Development of a conceptual framework for post graduate study

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I am neither especially clever nor especially gifted. I am very, very curious. - Albert Einstein
Introduction

• Visit current issues in terms of supervisors, students and skill sets.

• Describe conceptual framework

• Develop a conceptual framework for postgraduate studies.
Challenges - Supervisor

- Is it useful? – Mode 2 research
- Conceptual skills of students
- Lack of reading
- Do not have a topic/unclear topic
- Writing skills
- Referencing/Plagiarism
- Low motivation
- Research methodology
- Development of objectives
- Alignment of objectives with the research questions
- Checking of work prior to submission
- Drop-out
Stakeholder Management - Student

- Institution
- Supervisor (examiner)
- Family, friends
- Respondents
- Subject experts
- Practitioners
- Professionals – statistician, editor
- Employers
- Gatekeepers
- Your team
Skills Set Ratings (1-10)

- Written communication
- Presentation of work
- Computer skills
- Referencing
- Team player
- Reflection
- Meeting deadlines
- Motivation
- Subject knowledge
- Research skills
- Working under pressure
- Administration
- Trust/integrity
- Supervisor interventions
Conceptual Framework - Definition

- Is the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that supports and informs your research and the relationships among them (Miles and Huberman 1994: Robson 2002).
- What is out there that you plan to study, what is the current status of the information and what has caused this situation?
Conceptual Framework contd

• What are the key concepts in the study?
• What is going on in the literature with regards to the concepts and related issues?
• Which theories/models inform current understanding of these concepts?
• How are the concepts and theories related to each other?(Rhodes University)
Importance of Conceptual Framework

• Sets **boundaries** for the study
• Provides explanations of “why” and “how”
• Acts as a filtering tool for research questions and data collection methods.
• Limitation – individual bias
Concept maps

• Mind mapping
• Flow charts
• Tree diagrams
• Shape based diagrams
Constructing a conceptual Framework

• Experience of researcher
• Theories – old and current
• Research (past and current about the subject)
• Thought experimentation (Maxwell: 2004)

• Need to indicate relevance, relationships, advantages and limitations.
Research Paradigms

• Refers to a set of philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology).
• Paradigms are important since it includes specific research methodologies.
• Qualitative research – interpretivism, critical theory, feminism, postmodernism, phenomenology.
• Quantitative research - positivist
Idea/Problem

- Is it current?
- Would it attract attention?
- Is it useful – Mode 2?
- Is it “appropriate” for your qualification?
- What evidence is available that it is a “real/significant” problem?
- Is adequate information available?
- Can it be narrowed to obtain greater depth rather than breadth?
Building a Topic

- Topic 1
- Topic 2
- Topic 3

Secondary Issues
Primary Issues
Systems Theory

• A system has a boundary and sub-systems that are interdependent and interrelated.
• In an open system the system and its components interact with the environment.
• The complexity of a system is determined by the number of sub-systems, interactions among the sub-systems, attributes of the sub-system and the degree of organisation in the sub-system (Schoderbek et al(1985).
Systems approaches

• **Functionalist** – Systems appear as objective aspects of reality independent of the observers.

• **Interpretive** – focus on behaviour and gives attention to perceptions, beliefs, interests and values

• **Emancipatory** – are suspicious of the current social order and seek to radically change it.

• **Post modern** – seeks to reclaim conflict, and to ensure the marginalised voices are recognised and heard (Jackson:2000)
Open System
Mind Mapping

• A mind map is a type of (radial) diagram that contains words, ideas or tasks that are linked around a central idea or keyword.

• Benefits
  – Gives you a good overview of important factors, subsystems, concepts, points and keywords
  – Organizes your topic
  – Encourages better understanding

• Think in terms of key words or symbols
Mind Mapping (contd)

- Write down the most important word or short phrase or symbol for the centre.
- Post other important concepts and their words outside the circle
- Edit this first phase
  Think about the relation of outside items to the centre item
- Continue working outward
  Think weird: combine concepts to expand your map. As you expand your map, tend to become more specific or detailed
- Set the map aside - reflect
- Later, continue development and revision
  Stop and think about relationships you are developing
  Expand the map over time to complete the “picture”
Identify Theories

• Evolution of the theories
• Current standing in the field
• Contentious issues of each theory
• Relationships with other selected theories.
• Relevance to the aim, objectives and research questions.
• How can the selected theories be integrated into the study?
Theories contd

THEORY ONE

INTEGRATION

THEORY TWO

THEORY THREE
Objectives

• Must support the aim/topic.
• Provide depth of the subject matter
• Limited to a few
• Must be used to develop the research questions.
Research Questions

• Must flow from the objectives.
• Must be well constructed
• Questions must be relevant/appropriate for the different respondent groups
• Should add value to the study.
Recommendations/Conclusions

• Findings should be used to make recommendations for each objective
• The conclusions should integrate and align the recommendations with the topic.
ALIGNMENT
FLOW DIAGRAM

Research paradigms
↓
Idea/problem
↓
Readings (Theory/model)
↓
Systems theory
↓
Mind mapping

Objective 1
↓
Research questions
↓
Findings

Objective 2
↓
Research questions
↓
Findings

Objective 3
↓
Research questions
↓
Findings

Recommendations and conclusions
↓
AIM/PURPOSE/TOPIC
Conclusions

- Conceptual framework is critical for post graduate studies.
- The researcher develops a better understanding of the research process.
- The quality of research is improved due to a better understanding of the factors or sub-systems in the field of study.
THANK YOU