

MODULE V

PROBLEM FORMULATION

In Research process, the 1st and foremost step is that of selecting properly and defining a research problem. The researchers must find the problem and formulate it so that it becomes susceptible research. Like a doctor, a researcher must examine all the symptoms concerning a problem before he can diagnosis correctly.

"A problem well put is half solved". This saying highlights the importance of proper formulation of the selected problem. The primary task of Research is the collection of relevant data and the analysis of data or finding answers to research questions.

The proper performance of this task depends upon the identification of correct data and information required for the study. Once the problem is formulated he can execute the other steps without any waste of time and energy. Thus formulation is a direction and specific focus to research effort. It helps to delimit the field of enquiry and prevent blind research and indiscriminate gathering of data. A proper formulation help to solve all major tasks for research like sampling, collection of data, construction of tools, plan of analysis etc.

What is a Research Problem?

A Research problem in general refers to some difficulty the researches experiences in the context of a theoretical or practical situation and wants to obtain a solution for the same.

"The term problem means a question or issue to be examined"

The term problem originate 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".

An illustration

Let us suppose that a Research problem in general way as follows "Why is productivity in Japan so much higher than India".

In this form of question has a number of ambiguities such as: what sort of productivity is being referred to? With industries the same is related? With what period of time the productivity is being talked about? In view of all such ambiguities the given statements or the question is too much general to be amenable to analysis, Rethinking and discussion about the problem may resulting narrowing down the question to "what factors were responsible for the higher labour productivity of Japan's manufacturing Industries during the decade 1971 to 1980 relative to India's manufacturing Industries"?

This version of the problem is definitely an improvement over its earlier versions for the various ambiguities have been removed to the extent possible. Further rethinking and rephrasing of the problem will become in this form.

"To what extent did labour productivity in 1971 to 1980 in Japan exceed that of India in respect of 15 selected manufacturing Industries? What factors were responsible for the productivity differentiates between the two countries by Industries?"

With this of formulation, the various terms involves such as 'labour productivity', 'productivity differentials etc are explained clearly. The time period, the need of data etc are considered in this type of formulation.

Selection of a Problem

The Research problem undertaken for study must be carefully selected the task is a difficult one, although it may not appear to this. So in this connection researcher can seek the help of a guide. However the research problem cannot be borrowed. A problem must spring from the mind of researcher like a plant spring from its seed. A research guide can only help a researcher to choose the subject. The following points may be observed by the researcher in selecting a research problem.

1. Subject which is overdone should not be chosen.
2. Controversial subjects should not be taken.
3. Too narrow or too wide problems should be avoided.
4. The subject selected for research should be familiar and feasible.
5. The subject should be within our time limit.
6. The subject should be within our affordable budget.

Sources of Problem

The sources from which one may be able to identify research problems are

1. Reading

When we critically study and articles relating to subject of our interest, pertinent questions may arise in our mind. Similarly areas of research may strike to our mind when we read research reports.

Academic Experiences

Classroom lectures, class discussions seminar discussions and out -of-class exchanges of ideas with fellow students and professors will suggest many stimulating problems to be studied.