CONQUERING THE MOUNTAIN:

Framework for Successful Chair Advising of Online Dissertation Students

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Preface

Advice from Recent Graduates

I was fortunate to have selected the 'right' mentor. While the vision, mission and goals are important, I strongly affirm that one of the two most critical elements in completing the dissertation program is selecting the 'right' mentor, meaning the one that is 'right' for you. The mentor and mentee must establish a comfort zone with mutual respect.

The relationship should be initiated early in the program rather than at completion of course work. By establishing this relationship the comments, suggestions and recommendations on the proposal (Chapters 1, 2, & 3) and the final dissertation (Chapters 4 & 5) are not taken as personal but with sincerity, guidance and direction. Comments, suggestions and recommendations should be taken at face value. The mentor is there to guide you. There is no need to defend yourself to the mentor. By being on the same side, the relationship along with learning journey becomes everlasting.

The second most critical element is to select a classmate based on the same criteria - a classmate that is 'right' for you. Selecting a classmate who is willing and able to personally and professionally communicate with you and establish a comfort zone with mutual respect is critical for success. The comfort zone allows the both of you to engage in all levels of conversation while mutual respect embraces both of you to recognized each others discipline and the merits in your studies. In essence, someone who can identify the day-to day pursuits of the dissertation learning voyage with you.

Dr. Albert Chavez
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As a recent graduate of the University of Phoenix Online, the steps taken to complete the dissertation are still very fresh in my mind. The dissertation is the last hurdle that students must jump over in order to get the prized possession - the Degree. A misconception I identified was that many students believe that after the completion of the course work, everything else (the dissertation) is going to be effortless. This is untrue.

The dissertation is a major project. Completing it requires dedication that includes many revisions, headaches, long nights and early mornings. You may now be asking yourself, “What can be done to complete the dissertation”? To complete the dissertation you need a mentor/dissertation chair. The mentor is the person who will work with you during the dissertation process. You will spend a lot of time with this person. If you are married, tell your spouse that the dinner portions will need to be divided.

In many ways, the mentor will be your right arm. Your mentor will review all of your work and through some magical powers find mistakes, inconsistencies, and grammatical errors that you have overlooked.

Now you may be asking yourself “How can I survive”? Do not stress. If you follow these tips you will soon be walking across the stage to receive your degree.

1. Choose a mentor.
2. Make a schedule with your mentor and adhere to it.
3. Every day set time aside to work on the dissertation.
4. If you get frustrated call someone. Since this program is online, you can utilize the internet and telephone to contact your mentor and other students. Smile
5. Trust the process and remember, other students have completed their dissertation- SO CAN YOU.

Conquering the mountain: Framework for successful chair advising of online dissertation students is a valuable resource for today’s distance education chairs and administrators who direct doctoral programs. The book contains relevant strategies and information to effectively help each doctoral student in his or her journey up the dissertation mountain!

Dr. Janon Berry
Doctor of Management
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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Dissertation Process -- The Mountain --

Kimberly Blum

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined."
(Henry David Thoreau (American essayist, poet and philosopher, 1817-1862)

Introduction From a Dissertation Learner:

> *The dissertation process was grueling; it was mind-blowing, back-breaking, and anxiety driven. The dissertation process takes student dedication and a fair amount of intelligence to complete the dissertation, but most importantly what is needed is a focused, understanding, and dedicated mentor to pull you up the dissertation mountain. My dissertation mentor was the main dissertation student contact during my entire academic career and one who understands the dissertation process and aware that completing the dissertation is like climbing a mountain. My mentor was my dissertation mountain climbing guide, and when I stumbled or had aches and pains my mentor dragged me to get to the top.*
>
> Dr. Janon S. Berry
> Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership,
> University of Phoenix Online

Teaching students to write a dissertation in the traditional face-to-face manner is a difficult process. Distance education complicates the dissertation process because the faculty member is not physically located near the student for easy student consultation and teamwork at critical timelines.

In 2001, the latest statistics available for the total number of distance education students, there were over 3 million enrolled online students. Twenty-eight percent, 820,000, or 43% of all enrolled students were at the masters or doctoral level in an ***online*** program in distance education at degree-granting with a total of 1,904,000 enrolled masters and doctoral learners in the United States (Digest of Education Statistics (2003).

