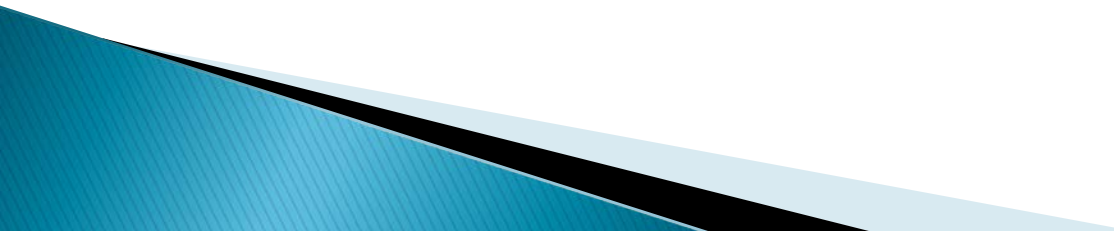


Guiding the development of a research proposals: some issues

Comrade Trywell Kalusopa


Finding a researchable problem – where?

- ▶ From reading
 - ▶ From previous research
 - ▶ From personal interest
 - ▶ From potential supervisors
 - ▶ From one's workplace
 - ▶ From government
 - ▶ At the interface between disciplines
 - ▶ Where else?
- 

It isn't that they can't
see the solution. It is
that they can't see the
problem

Chesterton

Background, rationale, motivation– relates to the problem statement

- ▶ What is the history of the research question?
 - ▶ What gave rise to it?
 - ▶ Why are you asking this question?
 - ▶ Why is the research necessary or worth doing?
 - ▶ What significance could the research findings have?
- 

Formulate a research question that is

Specific

Real

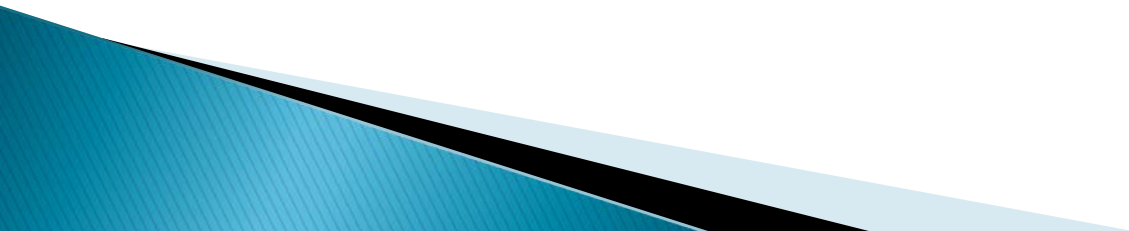
Researchable

Interesting to you

It should –

Encompass the expected content

Predict the whole argument



A research question should not

- ▶ Simply represent a broad area
- ▶ Expect a yes or no answer
- ▶ Allow for surprises later in the later
- ▶ Be too big for the requirements of the project

How can research questions become comprehensive, higher level questions?

Ask yourself –

To what extent?

How?

Why?

What else?



Hypothesis

- ▶ Rowena Murray (2005 – Writing for academic journals) draws on Burton and Steane 2004:to say that a hypothesis
“fits well with a situation where there is an already well developed body of knowledge – that is, established theory from which hypotheses may be derived – but it is less appropriate where the research is more concerned with developing our understanding of a relatively new field of study, that is, where the need is for theory building more than theory testing”.

“



Hypothesis 2

- ▶ Murray also cites Barrass 2002

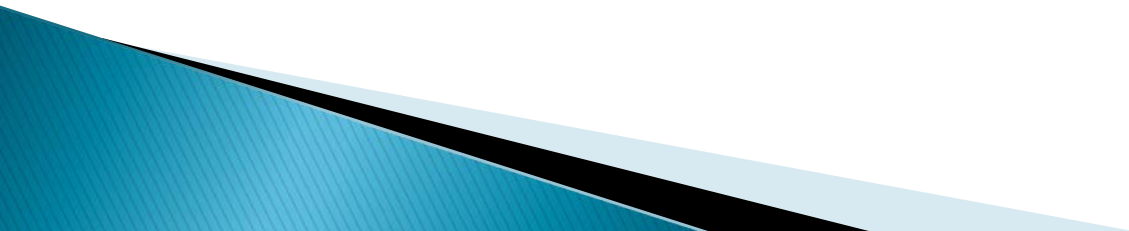
“Scientific research begins with a problem ... Problems are tackled by the method or investigation, in an attempt to obtain evidence related to a hypothesis. If the problem is stated as a question, then each hypothesis is a possible answer to the question or a possible explanation”.

