

Teaching and Curriculum PhD Dissertation:

The dissertation is the culmination of the doctoral program of study and represents PhD candidates' final analysis and interpretation of the dissertation research project. This original research is designed to produce knowledge about an educational issue of importance that is well established by a thorough review of the literature. The dissertation should be grounded in a solid foundation of theory, investigate an educational problem of importance to specified field/s, articulate a focused research question that addresses the problem, and report on the data collection using a theoretically consistent analytic framework. Studies may use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed design strategies. PhD students typically pursue academic positions in research universities.

SAMPLE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL FORMAT

1. One-page abstract:
 1. What is my RESEARCH QUESTION, i.e., what do I want to find out?
 2. What is the problem that makes my question and this research necessary?
 3. What/who am I going to study in order to answer this question?
 4. Where and how am I going to conduct this research?
 5. Why is this question "significant," i.e., worthy of doctoral research?

2. Statement of the problem
 1. My research question is _____ (restate it here).
 2. What is the nature of the problem that my research question is designed to address? Whom does this problem affect and why is it worth studying?
 3. What specific aspect of the problem is my research designed to investigate?
 4. Briefly, what are the inadequacies in approaches to studying the problem thus far? (This will be addressed in depth in the literature review section.)

3. Theoretical Framework
 1. What's the theoretical/conceptual framework that will guide my research and analysis of the problem? In other words, what is the theoretical framework I will use to determine the kind of data I will collect and how I will make sense of it? (Though explaining your theoretical framework also requires a review of literature, conventionally the "lit review" section refers to directly situating the problem you will address in previous educational research - see below. Depending on the individual project, the theoretical framework may be better placed after the literature review.)

4. Review of the Literature
 1. What significant prior research has been done to address the problem? A good lit review is not a just a summary of a string of research studies that are related to your topic. It provides a frame for making sense of the question you will investigate. After deciding which body of research is relevant, you must characterize as it relates to the investigation of YOUR problem. Then, you can summarize specific studies to justify your

characterization of this literature. How do the conclusions (or the research methods) in these studies lay the foundation for your own question - and/or - how do they scream out for an alternative approach or conclusion? (One that you, incidentally, are going to provide!) It is critical to point out gaps in this body of research so that you can address the next section . . .

2. How will my study refine, revise or extend previous work?

5. Methodology

1. My research question is _____ (restate it here).
2. What is my justification for choosing a qualitative and/or quantitative approach to researching this particular question?
3. What kinds of data will I collect? Why? How will I collect these data?
4. Who will participate in the study and why? In what setting(s) will I conduct this research and why?
5. How will I analyze the data? What is my analytic framework? What is my unit of analysis? Connect these answers to your theoretical framework and research question.
6. How will I ensure the "trustworthiness" of my research results?
7. What are the limitations to my study? What will I NOT do?

6. Significance of the study

1. What kind of things will the field of education know at the end of my research? How do I expect my research to advance theoretical understanding in the field of education? How might it contribute to changes in current educational theory, policy, and/or practice?

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

8. APPENDICES

1. Sample Permission Letter
2. Possible interview questions or other measures
3. Etc. . . .

9. PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

1. Please provide an outline of your proposal.
2. If your document is over 30 pages, include a table of contents.
3. Use subheads generously. Refer to the APA style manual to see how to consistently represent the "level" of subheads by underlining, centering, or caps, for example.
4. Double-spacing and pagination of the document are expected. However, it also helps to have a running head on each page with your name and the date of the revision. Because you will probably be doing several revisions, it helps everyone keep track.
5. An engaging TITLE not only lends you authorial credibility, but it also lets your reader know the direction of the trip you are asking them to take with you.

Adapted from Patricia Irvine (2008). San Francisco State University.