The National Center for Education Statistics projects that the number of doctorate students will jump from 34,870 enrolled students in 1988 to what is labeled a low alternative projection of 45,500 by the year 2013; a high alternative projection is 49,000 doctoral students in 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). If the same percentages of doctoral students enroll in online education without projecting a growth in online enrollment, in 2013, there could be at *least* 19,595 U.S. online doctoral students who face the dissertation process online in the future; a total that could be substantially larger including a growing international online student population.

The U.S. educational system has the largest number of international students in the world. During 2003/2004, "…a total of 572,509, according to Open Doors 2004, the annual report on international academic mobility published by the Institute of International Education (IIE)"(Open Doors, 2004, para 1). International students contribute $12 billion to the US economy which highlights their impact on American higher education. The University of Phoenix Online has an expanding international online doctoral student population; 39 percent of all students consist of non-white ethnic groups that reflect how the educational market place is transcending national boundaries (Fact Book, 2005).

The entire dissertation process for many doctoral students appears similar to a mountain looming in the distance, inescapable, magnificent, but impossible to scale. Online doctoral students face additional challenges overcoming the barriers of distance education (Blum, 1999). Helms and Raiszadeh (2002) found that working in a distance education virtual medium requires more explicit objective setting than face-to-face teams. Dissertation chairs do not have an online explicit list to follow to help distance education students succeed at writing a dissertation despite argument that "professors can learn advising skills by following some systematic advising processes" (Davis, 2004, para 2); previous attempts at successfully mentoring dissertation students are typically trail-and-error learned from past failures and successes (Davis).

The purpose of this book is to give online distance education faculty who are dissertation advisors an explicit framework for enabling distance education doctoral student to complete a dissertation without ever coming face-to-face. Virtual doctoral dissertation chairs who have more than five years of experience and expertise working with students have contributed chapters and key sections to this book.

Reducing Initial Student Fear: Looming Mountain

> *"I dread the dissertation process because I do not like statistics"*
>
> personal communications, L. Smith, 2004

Doctoral students start the dissertation process with a great deal of fear of failure. Some students make statements about statistics because they do not understand what research is about, and believe in error that the research process is all about crunching statistics. Statistics is a feared subject by many learners who are concerned about their level of statistical expertise (Eddy, 2005).

Successful doctoral advisors who send out notes clarifying exactly what goes into writing a dissertation, reducing the emphasis on statistics for the beginning student helps reduce student fear of the *mountain.* The dissertation mountain appears larger than life when viewing it from below, but similar to the climber who gathers information on the mountain, assembles gear, and obtains a good mountain guide in the form of an advisor, the dissertation mountain is doable.

Breaking the process into manageable steps makes the mountain climbable for online student who do not have the benefit of sitting next to an advisor who can use facial clues to reduce fear such as a smile, or a physical clue such as a pat on the back while calming the student down and verbally explaining the process. In contrast, online advisors must help online dissertation students using the platform for distance education, often a series of emails or newsgroups, IM, or the phone. Experienced chair advisors use a consistent framework of steps to reduce student fear of the mountain of the dissertation process explained below.

Creating an Initial Study Plan: Attacking the Mountain

Dissertation chairs who share initial information with learners at the beginning, taking extra time to provide many additional documents by an additional initial time investment because knowledge reduces student fear of the dissertation mountain result in success.

Examples of resources advisors can send to reduce initial student fear of the mountain dissertation are approved university dissertations, content ideas, and a formal checklist of requirements. Using a series of emails, resources, and samples, the dissertation advisor communicates resources and shares examples with the students. One of the author's of this book asks formal permission of students further along in the process or successfully graduated with an approved dissertation to share sections with beginning research students. This practice helps to reduce initial student fears For instance, the University of Phoenix and Walden University use a checklist for each dissertation chapter, and this is one of the first documents shared by the advisor with the dissertation student.

Create a Timeline to Climb Mountain Milestones

Successful online doctoral advisors help learners establish as timeline to make milestones clear and doable for the learners. Many advisors use Excel to work with the student to create a timeline, working backwards with the date the student wants to graduate, dissertation due dates, proposal due dates, milestones of the problem, purpose, research questions, and hypotheses creation.

