Topic 3

Literature Review: Problem Identification
Literature Review – Problem Identification

Researcher begin a study by identifying a research problem (Creswell, 2008)

Why Research Problem is IMPORTANT?

- It established the importance of the topic
- It creates reader interest
- It focuses the readers’ attention on how the study will add to the literature
How Research Objective is Formulated

Common research problem:
- lack of research
- Some of the phenomena is still unexplained
- Inconsistencies in findings
- Methodological problem in mist research

By getting answer to those research questions, the study goals are met and a contribution towards solving the problem is made (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005)
The Research Problem

• Defined as a general issue, concern, or controversy studied in research.
• Statement of research problem is one of the most important parts of research.
• Research problem has to be well-articulated, well-supported, and well argued problem.  
  (Ellis & Levy, 2008)
• Sources of research problem:
  - people
  - problem
  - programme
  - phenomenon
## Aspect of Research Problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of study</th>
<th>Source of research problem</th>
<th>Study of</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study population</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Individuals, organizations, groups, communities</td>
<td>They provide you with the required information/you collect information from or about them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject area</td>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Issues, situation, associations, needs, population, composition, profiles, etc.</td>
<td>Information that you need to collect to find answer to your service research question</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Contents, structure, outcomes, attributes, satisfaction, consumers, providers, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
<td>Cause and effect, relationships, the study of a phenomenon itself, etc.</td>
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How the Problem Differs from Other Parts of Research

- **General**
  - **Topic**: The broad subject matter being addressed in a study.
  - **E.g.**: Distance learning

- **Specific**
  - **Research Problem**: An issue/problem in the study.
  - **E.g.**: Lack of students in distance classes

  - **Purpose statement**: The major intent/objective of the study.
  - **E.g.**: To study why students do not attend distance education classes at a community college

  - **Research question**: Researcher would like answered/addressed in the study.
  - **E.g.**: Does the use of Web site tech. in the classroom deter students from enrolling in a distance education class?
# Considering in selecting a research problem

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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| Interest                  | ▪ Most important consideration in selecting a research problem.  
                            ▪ A research endeavor is usually time consuming, and involves hard work and possibly unforeseen problems. |
| Magnitude                 | ▪ You should have sufficient knowledge about the research process to be able to visualize the work involved in completing the proposed study.  
                            ▪ Narrow down the topic to something manageable, specific & clear.                                                                  |
| Measurement of concepts   | ▪ If you are using a concept in your study (in quantitative studies), make sure you are clear about its indicators & their measurement.        |
| Level of expertise        | ▪ Make sure you have an adequate level of expertise for the task you are proposing.                                                           |
| Relevance                 | ▪ Select a topic that is relevance to you as a professional.  
                            ▪ Ensure your study adds to the existing body of knowledge, bridges current gaps/is useful in policy formulation. |
| Availability of data      | ▪ Make sure that the data is available and in the format you want before finalizing your topic.                                               |
| Ethical issues            | ▪ How ethical issues can affect the study population and how ethical problems can be overcome should be thoroughly examined at the problem-formulation stage. |
How Research Problems Differ for Quantitative & Qualitative Research

Use **QUANTITATIVE** research if your research problem requires you to:

- Measure variables
- Assess the impact of these variables on an outcome
- Test theories/broad explanations
- Apply results to a large number of people

Use **QUALITATIVE** research if your research problem requires you to:

- Learn about the views of the people you plan to study
- Assess a process over time
- Generate theories based on participant perspectives
- Obtain detailed information about a few people or research sites
Once research problem is identified:
- State that problem clearly and completely.
- State the case for the establishment of the problem.
- Ask yourself whether it is practical/possible (feasible) for you to do the research.

Identify sub-problems to reflect the objectives of your research:
- Completely researchable units.
- Add up to the total problem.
- Must be clearly tied to the interpretation of the data.
Criteria in Problem Selection

- Limitation of a researcher
- Interest of a researcher
- Contribution of findings towards improving knowledge
- Can develop and expand solution of new problem

- Theoretical and or practical values of findings
- Availability sources of references/bibliography
- Can be empirically studied
- Can be ethically conducted
Five Elements of a “Problem Statement”

FLOW OF IDEAS

Subject area

Topic

The problem issue

-A concern
-A problem
-Something that needs a solution

Evidence for the issue

-Evidence from the literature
-Evidence from practical experiences

Deficiencies in the evidence

-In this body of evidence, what is missing?
-What do we need to know more about?

What remedying the deficiencies will do for select audiences

How will addressing what we need to know help:
-Researchers
-Educators
-Policy makers
-Individuals such as those in the study
Advancing the topic

- The topic is introduced in the 1\textsuperscript{st} paragraph.
- The topic includes the general subject matter.
- The topic must be introduced so that the reader can relate to it.
The narrative hook should be the 1st sentence of the study.

Function of the narrative hook:
- causes the reader to pay attention
- elicits an emotional/attitudinal response from the reader
- causes the reader to continue reading

Information that can be included in the narrative hook:
- statistics
- a provocative question
- need for research
- intent of the study
Stating the research problem

- State the problem in the opening paragraph
- Identify an issue
  - research-based research problems
  - practical problems
- Reference the problem using the literature

Justifying the importance of the research problem

- Justification based on what other researcher have found
- Justification based on personal/workplace experiences
- Justification based on the experiences others have had in the workplace
Identifying deficiencies in the evidence

- What do we still need to know?
- What else do we need to know to improve practice?

Identify the audience

Ask the following question: “Who will profit from reading our study?”

- Other researcher
- Practitioners
- Policy makers
- Special populations (e.g. parents)
Writing the statement of the problem section

- Include one paragraph for each of the five elements
- Heavily reference this section to the literature
- Provide statistics to support trends
- Use quotes from participants (in moderation)
Example of review of research problem

Introduction
The literature concerning the learning organization emphasizes the role of the facilitators of organizational learning (Goh and Richards, 1997). Of all the possible factors, we have focused on the human resources employed by the firm and the way in which they are managed, because organizational learning is based on the individual learning of the people who make up the organization, and the human resource system has been demonstrated to influence the capacity of the organization to generate new knowledge and stimulate learning. This implies that human resource management (HRM) plays a central role in a company orientated towards learning.

In this context, previous studies have discussed appropriate conceptualization and measurement of the organizational learning capability (OLC) of an organization (Jerez-Gómez et al., 2005a); there are other studies that have analysed how certain HRM practices have a positive influence on this capacity to learn (Lei et al., 1999). However, a significant research gap is observed concerning the role that different characteristics of human capital may play in the development of OLC and whether this human capital can also be managed based on HRM practices. On the basis that it is the individual who acquires new knowledge, and this human capital is more valuable and specific to the organization, it may be associated with OLC (Kang et al., 2007).

In addition, authors have claimed that there is a risk of obsolescence and loss of value of human capital, if it is not well managed (Boxall, 1996). Human capital may be conserved and enhanced when appropriate HRM practices are adopted (Lepak and Snell, 1999, 2002) and the knowledge possessed by the employees may condition the OLC of their organization (Collins and Smith, 2005).

As a consequence of this reasoning, the objectives of this article are first, to study the direct relationships between HRM practices and OLC; second, to see whether particular characteristics of the human capital, such as the value and uniqueness of employees’ knowledge and skills, are related to OLC; and third, to assess if such human capital can be considered as a mediating variable between HRM practices and OLC.

This paper is expected to make three main contributions. The first is the proposed