Chapter Six
Proposal and Report Writing

What is a Proposal?

❖ Proposal is a document which sets out your ideas in an easily accessible way.

❖ It is a systematic and careful description of what a thesis, dissertation or research project will be about and how it will intend to carry out the work involved until its completion.

- It is a useful document that challenges you to think very carefully about what you are going to do, how you will do it and why.

- It is required in order to inform your supervisor of your intentions so that he/she can judge and forward their comments.

What makes a good proposal?

• Demonstrate relevant background

• Indicate how your topic emerges from issues that are being debated and how your work will produce a useful contribution to the debate.

• Relevance to funding body or to student's study.

Cont'd

- Uniqueness, or offers new insight or development.

- The title, statement, objectives and methodologies are all clear and brief.

- Comprehensiveness and good match between the issues to be addressed and the approach being adopted with timetable, resources and budget.

6.1 Proposal Writing

Thinking Stages

➢ Before you start to think about your research, you need to ask yourself a few questions like:

✓ Why I decided to do some research?

✓ How can I remain interested in my research?

✓ What personal characteristics do I have which might help me to complete my research?

✓ What skills and experience do I have which might help in my research?

Be inclusive with your thinking by addressing at least the 6 Ws.

What are these six WS?

- ✓ What?   What is your research?
- ✓ Why?   Why do you want to do the research?

               What is its purpose?

- ✓ How?   How can you conduct the research?
- ✓ Who?   Who will be your participants?
- ✓ Where?   Where are you going to conduct your

               research?

- ✓ When?   When are you going to do your research?

Drafting Stage

- Once you have thought about these six 'Ws', try to sum up your proposed project in one sentence.

- Write down your ideas

- Try not to be overly influenced at this time by what you feel others expect from you

- Be realistic about the time that you are welling to commit to your research project

- Take it to several people, including your boss and/or advisor, and ask them if it makes sense. Do they understand what your research is about? If they don't, ask them to explain their confusion, revise your statement and take it back to them.

Reasons why Research proposals Fail

Those students who tend to have a problem in coming up with a viable proposal often are the ones that have tried to rush through the "thinking about it" part and move too quickly to trying to write the proposal.

Indicators of poor Proposal and causes for fail

- Un clear or Vague title, Aims and objectives

- mismatch between the approach being adopted and the issues to be addressed.

- The overall plan is too ambitious and difficult to achieve in the timescale.

- The researcher does not seem to have conducted enough in-depth background research.

- Problem is of insufficient importance.
- Information about the data collection is insufficiently detailed.
- Information about the data analysis method is insufficiently detailed.
- Timescale is inappropriate or unrealistic.
- Resources and budget have not been carefully thought out.
- Topic has been done too many times

6.2 Proposal Formats and Styles

- Every subject has its own way of looking at things, its own terminology and its own ways of measuring.

- There is a fairly standardized format for writing proposals.

- Structuring an outline is very important

- In structuring the outline, it must include the <u>major components or elements</u> of any research proposal.

Research Title

- It must be reflective of its problem

- It must have limited words (10-15 words)

- It should answer the following questions:

 What are you trying to investigate or discover?

Who are the respondents or subjects of the study?

Where the research study will be conducted?

Example:

   Household Level Rural Land Use Change in Case of Keneni Micro Watershed, SNNPR Since the 1960s and Its Implications to Sustainable Land Management

1.Introduction

1.1 Background

It gives pertinent background information on research project and should be as brief as possible and to the point.

In the background of the study, the writer should

- Create reader interest in the topic,

- Lay the broad foundation for the problem that leads to the study, Place the study within the larger context of the scholarly literature, and reach out to a specific audience.

- The proponent should describe the existing and prevailing problem situation based on his/her experience. This scope may be global, national, regional and local.

- The proponent should give strong justification for selecting such research problem in his/her capacity as a researcher. Being a part of the organization or systems and the desire and concern to improve the systems.

- The researcher should link and relate the background of the study to the proposed research problem.

1.2.Problem Statement

Effective problem statements answer the question:

"Why does this research need to be conducted?"

What is the 'Current Status of Problem'?

– Current Problem, Current Methods, Current Analysis,

– Scope of your focus on 'Current Status of Problem'(local, nationally, internationally)

• Why change the 'current status' and how

– What the dilemma behind (current methods, analysis)

– Why we like to change (current methods, analysis)

• How we change the 'Current Status'

If you find this difficult to write, then most likely you have not understood the problem.