The timeline should include Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 revisions, edits, and final dates of completion, and factor in revisions of student drafts, chair edits, committee suggestions, and formal approval time by the University.

The timeline clearly shows the dissertation student that the mountain is climbable in small steps, one step at a time in a timeframe that meets deadlines and accounts for student work or family commitments is factored into the milestones, as well as any advisor vacations or times when he or she is unavailable. An example of a timeline Blum created with a student for a dissertation proposal is below. Chairs are called *mentors* at some universities.

Mentor-Mentee Contract and Dissertation Timeline Template Instructions:

1. Revision turn around time is based on experience
2. Enter in the start date of First Dissertation Class and this generates milestones.
3. Enter all planned conferences and vacations for mentor and mentee.
4. Mentor reviews and factors in more time based on experience.
5. Both parties sign the contract and keep a copy.
6. Timeline revisions required new signatures.
7. Enter in Dates of Dissertation Online Classes
8. Have mentees print this out and put next to computer.

Table 1

Timelines, Milestones and Actions

Milestone	Due date of first Drafts or step accomplished	Mentor and Mentee agreed to five day turnaround has five days; 1 day in classes	Comments
Date starting First dissertation-related individual course.	**9-Jan-05**		
Editor confirmed and notified of the time frame. Send this chart to editor	10-Jan-05	15-Jan-05	
Problem statement to mentor	**9-Jan-05**	10-Jan-05	
Edited, suggestions made, returned	10-Jan-05	15-Jan-05	
Revisions Made	11-Jan-05	13-Jan-05	
Edited, returned	18-Jan-05	19-Jan-05	
Revisions Made	21-Jan-05	22-Jan-05	
Approved, or cycle above; the problem DRIVES the entire study so it must be perfect.	23-Jan-05	24-Jan-05	

Milestone	Due Date	Mentor/Mentee Date	Comments
Purpose Statement draft to mentor	**19-Jan-05**	21-Jan-05	
Edited, suggestions made, returned	22-Jan-05	23-Jan-05	
Revisions Made	24-Jan-05	25-Jan-05	
Edited, returned	30-Jan-05	31-Jan-05	
Revisions Made	1-Feb-05	6-Feb-05	
Approved, or cycle above;	11-Feb-05	12-Feb-05	
Research Questions/hypothesis questions	**25-Jan-05**	26-Jan-05	
Edited, suggestions made, returned	27-Jan-05	28-Jan-05	
Revisions made,	29-Jan-05	30-Jan-05	
Committee selected	30-Jan-05	30-Jan-05	
Problem, purpose, questions to committee for suggestions	30-Jan-05	4-Feb-05	
Chapter 1 Draft to Mentor	**4-Feb-05**	9-Feb-05	
Edited, suggestions made, returned	11-Feb-05	9-Feb-05	
Revisions made,	11-Feb-05	16-Feb-05	
Approved, or cycle above;	18-Feb-05	20-Feb-05	
Send to Editor; return to Mentor	20-Feb-05	25-Feb-05	
Approved by mentor or more changes.	27-Feb-05	1-Mar-05	
Send Chapter 1 to Committee	1-Mar-05	6-Mar-05	
Chapter 2 Draft	4-Feb-05	6-Feb-05	
Chapter 2 Revised	8-Feb-05	30-Mar-05	
First Dissertation Class Ends -- grade issued	30-Mar-05		

Milestone	Date	Date	Comments
Chapter 1 committee suggestions incorporated	30-Mar-05	4-Apr-05	
Revisions made; send to mentor with chart of changes, the request, the change itself, and the page number of Chapter 1	9-Apr-05	14-Apr-05	
Approved by mentor or cycle above.	14-Apr-05	19-Apr-05	
Chapter 2 Revised	19-Apr-05	24-Apr-05	
Chapter 2 approved by Mentor	29-Apr-05	4-May-05	
Chapter 3 to Mentor	3-Jun-05	8-Jun-05	
Same cycle, editor to receive all three chapters before sending to committee after mentor approves content; mentor receives one more time after editor before sending out.	18-Jun-05	23-Jun-05	
Committee receives mentor approved, edited Proposal with chart of changes; all three chapters.	3-Jul-05	8-Jul-05	
Changes requested, revised with chart.	18-Jul-05	23-Jul-05	

