

Common Problems & Guidelines to avoid those Common Problems

Problems Related to Topic

Following are few potential allegations due to which topic can be rejected:

- Topic may be not according to specialization of degree program.
Example:
 - *Supply Chain Policies of Coca Cola*
 - *Comparative Studies of Strategic Marketing Management of Mobilink and Ufon*
 - *Identifying the reasons of high turnover in XYZ industry*
- Topic may be too broad or too general and it is very hard to do project/dissertation.
Example:
 - *Pitfalls of Textile industry of Pakistan*
 - *Root causes of Energy crises in Pakistan*
 - *Success factors of Entertainment Industry of Pakistan*
 - *Strategic Management – A Route to Success*
- Topic may be too narrow or too specific i.e. topic may be specific to a single organization or may be sometimes specific to single department of an organization.
Example:
 - *Gap Analysis of The Customer Service Department Of PTCL Using ISO 9000 –Standards*
 - *Employee’s Motivation and Leadership Role: A study of R & D department of ABC Company*
 - *Role of information technology in enhancing the efficiency of HR department*
- Topic may be based on assumption, opinions or perceptions or chosen topic may not address a real problem or question.

Ways to remove above allegations:

- Develop a project/dissertation topic related to your specialization. To check whether the topic is related to your specialization, try to search out the key concepts like leadership, knowledge management, and/or empowerment in text books of courses which you have studied during your specialization.
- Always keep in mind that the use of word “management” as prefix or suffix does not mean that it comes under “Management Field”.
- Try to develop a specific project because specific project topic could help to keep focus for writing your project report. Broadly defined topic for project is

appealing but it is eventually a difficult move to manage while specific project topic will allow you to concentrate on one thing.

- Try to limit your study to certain number of organizations operating in a particular sector or industry like banking, telecom, chemical industry, glass industry, automotive industry, Sugar industry etc.

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Problems Related to “Introduction Section”

In most of the proposal following things are either missing or insufficient contents are available. Due to following reasons, the reader (supervisor) lost his/her interest in proposal.

- The section of society (educationist, practitioners consultants, corporate sector etc) which may show interest in problem or question related to your project interest is not highlighted.
- The issue/s which student wants to explore may not clearly presented i.e. the purpose of project/dissertation is not provided
- Most of introduction is based on perceptions but the description of those perceptions is not provided by student i.e. in this section student are unable to provide rationale that how you came to this issue based on your previous interests (research you might have been involved in, other courses you have taken, your work experience, discussions, studies etc.).
- Most of contents are written without any references. Big statements are written without any supportive contents like reference of author name, article, and book etc.
- Explanation of the concepts which may be used is inappropriate

Keep in mind following points while writing introduction section of your proposal

- Must provide rationale of a research work because it indicates the background and events leading to the need of the study.
- To write a good study rationale, must make preliminary readings on the topic and indicates full understanding and knowledge of the previous works in the study field.
- Must use clear facts that support ideas discussed in proposal.
- Avoid too broad, incorrect information or too lengthy reviews or results in the proposal because reader may not find out the main message of the work and then less convinced with its rationale.
- The rationale should make clear how the problem is relevant to the national/societal needs.
- Avoid writing rationale of a study on the basis of assumptions, perceptions or opinions rather it should be supported by clear facts and figures or events that lead towards issue under study.

Problems Related to “Objectives”

The objective of a certain research summarizes what to be achieved by the study. It should clearly define the question for which a solution is being sought. A proposal may be rejected due to following potential error in objectives:

- The objectives may be too broad or general or vague.
- No link may be evident between objectives and topic of study.
- Long list of objectives (like 10 to 15) may be developed which can not be achieved in limited time of a semester.
- More than one objective (two or three) may be written in one single statement.
- Misunderstanding on student part by stating objectives from different contexts like following:
 - **Degree Objective:***(The objective of project/dissertation is to get MBA degree because it is request of degree)*
 - **Personal Objectives:***(The objective of project/dissertation is to apply my knowledge which I get after studying different courses)*
 - **Company’s Objectives:***(the objective of organization is to find out the role leadership to enhance productivity)*
- The set objectives may not be achieved due to difficulty in operationalization or measurement

Keep in mind following points while writing objectives of your proposal

- Must clearly relate to the statement of the problem.
- To cover the different aspects of the problem.
- To be clearly phrased in operational terms specifying exactly what one is going to do, where and for what purpose.
- To be realistic considering local conditions and available resources.
- To use specific action verbs i.e. to determine, to identify, to verify, to describe, to calculate.
- To avoid vague non-action verbs i.e. to study, to appreciate, to understand.