Purpose of the Problem Statement

- Clearly write your own 'angle' on the problem

- Clearly state the reason behind your proposal

- Specifies the condition(s) you want to change

- Supported by evidence (prior research by you)

- Show your prior research on the topic (results, publish paper)

- Even if the problem is obvious, your reviewers want to know how clearly you can state it

5 Key Questions to Answer in Your Problem Statement

- Does your problem statement:

– Demonstrate a precise understanding of the problem you are attempting to solve?

– Clearly convey the focus of your project early in the narrative?

– Indicate the relationship of your project to a larger set of problems and justify why your particular focus has been chosen?

– Demonstrate that your problem is feasible to solve?

– Make others what to read it further?

1.3. Research Objectives

- Flows naturally from Problem Statement to Research Objectives.

- Keep your objectives SMART

- Specific: indicate precisely what you intend to change through your project

- Measurable & attainable: what you accept as proof of project success

- Logical & Relevant: how each objective contributes to systematically to achieving your overall goal

Example

General Objective

- The general objective of this study is to quantify the land use and land cover changes and identify its implications to sustainable land management in Keneni micro watershed since 1960s.

Specific Objectives

- Specifically the study will attempt to:

1. Quantify the land use and land cover change patterns of Shelo Balela micro watershed based on multi-temporal satellite images (1973- 2010)

2. Evaluate the temporal land use change at household level in the study area over the past 50 years.

3. Identify the drivers of land use change at household level.

4. Examine the implication of land cover changes and associated land uses at household level on sustainable land management practices in the study area.

1.4.Research questions/hypothesis

❖ Descriptive research often uses just research questions.

❖The purpose of the research question is to make the research focused.

❖Thus, it sails a research study in a particular direction. A good question is stated as a question, specific, includes key terms and / or variables to be investigated, can be operationalized and it is written in simple and precise form.

Example

1. To what extent is the land cover of the micro watershed changed since 1960s to 2014?

2. Is there a major change in land use practices at household's plot level in the study area in the past fifty years?

3. What were the drivers of land use and land cover changes of the micro watershed in general and at household level in particular?

4. What are the implications of the land use and land cover changes in the study area to sustainable land management?

Hypothesis

- In experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational or ex post facto research a hypothesis is generally expected. You can also have research questions if desired.

- Hypotheses are normally stated directional and non directional in relation to null and alternative hypothesis

1.5. Importance/Benefits of the Study

❖ It discusses the importance of the study to the society, country, government, the community, institution, concerned agency, curriculum planners and developers and to the researchers.

❖ It expounds on the study's probable impact to education, science, technology, on-going researchers, etc.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

- Delimitation addresses how a study will be narrowed in scope, that is, how it is bounded.

- This is the place to explain the things that you are not doing and why you have chosen not to do them—the literature you will not review (and why not), the population you are not studying (and why not), the methodological procedures you will not use (and why you will not use them). Limit your delimitations to the things that a reader might reasonably expect you to do but that you, for clearly explained reasons, have decided not to do.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

- Limitation identifies potential weaknesses of the study and means to minimize the limitations.

2. Literature Review

It includes:

➤ General concepts and Definitions related to the topic

➤ Theories and principles related to the topic

➤ Research results of others

➤ It is generally best to start globally and then narrow it down to the specific research question you have.

Purpose/Importance:

➤ It shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported.

➤ It relates a study to the larger, ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic and identifying gaps

➤ It provides a framework as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings

➤ Demonstrate to the reader that you have a comprehensive grasp in the field

By the time you finish your research, you should know more about the topic than anyone else even more than your advisor

• You accomplish this by a thorough review of existing research regarding the problem.

Procedures

- It should be organized thematically to conform with the specific problems.

- Focus on recent or historically significant research studies

- Always refer to the original source

- Discuss how the literature applies, show the weaknesses in the design, discuss how you would avoid similar problems

- Indicate how your idea is different/better from others

- It should be synthesized such that evidence from all the studies reviewed would get an overall understanding of the state of knowledge in the problem area.

- You have to synthesize and merge what others had done, not just string a bunch of quotes together!!!!