Milestone	Date	Date	Comments
Mentee on Vacation	**4-Aug-05**	**9-Aug-05**	
Committee receives final copy for signatures.	3-Sep-05	8-Sep-05	
Requested changes if any, made and back to committee to sign	23-Sep-05	28-Sep-05	
Mentor on Vacation	**28-Sep-05**	**3-Oct-05**	
ARB/IRB receives proposal	13-Oct-05	27-Oct-05	
Changes requested, only these changes are made, resend; or approved.	11-Nov-05	26-Nov-05	
ARB and IRB approve proposal	10-Dec-05		
One on One Dissertation Class -- Chapter 4	24-Jan-06	25-Mar-06	
One on One Dissertation Class -- Chapter 5	26-Mar-06	25-May-06	
Edits of Entire Dissertation	24-Apr-06		
Dissertation to Grammar and APA Editor	26-Apr-06		
Orals	28-Apr-06		
Committee last edits done	30-Apr-06		
Committee Signatures obtained on hard-copy	30-Apr-06		
Deadline to Upload to Dean	**16-May-06**		

Milestone	Date	Date	Comments
Dean's requested changes made and re-sent	30-May-06		
Committee hard-copy new signature obtained -- if needed	30-May-06		
Deadline for Dean's Signature	**6/1/2005**		
Graduation	7/30/2006		
By signing the below, I agree to the timeline and this contract. and my schedule must be revised with new signatures and dates.			
Mentee Signature		Mentor Signature	Date
Sign Here		*Sign Here*	Date Signed
Name of mentee		Name of Mentor	
Mentee Contact Information		Mentor Contact Information	
Address:		Address:	
City, State, Zip		City, State, Zip	
Home Phone		Home Phone	
Cell:		Cell:	
Work:		Work:	

Finally, chairs who are most successful at reducing online dissertation student fear simply pick up the phone and walk the student through the initial processes, mapping out what needs to be done and when. Advisor follow-through with encouraging emails keeps provide positive feedback that builds confidence and lowers unnecessary anxiety. One of the author's of this article chair at Walden University used to send out postcards simply saying hello to the dissertation student, and this practice always reduced levels of anxiety, especially the postcard stating the mentor was alive and well after a Costa Rica rafting trip (the mentor was older than 60 at the time).

Chapter 1 introduced the mountain and explained some techniques to reduce student fear of the looming dissertation mountain.

Chapter 2 will provide a framework for advisors to share to students about learning design methods – helping students prepare for the Unique Mountain as well as how to guide students to selecting a significant Problem – helping students pick a doable mountain.

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Chapter 2

Learning about Methods - Helping Students Prepare for the Unique Dissertation Mountain

Marilyn Simon

Doctoral Level Writing

Similar to climbing a mountain that looms far above any *hill*; doctoral level writing is the *highest* level of academic writing. The Council of Graduate Schools (2005) described the purpose of doctoral level research as being able "to apply generally accepted theory to a current problem in order to find a viable solution." (p.1) Doctoral level research must be objective and credible. All statements and claims in doctoral writing are supported with sufficient evidence to ensure validity. Dissertation students must address dissertation statements that seemingly counter or refute claims in order to present a well-rounded overview of the topic and problem under investigation. Primary sources and recent peer-reviewed, refereed journals must be the overwhelming majority of references. Germinal (or classical) works should be included in order to present an historical overview of the topic and foundational research.

Doctoral Dissertation

A doctoral dissertation must meet three criteria as described by Simon and Francis (2001). A dissertation must pass the ROC bottom test! A dissertation must be Researchable (doable), Original (fill a true and serious void in the literature, or replicates a study in a different environment or time, extends prior knowledge, or develops a new theory), and Contributory (to a profession and society).

In order to sustain reader's attention the dissertation should also be of great personal interest to the dissertation student, and, preferably, something that exudes a great passion from the learner. The dissertation student should consider the audience (including the committee) who will read the document and pick a topic that can contribute towards career goals and contribute relevant knowledge to the profession and society. Once a dissertation learner discovers *the field to plough, the learner will choose a piece of land to cultivate*.