Objectives should be “SMART”:

- Simple
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

Let take an example, if the research problem is “High turnover in organization ‘A’ from private sector as compare to organization ‘B’ from public organization”, then the objective/s may be stated like following:

- To discover how leadership style practicing in both type of organizations has effect on employee’s turnover.
- To identify the socioeconomic and cultural factors that may influence employees’ turnover in both type of organizations.

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Problems Related to “Significance” Section

This section of proposal is about to develop curiosity for readers that you are going to do a project/dissertation which will offer benefits to certain audience. Students fail to understand the purpose of this section may commit following errors.

- May provide and highlight the importance of project/dissertation for a student
- May highlight the importance of variable (like motivation) involve in project/dissertation in general.
- May provide the importance of selected organization and may fail to create link of organization with selected topic.

Keep in mind following points while writing significance section of your proposal

- State how your study will improve, modify, or broaden presented facts in the field under exploration. Make a note that such improvements, modifications, or extensions may have significant, theoretical, or methodological implication.
- The majority of studies have two prospective audiences: practitioners and academicians. Highlight statements relating the research to both groups are in order.
- This can be a tricky part to engrave. Imagine about implications — how results of the study may have an effect on scholarly research, theory, practice, educational interventions, curricula, counseling, policy.
- When you are taking into account the importance of your study, pose yourself the following questions.
 - *What will outcomes stand for to the theoretical framework that framed the study?*
 - *What suggestions for later research come up from the conclusion?*
 - *What practicing educator will value the results?*
 - *Will results contribute to the solution of educational problems?*
 - *Will results influence educational policy decisions?*
 - *What will be improved or changed as a result of the proposed research?*
 - *How will results of the study be implemented, and what innovations will come about?*

Problems Related to “Format”

- Most of the proposals are rejected because these are not developed according to standard formats available on LMS.
- There are two separate formats; one for Project and second for Dissertation. Both formats are different containing different sections and different information required for each section. Proposals are rejected because instead of following one specific proposal format, merged formats are incorporated and due to which it is very difficult to identify that whether proposal is about a project or a dissertation.
- Project may be rejected when sufficient and relevant text is missing in each section.

Keep in mind following points while writing different sections of your proposal

- First make your mind that whether you are doing project or dissertation. When you make a choice between project and dissertation then stick to proposal format of specific study nature.
- Read contents of each section and gather information related to your topic to meet the requirement of each section.
- Must provide enough material/text against each section of project/dissertation proposal

Problems Related to “Literature Review”

The rationale of a literature review is to communicate to the person who reads what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic and what are the strengths and weaknesses of subject under study but this rationale is missing in most of proposals. Following potential errors may be observed in literature review.

- May be presenting incomplete or insufficient contents by stating following line:
 - “Detailed literature will be provided in final report”.
- Disconnected or disjointed paragraphs may be presented without logical linkage between paragraphs
- Contents may be copied without any proper citation or proper reference list.
- The variables involved in the dissertation may not be identified or discussed properly in literature review section.
- Instead of discussing specific theory, all irrelevant theories may be discussed.
- Contents may be provided from unauthentic sources like wikipedia.
- Contents may be properly cited within paragraphs but details of articles may not be available in reference list.

Keep in mind following points while writing literature review of your proposal

- Elaborate clearly the key concepts or the main factors or variables used in dissertation
- Provide relationships between key concepts, factors or variables as identified or discussed in literature. Avoid to create relationship based on experience or assumptions
- Discuss the theories existing between variables under consideration
- Explain the contribution of present study be expected to make for different sections of society (educationist, practitioners consultants, corporate sector etc)
- Develop general explanation for observed variations in a behavior or phenomenon.

Problems Related to “Proceedings”

The proceeding section of proposal may be rejected because of following reasons;

- The section may be poorly crafted due to misunderstanding of this section
- Instead of project activities, the section may provide details of project report.
- The section may not provide the plan of project/dissertation i.e. how different project activities (reading of articles, data collection schedule, time required for data analysis) may be carried out.
- The section may not present types of activities involved during project/dissertation.
- The section may not offer timeline split of different activities of project/dissertation.