For instance;

— Bekele (2001) says it is important to move around in the classroom.

– Asafw (2007) believes movement in the classroom helps students to focus on the teacher.

– James (2010) says teachers should change their position every 3-4 minutes in order to keep student attention.

❖ Moving around the classroom helps to maintain student interest (Bekele, 2001; Asfaw, 2007; James, 2010)

Conceptual/ Theoretical Framework of the Study

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

❑ The conceptual framework is the schematic diagram which shows the variables included in the study.

❑ Arrows or line should be properly placed and connected between boxes to show the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

❑ All the independent and dependent variables should be clearly discussed and explained

how these would influence the results of the study.

Theoretical Framework

- The theoretical framework consists of theories, principles, generalizations and research findings which are closely related to the present study under investigation. It is in this framework where the present research problem understudy evolved.

- Authors of these theories and principles should be cited. As much as possible research findings and theories should be correct.

3. Methodology

This discusses the research locale, research design, population sampling or respondents of the study, research instrument, and the statistical treatment of data.

3.1 Description of the Study area

- This discusses the place or setting of the study. It describes in brief the place where the study is conducted, relief structure, climate, soil type, forest coverage, water Resource of the Study area, etc.

- Describes the socio-economic background of the area (Shows the target population, Population Density, Economic activity, etc.)

- Only important features which have the bearing on the present study are included.

3.2 Research Design

- Describes your project activities in detail

- This describes the research mode whether it is true experimental or quasi experimental design, descriptive or survey research, historical research, qualitative research, ethnographic, etc.

- Description should include the sequence, flow, and interrelationship of activities.

- What you are going to do in technical terms.

– May contain many subsections

– Be specific about what research method you will use and why

– Provide details of your proposed solutions to the problem and sub-problems

– Provide information for tasks such as sample selection, data collection, instrumentation, validation, procedures, ethical requirements

3.3 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

- This describes the target population and the sample frame.

- It specifies the sampling technique used and how the sample size is determined.

3.4 Research Instrument

This explains the specific type of research instrument used. such as:

- Questionnaire,
- checklist,
- structured interview,
- teacher– made test, etc.

The establishment of validity and reliability should be explained

3.5 Data Analysis

Data Analysis is essentially a four step process

1. Identify precisely what will be evaluated. If you wrote measurable objectives, you already know.

2. Determine the methods used to evaluate each objective. More precisely, you will need to describe the information you will need and how you propose to collect it.

3. Specify the analyses you plan to make based on the data you need to collect. Your design may be simply to observe behavior of a particular population or something more complex like a rigorous experimental and multiple control group design.

4. Summarize the resulting data analyses and indicate its use.

4.Work and Budget Plan

➢ Work plan and financial plan must go hand in hand. The purpose is to trace all the activities to be accomplished in undertaking the study and the corresponding financial requirements in carrying out these activities.

➢ The researcher/proponent must make careful estimates of all expenses that are likely to be incurred in carrying out the project.

➢ It contains personnel requirement, materials and supplies, communication services and other operating expenses such as research-related travel and transportation, materials reproduction, testing

5. References

➢ It include all works cited or referred to for information while writing the research proposal.

➢ The section contains all published and unpublished scholarly materials like books, periodicals, documentary materials, pamphlets, yearbooks, statistical abstracts, annual reports, etc.

➢ Should be written alphabetically and must be original and relevant sources

- The references must include all works cited or referred to for information while writing the research proposal.

- The section contains all published and unpublished scholarly materials like books, periodicals, documentary materials, pamphlets, yearbooks, statistical abstracts, annual reports, etc.

- References should order based on their significance. For instance:

✓ First order: books and journal articles

✓ Second order: conference article

✓ Third order: technical report

6. Appendix

A research proposal should be complete in transmitting all the necessary materials without being too bulky.

Any detailed technical matters of interest to a few readers should be put at the back end of the proposal. Therefore, a preliminary draft of the questionnaire, mathematical formulae or derivations, detailed description of the sample selection procedure(s), etc., if they are deemed necessary, should be confined to the APPENDIX (CES).

Weaknesses in Research Proposals

–unfocused research problem

–unimportant (done before!)