Hypotheses* and underlying assumptions**

The difference lies in the level of specificity

Prediction of an answer to the research question*

Tentative prediction or explanation of the relationship between two or more variables**



Purpose and research objectives

- ▶ The purpose should be completely compatible with the research question
- ▶ The objectives elaborate on the purpose by being more specific i.e what steps need to be taken to fulfill the purpose?

Delimiting your study – assigning boundaries

- ▶ Geographical area
- ▶ Period studied
- ▶ Selected aspect of object of the study

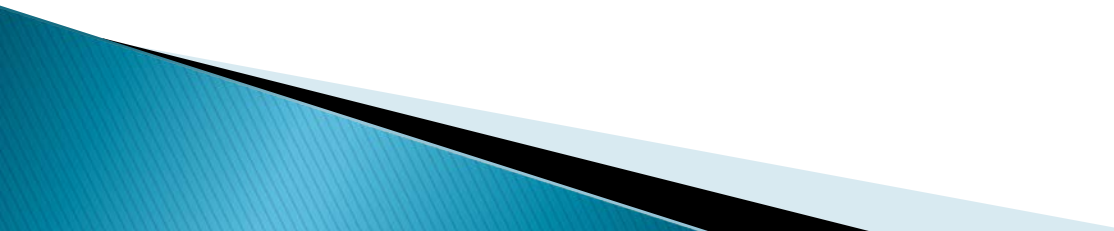
Do not say what you won't do

Don't overestimate your capacity

Be prepared for critics



Review of the literature

- ▶ Surveys the relevant materials
 - ▶ Analyses the central arguments
 - ▶ Shows understanding of which paradigms these relate to
 - ▶ Makes the material your own
 - ▶ Relates different areas to one another and to your research
 - ▶ Analyses and relates the methodologies from other related research to your study
 - ▶ Provides the base for an overview of key sources for the proposal
- 

The literature review should produce

- ▶ A conceptual framework, including philosophical stances and theoretical assumptions, and key principles
- ▶ Theoretical problems or contradictions
ie the problems or issues set in the theory and structured around a clear focus on the research objectives

Review of the research methodologies

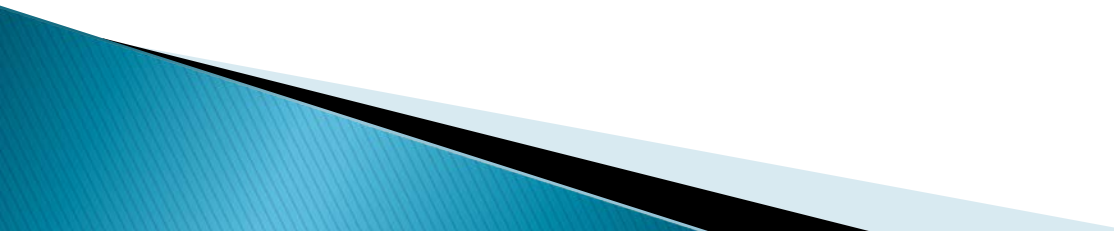
– often part of the literature review

- ▶ What do you review?
- ▶ How do you decide which method to select?

See <http://informationr.net/rm/>

- ▶ How does this section differ from the rest of the literature review?

What the review of methodologies produces

- ▶ A methodology or methodologies that are appropriate to the research question
 - ▶ A clear motivation for the selection of research methodology or methodologies
- 

Gowin's V-diagram adapted (by Groenwald)

Focal question

Conceptual

Theories (Which are relevant)

Principles (Which are relevant)

Concepts (Which are relevant)

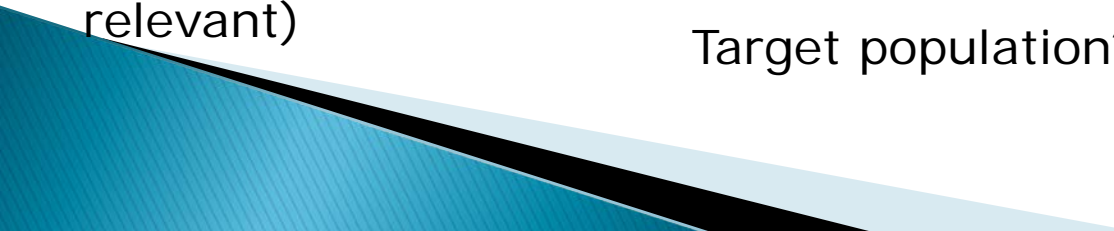
Methodological

Value judgment (Why undertake the study)

Knowledge advantage (What knowledge is known)

Transformation (Why transform knowledge)

Target population?



