

Lecture 6 RESEARCH PROBLEM

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

“The term problem means a question or issue to be examined”. The term problem originates from the Greek word ‘Probellim’ – meaning anything that thrown forwards, a question proposed for solution, a matter stated for examination.

What is formulation? Formulation means “translating and transforming the selected Research problem in to a scientifically researchable question”.

A **research problem** or phenomenon as it might be called in many forms of qualitative research is the topic you would like to address, investigate, or study, whether descriptively or experimentally. It is the focus or reason for engaging in your research. It is typically a topic, phenomenon, or challenge that you are interested in and with which you are at least somewhat familiar.

In other words, defining a research problem is the fuel that drives the scientific process, and is the foundation of any research method and experimental design, from true experiment to case study.

POINTS TO CONSIDER ON RESEARCH PROBLEM

The following points should be kept in mind while defining a research problem:

- The right question must be addressed if research is to aid decision makers. A correct answer to the wrong question leads either to poor advice or to no advice.
- Very often in research problem we have a tendency to rationalize and defend our actions once we have embarked upon a particular research plan. The best time to review and consider alternative approaches is in the planning stage. If this is done needless cost of false start and redoing work could be avoided.
- A good starting point in problem definition is to ask what the decision maker would like to know if the requested information could be obtained without error and without cost.
- Another good rule to follow is "Never settling on a particular approach" without developing and considering at least one alternative".
- The problem definition step of research is the determination and structuring of the decision maker's question. It must be the decision maker's question and not the researcher's question.
- What decision do you face? If you do not have decision to make, there is no research problem.
- What are your alternatives? If there are no alternatives to choose, again there is no research problem.
- What are your criteria for choosing the best alternative? If you do not have criteria for evaluation, again there is no research problem.
- The researcher must avoid the acceptance of the superficial and the obvious.