–more complex

–limited relevance

– vague research design

–inappropriate or impossible data

–procedures inappropriate for problem

–lacking controls

- Poor means of analysis

- Poor referencing styles

6.3 Report Writing

Research report is a complete and detailed account of the whole research process from identification and definition of problem, formulation of hypotheses , collection of data as evidence, analysis and interpretation of data, to testing hypothesis and drawing out conclusions.
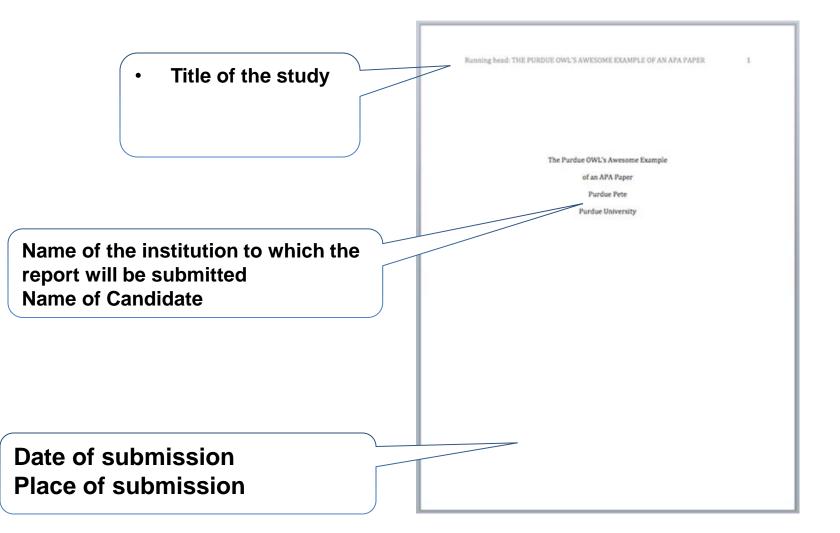
Styles of Research Reporting

- For the purpose of presentation of a research report, several styles are available which provide guidance to researcher as to the specific rules on style and format to be followed in reporting findings of research.

- But all formats are somewhat similar to the following outline which comprises of three major sections

  1) Preliminary section

  2) Main Text section

  3) Reference section

6.3.1 Preliminary section

This section contains

- Title Page
- Acknowledgement
- Table of contents
- List of tables and figures
- Abstract

Title page

- The title should summarize the main idea of the paper in 10-12 words.
- When typing the title, center it on the page and capitalize only the first letter of important words.
- On the next double spaced line is the institutional affiliation and on the next double spaced line is the author's name .
- On the last part of the title page, write the date of submission and place

- **Title of the study**

Running head: THE PURDUE OWL'S AWESOME EXAMPLE OF AN APA PAPER   1

The Purdue OWL's Awesome Example

of an APA Paper

Purdue Pete

Purdue University

Name of the institution to which the report will be submitted
Name of Candidate

Date of submission
Place of submission

Acknowledgement

- This is a section that recognizes individuals and institutions to whom you are indebted for providing credible assistance in due course of your study.

- Keep this part as brief and simple as possible.

Table of content

- Include list of major classification of the report with their corresponding page numbers for easy reference.

List of tables and figures

For tables and figures list them along with their corresponding page numbers.

Abstract

- Your abstract should contain at least your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, results, data analysis, and conclusions.

- You may also include possible implications of your research and future work you see connected with your findings.

- Your abstract should be a single paragraph double-spaced.

- Your abstract should be between 150 and 250 words.

- You may also want to list keywords from your paper in your abstract. To do this, center the text and type Keywords: (italicized) and then list your keywords. Listing your keywords will help researchers find your work in databases.

6.3.2 The Main Text

- The main text consists of five parts:
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Review of related literature
- ✓ Research Methodology
- ✓ Data analysis and interpretation
- ✓ Summary, conclusion and recommendation

6.3.3 Reference Section

- This is a section where you keep your bibliography and appendix.

- A bibliography is the record of sources and materials that have been used for the study.

- If the number of reference is large you may divide the bibliography into various sections

- One for book

- One for periodicals and journals and

- Possibly one for reports and special documents

- Appendices

All important but not essential materials to be included in the main body are presented in the appendix.

These materials may include:

- Questionnaire

- Interview formats

- Copies of covering letters used

- Evaluation sheets, Checklists and Raw data

- Long tables and figures, etc.

Writing a Bibliography: APA Format

Thank You