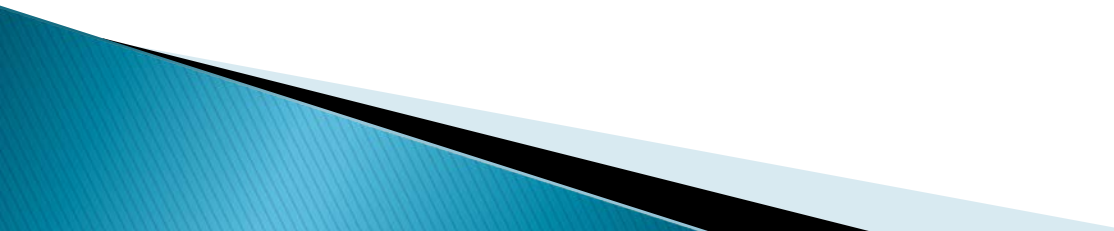
Elements of the writing process

- ▶ Pre-writing
- ▶ Drafting/composing
- ▶ Revision
- ▶ Editing
- ▶ Publication

A recursive process



Audience and voice

- ▶ Who will read the proposal?
 - ▶ What sort of language is appropriate?
 - ▶ What tone is appropriate?
- 

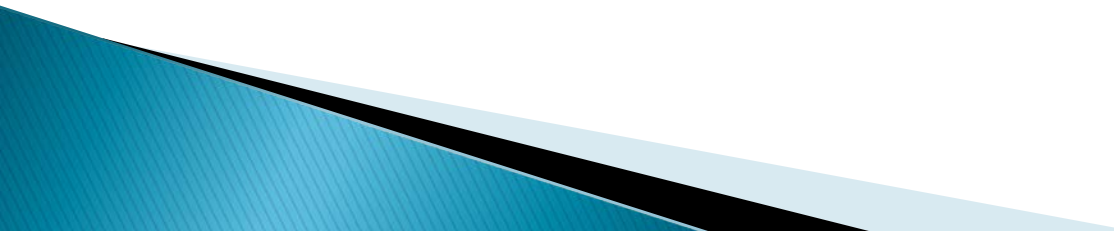
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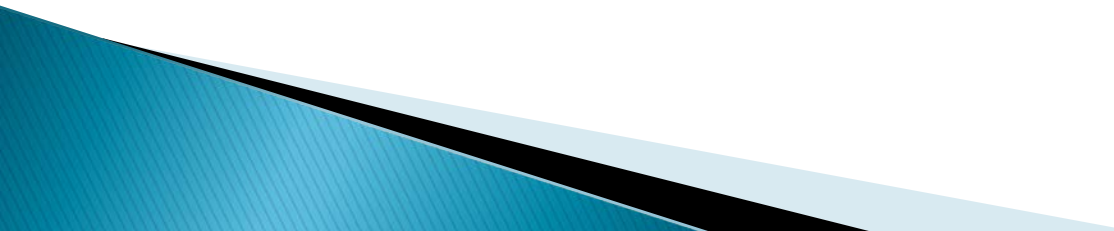
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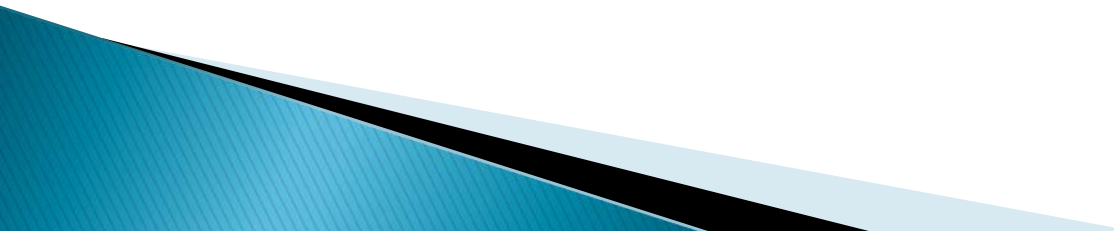
Common problems found in proposals –1

