

# Lecture #2

**Defining the Research Problem**

**By**

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- **Researcher must find the problem...., Formulate it...., To become susceptible to research**
- **Research must examine all the symptoms concerning a problem before diagnosing like doctor**

# What is Research Problem

- A research problem, refers to some difficulty which a researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation and wants to obtain a solution for the same.

# WHAT IS A RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research problem exist under following condition

- There must be an individual (or a group or an organization), to whom the problem can be attributed
- There must be at least two courses of action, to be pursued. A course of action is defined by one or more values of the controlled variables
- There must be at least two possible outcomes, of the course of action, of which one should be preferable to the other
- The courses of action available must provides some chance of obtaining the objective, but they cannot provide the same chance, otherwise the choice would not matter. In simple words, we can say that the choices must have unequal efficiencies for the desired outcomes.

# Components of Research Problem

- There must be an individual or a group which has some difficulty or the problem
- There must be some objective(s) to be attained
- There must be alternative means (or the courses of action) for obtaining the objective(s) one wishes to attain
- There must remain some doubt in the mind of a researcher with regard to the selection of alternatives
- There must be some environment(s) to which the difficulty pertains

# Selecting the Problem

- Following points may be observed by a researcher in selecting a research problem or a subject for research:
  - 1) Subject which is overdone should not be normally chosen, for it will be a difficult task to throw any new light in such a case
  - 2) Controversial subject should not become the choice of an average researcher
  - 3) Too narrow or too vague problems should be avoided
  - 4) The subject selected for research should be familiar and feasible so that the related research material or sources of research are within one's reach.
    - 1) a researcher should contact an expert or a professor in the University who is already engaged in research
    - 2) He may as well read articles published in current literature available on the subject and may think how the techniques and ideas discussed therein might be applied to the solution of other problems
    - 3) He may discuss with others what he has in mind concerning a problem. In this way he should make all possible efforts in selecting a problem.

# Selecting the Problem

5) The importance of the subject, the qualifications and the training of a researcher, the costs involved, the time factor are few other criteria that must also be considered in selecting a problem.

6) The selection of a problem must be preceded by a preliminary study. This may not be necessary when the problem requires the conduct of a research closely similar to one that has already been done.

# TECHNIQUE INVOLVED IN DEFINING A PROBLEM

- Defining a research problem properly and clearly is a crucial part of a research study and must in no case be accomplished hurriedly
- The research problem should be defined in a systematic manner, giving to relating points.
  - (i) Statement of the problem in a general way
  - (ii) Understanding the nature of the problem
  - (iii) Surveying the available literature
  - (iv) Developing the ideas through discussions
  - (v) Rephrasing the research problem into a working proposition



# Statement of the problem in a general way

- Problem should be stated in a broad general way, keeping in view either some practical concern or some scientific or intellectual interest
- The researcher must immerse himself thoroughly in the subject matter concerning which he wishes to pose a problem.
- In Social research, it is considered advisable to do some field observation and as such the researcher may undertake some sort of preliminary survey or what is often called pilot survey

# Understanding the nature of the problem

- understand problem origin and nature clearly
- Discuss it with those who first raised it in order to find out how the problem originally came about and with what objectives in view
- The researcher should also keep in view the environment within which the problem is to be studied and understood

# Surveying the available literature

- The researcher must be well-conversant with relevant theories in the field, reports and records as also all other relevant literature
- Knowing what data are available often serves to narrow the problem itself as well as the technique that might be used
- Studies on related problems are useful for indicating the type of difficulties that may be encountered in the present study as also the possible analytical shortcomings.

# Developing the ideas through discussions

- Discussion concerning a problem often produces useful information
- This is quite often known as an *experience survey*
- People with rich experience are in a position to enlighten the researcher on different aspects of his proposed study and their advice and comments are usually invaluable to the researcher

# Rephrasing the research problem

- Finally, the researcher must sit to rephrase the research problem into a working proposition
- Once all the above procedure is follow, then rephrasing the problem into analytical or operational terms is not a difficult task
- Through rephrasing, the researcher puts the research problem in as specific terms as possible so that it may become operationally viable and may help in the development of working hypotheses

- Following points must also be observed while defining a research problem:
  - Technical terms and words or phrases, with special meanings used in the statement of the problem, should be clearly defined.
  - Basic assumptions or postulates (if any) relating to the research problem should be clearly stated
  - A straight forward statement of the value of the investigation (i.e., the criteria for the selection of the problem) should be provided
  - The suitability of the time-period and the sources of data available must also be considered by the researcher in defining the problem
  - The scope of the investigation or the limits within which the problem is to be studied must be mentioned explicitly in defining a research problem