Keep in mind following points while writing research methodology section of your proposal:

- Identify important sections or steps through which one have to pass to complete a particular project/dissertation.
- Following table can be generated to provide number activities and time required to complete each activity.

Sr	Activities	Duration (approx)	To be completed by
1	Reading of related articles	02 Weeks	June 01 to 15, 2010
2	Development & approval of Questionnaire	?? Weeks	
3	Coding & Data Transfer in Software	?? Weeks	
4	Data Analysis	?? Weeks	
5	Report Writing	?? Weeks	
6	Proof Reading and Project submission	?? Weeks	
	Total Time	?? Weeks	

Problems about “Research Methodology” Section

Due to following reasons related to research methodology, a proposal may be rejected:

- Adopting general approach while writing this section. (for example: It is a descriptive research)
- Unable to identify and/or distinguish primary and secondary sources for project/dissertation.
- Unable to provide logical reasons for choosing a particular primary and/or secondary sources
- Providing incomplete information about sources; for example most of proposals claim websites, books reports as a secondary source of information but failed to answer following questions
 - *Which specific source will be used to get secondary information?*
 - *Which specific secondary data is needed?*
 - *Why secondary data is necessary for this project/dissertation?*
 - *How authenticity of data source will be ensured?*
- Target population may not be properly identified like specific organizations or employees, or manager
- The sample size may be not calculated or sampling frame may not be identified or sampling technique may not be mentioned.
- Inappropriate data collection tool may be suggested.
- In case of “Observation” as data collection tool, proposal may have more chances of rejection because this tool is not recommendable in social science research especially in business research because it may have following deficiencies:
 - *Researcher may not have any formal training for this tool*
 - *Researcher may not avoid biasness during observation*
 - *Researcher may be having insufficient or in-depth knowledge about concepts which are under observation.*
 - *Researcher may lack enough analytical and interpretative skills to infer any conclusion from collected data*
- In case of using multiple data collection tools, the justification about using particular tool may not be provided.
- The reliability and validity of data collection tools may not be discussed.
- The statistical tools may not be suggested for data analysis or wrong selection of statistical tool.

Keep in mind following points while writing research methodology section of your proposal:

- Keep in mind that research methodology refers to the practical framework within which the research is conducted.
- The section must provide work plan and describe the activities necessary for the completion of Project/dissertation.

- This section must present some information on how researcher is capable to find the data for a project/dissertation, what procedures will be used to get them and which resources will be utilized to acquire details.
- Must provide specific – not broad – primary and secondary sources of information.
- Must identify population, sampling frame and sample size for project/dissertation.
- In case of using questionnaire as data collection tool, answer each of the following question:
 - *Does each question have relation with any one of the objectives of study?*
 - *What type of questionnaire will be used: open-ended or closed ended?*
 - *What scale will be used in questionnaire? (ratio, nominal, ordinal, interval)*
- In case of using interview as data collection tool, answer each of the following question:
 - *What will be the type of Interviews: structured/unstructured interview?*
 - *How results of interview will be quantified for analysis?*
 - *The list of respondents is available to whom interview will be conducted?*
 - *Is proper plan to conduct an interview devised; like name of person, contact number of person, willingness of interviewee, appointment for interviews etc.*
- Which statistical techniques will be applied to verify the objectives (Mean, mode, median, standard deviation, Chi Square, ANOVA, regression, correlation, factor analysis etc)? Provide valid reason why you have selected this particular statistical technique. For example if you want to know the relationship between two variables then use of correlation is a best option.

Problems about “References or Bibliography” Section

Due to following reasons related to References or Bibliography, a proposal may be considered poor in quality:

- May ignore the reference section completely.
- No references of articles used to develop the proposal may be provided. Simply provided the statement, “References will be given in final project/dissertation”.
- Not followed the APA Style
- May provide the name of website only instead of name of article, author name and URL of that article.
- May provide long list of articles which may not be cited in the proposal or use proper citation in the proposal but details of that article in the reference list may be missing.
- Alphabetically sorting of articles may not be made.

Keep in mind following points while writing References or Bibliography section of your proposal:

- Always use APA style only. For details, follow the given link.
<http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/basics/index.htm>
- Provide as many references of articles which you read out to develop your proposal. This list may be populated at later stage when you will develop your final project/dissertation.
- Provide only references of those articles which you have read out and cited in your proposal. Providing long list of unnecessary articles which have no connection with your proposal may give clue of plagiarism.