- ▶ Too long
 - ▶ Poor structure
 - ▶ Poor language use
 - ▶ Inappropriate use of technical and other terms
 - ▶ Research too ambitious
 - ▶ No literature review
 - ▶ No integration of theory in literature review
- 

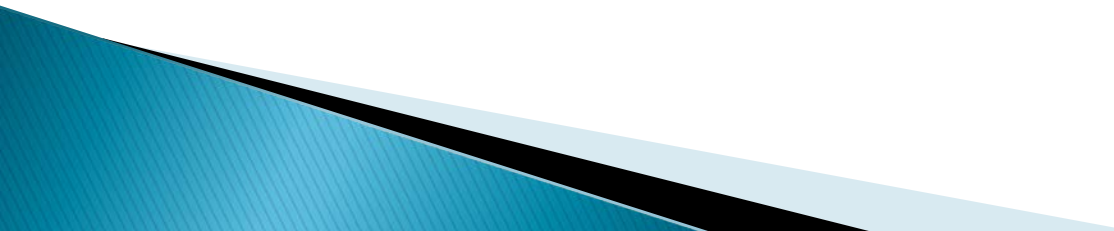
Common problems in proposals – 2

- ▶ Literature review copied
 - ▶ Methodology not clear eg size of population, specific data collection methods for specific populations and purpose not set out well
 - ▶ Methodology inappropriate
 - ▶ No references or inadequate referencing
- 

What should a proposal look like?

- ▶ Clarity of title
 - ▶ Background, rational, research problem/research questions
 - ▶ Clear Methodology (research, size of population, data collection)
 - ▶ Literature review
 - ▶ How data will be analysed
 - ▶ Referencing
- 

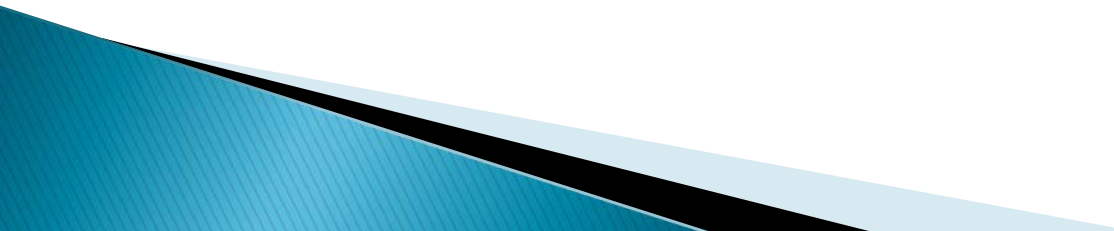
Proposal (Donor???)

- ▶ Development objective
 - ▶ Monitoring and Evaluation of the project
 - ▶ Question of sustainability of the Project
 - ▶ Log frame showing the activities, outputs:outcomes
- 

Group Work

Conceive a trade union research problem based on common socio-economic policy and develop a research proposal

Group activity

- ▶ Describe the problem or problems that led to the idea of doing the research in this specific subject area
 - ▶ How did you detect the problem/s?
 - ▶ What possible solutions do you envisage?
 - ▶ Develop a basic research proposal
- 

Research activity

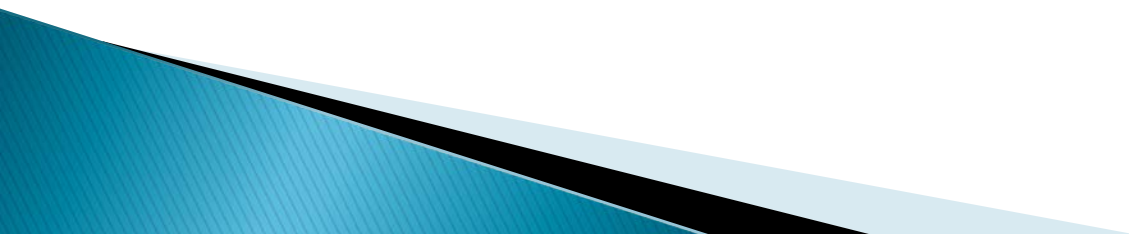
Arriving at a title

The title captures the purpose of the study phrased as a title.