Find a Topic to Research

One excellent way to find a topic is to network with other researchers around the globe. The Internet allows for easy accomplishment of networking by joining listservs, chat rooms, or newsgroups. Attending professional meetings and conferences are excellent places to understand the current problems in the chosen field for the dissertation, and rub elbows with colleagues. Finally, a review of the literature often reveals a topic worthy of researching.

Creswell (2002) suggested asking three basic questions to determine if the topic is worthy of doing at the doctoral level: Will the study of the issue contribute to knowledge and practice? Can the participants and sites be studied? Can the problem be researched given the researcher's time, resources, and skills (p.83)? Research begins when the dissertation learner starts thinking like a researcher and begins asking questions such as: What do I know; what do I believe; and what do I want to know about a complex problem in my field?

Frame the Problem

Framing the problem is the most important part of a dissertation and this is where a students need to begin the climb the mountain once he or she finds a general topic. After reading the problem statement, the reader will know why the student is conducting are the study and be convinced of its importance. In 200 words or less, the dissertation student must convince the reader that must be done! For example, society or one of its institutions has some pressing problem that needs closer examination and the dissertation student's study will attempt to answer some part of this serious problem in a unique and clever way.

The problem statement will also hint as to the nature of the study (correlation, evaluative, historical, experimental, etc). Dissertation students should begin to develop the problem statement by asking: What is the rationale for doing this study? Who cares about this study? Why would anyone care about this study? Answers are formed into the problem statement.

Finally, once the problem is defined, dissertation students should never stray too far away from the problem as research is conducted. According to Meltzoff (2003), an appropriate problem statement suggests a question and initiates a systematic process to obtain valid answers to that question.

Choose the Methodology

Once the dissertation student has settled on the topic and problem, dissertation students face the next steep grade

on the mountain – the need to select a methodological design that will enable the student to solve the problem and serve as a guide to navigate the climb up the mountain.

Similar to climbing a mountain with ill-fitting hiking shoes that later give the hiker blisters, the design must match or solve the problem with the data access the student can obtain. For example, if the problem calls for a need to explore unknown variables, to find reasons why a phenomenon exists, the design is typically qualitative and the student does not necessarily require access to primary data interviewing a sample.

General Qualitative Designs

Usually the qualitative researcher is more concerned with building a theory than testing it. A good practice for the dissertation learner considering a qualitative study is to read the brief description of these popular qualitative studies listed. When you find a design that appears to match to solve the problem, search on the Internet, and read selected sections of research books and learn more.

Ethnographic

Ethnographic designs view at an entire group -- more specifically, a group that shares a common culture – in-depth. The researcher studies the group in its natural setting for a lengthy period of time, often several months, or even several years. The focus of investigation is on the everyday behaviors (e.g., interactions, language, rituals) of the people in the group, with intent to identify cultural norms, beliefs, social structures, and other cultural patterns.

Grounded Theory

Here the researcher seeks to generate a theory that explains a process or action. The researcher would use this design for developing theories through primary interviewing, developing patterns or themes, and composing a visual that describe this theory. Creswell (2002) found that theory is "grounded" in the data from the participants or content analysis. The researcher develops predictions about the experiences of individuals. Creswell (2002) identified the following strengths and weakness: Emphasis on comparative methods and the researcher stays close to the data. The researcher must be careful about making a premature commitment to a set of analytical categories, or a lack of conceptual depth, to avoid drawing erroneous conclusions

Phenomenology

Experiences are narrated using story and description. The research is very personal -- and the results are stories with researcher staying somewhat detached. Phenomenologist focuses on the lived experience of persons eliciting commonalities and shared meanings.

Delphi research

The Delphi research focus is future-oriented. The Delphi techniques target future problems and foresee solutions. The Delphi method utilizes the knowledge of experts, combining it and redistributing it. The Delphi study opens up doors and forces new thought processes to emerge. Finally the Delphi method gives information to respondents on how closely personal respondents was related to responses from other experts in the same field and to justify trains of thought Denzin & Lincoln (2000**).**

Historical Case study Design

Historical designs typically analyze documents in relation to a theory or concept, describing what occurred by interpreting facts and events of archival documents in a critical manner. The historical case study design is useful when interviewing or observing is not possible but the problem can be solved with historical documents (Simon & Francis, 2004).

