

The following tips should help you select your research problem:

1. A thorough understanding of the known facts and accepted ideas in the field being pursued is a necessity. That is to say, you must try to be on top of your discipline. Always keep abreast of the recent developments in your field.
2. Use your natural curiosity as guide for selecting a problem. Of course, satisfaction of personal curiosity is a desirable incentive in selecting a topic to study, but this is not all. The presumption is that your curiosity rises as you gain a deeper understanding of the gaps in the body of knowledge of your field.
3. Young and inexperienced researchers should choose short and clear topics. Such researchers may not have the necessary capability to deal with broad and complicated research problems. All thesis students have this feeling that their respective theses will solve the problems of the world. This must be one of the reasons why you almost always think of very broad research issues because of the idea that your thesis, being your first professional work, will become very important and will open all doors for you professionally. It is, indeed, motivating to think in those terms. But is also always advisable to keep your feet on the ground. Again, do not try to solve the problems of the world by yourself with your thesis. But do try to do a good job of your thesis so that you can contribute to the increasing body of knowledge and ultimately help your discipline advance.

It is very important that you clarify your research problem. Here are five questions that will help you clarify your research problem:

1. Is the problem interesting? It is better to work on something that interests you.
2. Is the problem new? Choose a problem that is relatively new but has not been fully studied.
3. Will the study add to knowledge? You must be convinced that by doing the study you will contribute new knowledge.
4. Is the problem feasible? Choose problems that you can manage, those that can be feasibly undertaken.
5. Has anyone else had a prior claim to it? You may not be able to claim credit for a research problem that has already been studied previously by other researchers, but you may be able to arrive at other findings.

These are all practical questions that are designed to help you clarify the research problem you would want to work. These are all important because you can not do a good job of your thesis if your research problem is not clear, especially to yourself.

Rules in defining a research problem

These rules should serve to guide you in defining your research problem:

1. Be sure that the topic you choose is neither too vague nor too broad in scope.

2. To make the problem clearer and more understandable, state it as a question that will require a definite answer.
3. Carefully state the limits of the problem, eliminating all aspects and factors that will not be considered in the study. Sometimes some thesis students are unable to exclude from the thesis certain aspects of the topic because of the feeling that they must consider everything about the thesis topic. Well, the more you are unable to delimit your study, the more likely you will not be able to do a good job of it.
4. Define any special term that must be used in the statement of the problem.

Formulating the Objectives of the Study

Objectives must be specific and achievable. It is always wise to list them, no more than a sentence a piece, in approximate order of their importance or potential contributions. The objectives form a basis for judging the remainder of the proposal. Objectives set the stage for showing how one intends to solve or contribute to the solution of a problem. The objectives must neatly fit into the problem statement.

There are two common errors in writing objectives. First, they are vaguely stated generalities rather than clear cut criteria. Second, they are not presented according to priority.