (Wagner et al., 2011; Gal & Ginsburg, 1994). In this circumstance, the primary objective of this research article is to provide brief guidelines in identifying the inquiry and stating the problem through the use of a research outline proposal both for junior and senior high school students.

This lack of context makes the learning of research even more difficult for the research naive senior high school students (Tabuena, 2020a). There is thus a need to look at the teaching of research methods, since equipping the students with these research literacy skills leads to increased research output by the individual (Munabi et al., 2006). Furthermore, this research article aimed to accomplish the following: describe characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, and kinds of research; illustrate the importance of research across fields; design research used in daily life; write a research title (proposed or working title); state research questions; and present written statement of the problem.

### 1.1. Importance and Meaning of Research

As humanity encounter things in life - a rare or an ordinary one, sometimes they wonder how things are configured, structured and happened, such as the color of the sky, the climate of one's region, the spread of disease, the

effect of political extremism, racism and antisemitism, and many others that give us the way to think and figure out questions in mind. This simple way of thinking leads us to have an idea of a certain thing and/or topic whether it is important or not in our daily lives. Scientifically, this process associated with linking questions to questions in attempting to discover facts about something is called an inquiry. Human beings are curious in nature, and this curiosity leads us to discoveries that aid us in our daily lives. “How important is inquiry? How important is research?”

Research is the process of finding answers to [specific] questions systematically and reliably in the expansion of knowledge, however, it is much more than a method of problem-solving. According to Creswell (1994), research is defined to include systematic and rigorous investigation directed to the discovery of hitherto unknown facts; the construction of explanatory theory, and, the construction of original works of significant artistic merit; a scholarly activity directed to the construction of analysis or interpretation of existing human products of human, scientific, literary and artistic activity aimed at increasing the accuracy and depth of human understanding - both should result in tangible output.

The main goal of the research is to preserve and improve the quality of human life. There are numerous reports in the science of medicine, technology, education, and others, in which research is evident through those practical applications and advancements; among others are specified as follows: (a) discover and verify facts, (b) enhance man’s basic life, and (c) research advancement (Jerusalem et al., 2017).

## **2. RESEARCH TOPIC PROPOSAL:**

The research topic proposal is the preliminary step in identifying the inquiry in the research writing process. The research student who is contemplating an investigation, be it a research paper or a case study, must surely necessarily write a proposal. The dictionary defines a proposal as a proposing, or setting forth consideration, something proposed; an offer; a proposition; a scheme, a plan, a bid, or the like. The research proposal is then the plan for an intended investigation.

### **2.1. Establishing Research Topic to Identify Research Problem**

Understanding research from the perspective of researchers is very important, from its nature to important guidelines, as well as to the research process itself. To ensure consistency and efficiency in doing research, certain steps must be observed: (a) determine the research topic, and (b) identify the research problem or the statement of the purpose.

#### **2.1.1. Determine the Research Topic**

The first step in the research process is to determine the research topic. The research topic will be the general foundation in the process of scientific inquiry which covers the relationship among variables. Pursue feasible research. The topic you will decide on must be valuable and worthwhile. Choose and define certain topics wisely which might come from prevailing theories, existing problems in the school or community, observations, curiosity, interests, advice of authorities or experts, and other related fields. Sample research topics such as, but not limited to: mental health, depression, suicide prevention, computer literacy, classroom cleanliness, educational practices, and others. For example, research topic on audio cognitive neuroscience, a specific topic on the developmental neuroscience and musical training; research title: How musical training affects cognitive development: rhythm, reward and other modulating variables (Miendlarzewska & Trost, 2014).

#### **2.1.2. Identify the Research Problem or the Statement of the Purpose**

The research problem is commonly called the heart of research in which researchers aim to answer as they go through the research process. A research problem is a statement about an area of concern that implies the relationship between the variables of the study and should be stated in a clear and specific manner. For example, using the statement of the problem format, on the research title: Quality of life of post-myocardial infarction patients admitted at Bulacan Medical Center (Santiago, 2018); statement of the problem: This study aimed to assess the quality of life of post-myocardial infarction patients admitted to Bulacan Medical Center year 2015; specific research problems: (1) What are the demographic characteristics of Acute Myocardial Infarction patients admitted at Bulacan Medical Center in terms of age, sex, days of confinement in the hospital, history of cardiovascular disease, risk factors, lipid profile, and electrocardiogram? (2) What are the clinical characteristics of Acute Myocardial Infarction patients admitted at Bulacan Medical Center, in terms of Killips Classification, and events during confinement? (3) How may the Quality of Life of the post-Myocardial Infarction patients be described in terms of the following dimensions: physical functioning, social functioning, and emotional functioning? (4) Which of the patient characteristics singly or in combination is predictive of the quality of life of myocardial infarction patients? (5) Based on the findings of the study, what interventions may be recommended to further improve the general health of Myocardial Infarction patients?