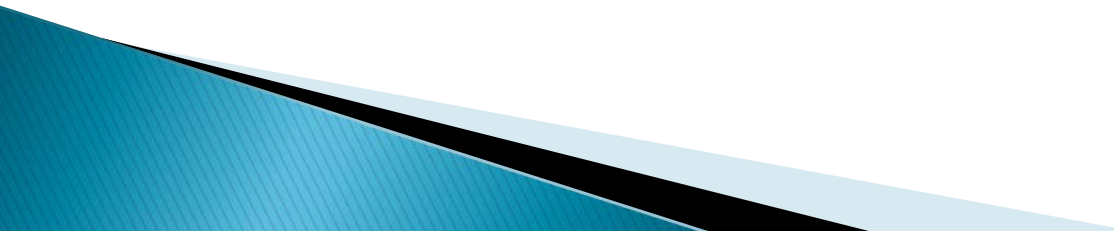
Scrutinise your map and your research question for the key terms that describe your study.

Incorporate the key terms into your title writing as many titles as you like.

After discussion with the person next to you select the most appropriate title – ie the one that relates best to your research question.

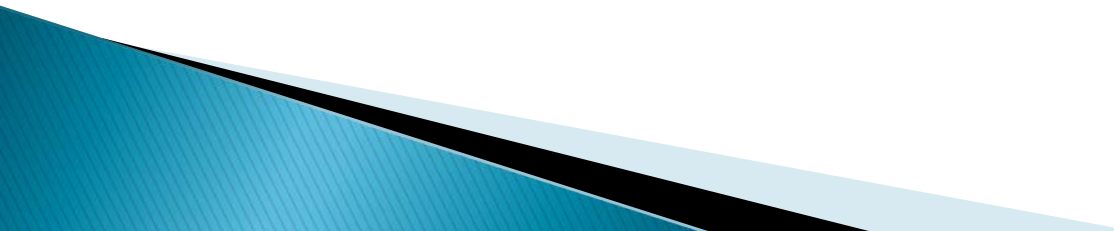


Research activity 5: Anticipating problems

- ▶ Mention any problems that you have experienced or can envisage that might impair your research.
 - ▶ Does that mean that you should avoid the research topic?
- 

Titles can be confusing

What is your exact meaning eg

- ▶ The effect of HIV/AIDS on food security
 - ▶ The effect of food security on HIV/AIDS
 - ▶ The economic effects of HIV/AIDS on food security in Botswana
 - ▶ The medical effects of food security on HIV/AIDS families in Botswana
 - ▶ The psychological causes of stress in HIV/AIDS families in South Africa
- 

Research activity 6

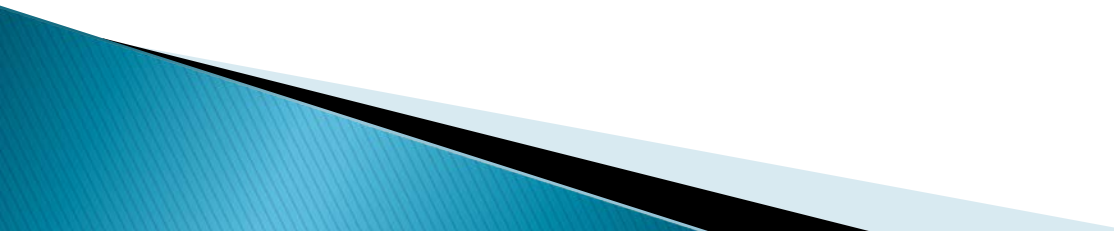
- ▶ With the person next to you identify the ethical considerations that might occur in your topic. How would you deal with such ethical issues?

What else do key terms help you do?

For each key term you will have a definition from standard references sources like the OED (www.library.unp.ac.za E-books) and subject specific sources.

These operational definitions are the cogs of your study as they determine what you will ask the participants for your data collection.

eg Information accessibility – the degree to which an information channel or source of information is available for use (Poole 1985: 103) –

- ▶ Is there an information service in your area?
 - ▶ What are the opening hours?
 - ▶ What sort of material does it contain?
 - ▶ In which languages is the material?
- 

What else do key terms do for you?

- ▶ Help to set limits
 - ▶ Form the base for subject searches
 - ▶ Provide indexing terms
 - ▶ Describe your research interest (CV and expert lists)
 - ▶ Provide a base for funding applications
- 