Another example, using the statement of the purpose format, on the research title: Development and validation of a Philippine music achievement test in addressing the K to 12 music curriculum learning competencies (Tabuena,

2020b); statement of the problem: This study aimed to develop and validate an achievement test in Philippine Music for junior high school students, particularly to grade level 7; specific research problems (statement of the purpose): Furthermore, this study aimed to accomplish the following: (1) Construct test items aligned to the K to 12 Music curriculum learning competencies; (2) Determine the difficulty and discrimination indices of the test items through item analysis, and (3) Evaluate the achievement test in Philippine Music in terms of reliability and validity.

**2.1.3. Guide Questions in Establishing Research Topic to Identify Research Problem**

In this part, the student should think of a broad topic for a possible research study (e.g. technology, behavior, games) and breakdown what have they conceptualized into smaller details following the guide questions: (a) What is your topic (in general)? (b) What is the current issue you want to find out about your topic? (c) Who is involved specifically in your proposed study? (d) What significant contributions it might bring? (e) What are the possible advantages and disadvantages? (f) What is the specific place you want to test your study? (g) To what extent (time-frame) you will accomplish it? Then, combine the answers to narrow down the topic. (h) What is the specific topic of your research?

**3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH TOPIC PROPOSAL:**

The following are the sample research questions according to the nature and type of research. A student-researcher may refer to it in developing the specific research problems (research questions): (a) Factor–Isolating Questions (for Descriptive Research), for example, How many hours do employees spend on Facebook per week?; (b) Factor–Relating Questions (for Correlational Research), for example, What is the significant relationship between the nature and economic status of the family and the social status of junior students? (c) Situation–Relating Questions (for Experimental Research)for example, What are the effects of the traditional methods of teaching on the level of performance of ABM students?; and (d) Situation–Producing Questions (for Experimental/Non-experimental Research), for example, What part of the curriculum should be enhanced or improved to prepare senior high school students for the workplace?

From the specific topic that a student-created in the previous part, this is the indication to conceptualize a statement of the problem and list down at least three (3) specific research problems (suggested number of research problems for the students).

**4. RESEARCH OUTLINE PROPOSAL:**

Generally, the title should: (a) summarize the main idea of the paper; (b) be a concise statement of the main topic; (c) include major variable/s; (d) show the relationship of the main variables of the study; (e) mention the participants (in a general manner) and the setting. Researchers should be reminded that: (a) using words that serve no useful purposes and can mislead indexers should be avoided; (b) the general problem when rewritten in statement form can be used as a research title, and (c) the title must have an average of 15 words (suggested number of words for a research title).

**4.1. Writing the Research Outline Proposal**

On the other hand, research designs help to describe how the researcher will process the research question, these are the plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. The three types of designs are the following (Creswell, 2009): qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed methods research, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Designs

Research Designs	Quantitative Research	Mixed Methods Research	Qualitative Research
Research Types	True-Experimental Research Quasi-Experimental Research Descriptive-Survey Research Correlational Research	Sequential Mixed Method Concurrent Mixed Method Transformative Mixed Method	Case Study Ethnography Historical Study Phenomenology

Also, data collection techniques involve obtaining the necessary information to answer the posed research question. Data collection techniques include quantitative survey; quantitative interview (structured) such as face-to-face

interview, and digital interview (phone/mobile, online, web-based); quantitative observation (systematic, naturalistic); experiments (laboratory, field, natural) and tests; demographics, documents, and related literature.

The following figure (Figure 1) might help students to identify the inquiry and state the problem through the use of the research outline proposal below, by providing a brief explanation for the research design and research type, and how the data will be collected.

<b>Proposed Research Title:</b>
<b>General Problem:</b>
<b>Research Questions:</b>
(1)
(2)
(3)
<b>Research Design:</b>
<b>Research Type:</b>
<b>Data Collection Techniques:</b>

Figure 1. Research Outline Proposal Form/Format

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Nowadays, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of research for developing guidelines to direct social and economic interventions (Mason et al., 1999). These guidelines may range from format to format or content to content that involves critical analysis of every solution to a problem using the scientific method in identifying the best evidence-based solution for action at the time. This in turn will advance how institutions teach research methods guided by the cognitive and constructivist theories of learning that emphasize the importance of understanding the learning process from the students' perspective. This would be beneficial to the students to provide them an engaging and conducive learning environment to promote and sustain research endeavors, involvement in research activities strengthens the ties of students to the school they are enrolled in; therefore, academic institutions must enhance such activities for retention purposes (Baker, 2008; Correa et al., 2015).

In this case, society expects universities and institutions to lead both the teaching and carrying out of research, and this expectation has led to various policy recommendations and initiatives to promote research and innovation (Oriokot et al., 2011). This research outline proposal form and the aforementioned guidelines might help students in identifying the inquiry and stating the problem in the research writing process.

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