Case Study

Case study findings are valid only for the case being studied with *some* generalizations possible but the researcher should triangulate the methods, data, and incorporates the use of a pilot study to test the findings and allows modification of methodology before the final study is completed. Every effort is made to explain patterns in an unbiased manner to discover the reality behind the data being studied (Simon & Francis, 2001; Yin, 2003**).**

Heuristics research

Subjects using the heuristics design are studied without speculation. Open-ended questions using personal communication in relation to the universe, researchers strive to find meanings within the context of personal experiences. Patterns in responses are the outcome of heuristics research **(**Simon & Francis, 2004).

General Quantitative Designs

If the problem is best answered by a quantitative method and the dissertation student has access to surveying or observing a sample, quantitative designs examine a relationship between two or more variables and/or test a theory, with the intent of generalizing results. Quantitative studies must be objective and variables specifically defined; exploring variables is not part of a quantitative design. Dissertation learners should to brush up on statistics and consider hiring a statistician for tips. The following is brief review of some popular quantitative designs.

Correlational Research

Correlation designs is focused on collecting data in order to determine whether, and to what degree, a correlation and to what degree, exists between two or more quantifiable variables. According to Davis (2005), "The designs for this kind of a research are founded on the assumption that reality is best described as a network of interacting and mutually-causal relationships. Everything affects--and is affected by--everything else. This web of relationships in not necessarily linear, as assumed in experimental research" (p.1). It is important to note that one variable does not cause another variable in correlation design, either there is a correlation or there is not and a degree of correlation (or lack of it) is found using statistical tests.

Cause and Affect: Relationships

When there is a particular situation and an outcome is consistently occurring in that situation, causation may be suspected. Causation must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt; there is a relationship between variable A and B. Cause and affect is not merely a correlation; the design uses statistical test to prove or disprove that variable *A causes variable B.*

Experimental

Experimental research is a design where one or more variables are manipulated and the results analyzed in a scientific manner. A major strength of experimental methodology, gained from random assignment of participants, is its internal validity: One can be more *certain* about attributing a "cause" to the independent variables. A major weakness is external validity: It is inappropriate to generalize beyond the results of the experiment. Most experiments take place in a laboratory environment.

Quasi Experimental

When a true experimental design is not available to a researcher for various reasons, e.g., intact groups are already formed, treatment cannot be withheld from a group, or no appropriate control or comparison groups are available, the researcher can use a quasi-experimental design. As in the case of the true experimental design, quasi-experiments involve the manipulation of one or more independent variables and the measurement of a dependent variable. There are three major categories of quasi-experimental design: the nonequivalent-groups designs, cohort designs, and time-series designs (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Factor Analyses

Here the researcher analyzes interrelationships within a set of variables or objects to construct a few hypothetical variables (or objects), called factors, that are supposed to contain the essential information in a larger set of observed variables. A small number of factors will usually account for approximately the same amount of information as the much larger set of original observations.

Avoiding hot spots in a hiker's feet is critical to preventing subsequent blisters; any area that feels hot is a potential source of trouble and addressed quickly with treatment. Similar to blisters hikers want to avoid when climbing a mountain, dissertation students should carefully consider the design, research the different general types available, and work with a dissertation chair to determine what data access is possible, and what design will match the problem. Reviewing literature is the next step in the long dissertation-climbing journey.

Start the Literature Review

Once the dissertation student has settled on a topic, framed the problem and selected the methodology that best answers the problem, it is time to put mole skin band aides on the hot spots, put socks and hiking shoes back on, and plunge up the literature slope of the mountain. The literature review is an integrated critical essay that analyzes the most relevant and current published knowledge on the topic. The literature review is organized around major ideas and themes. Regardless of the wealth of information the dissertation student might possess in any given area, learner knowledge stagnates if the student's knowledge is not expanded or supplemented with relevant and current literature. Dissertation students cannot defend an argument based on only beliefs or opinions.

To construct a literature review students need to find current studies (within the past 5 years) that have tried to answer the questions related to the student's problem statement. Summarize studies on the same topic or elements of the same topic, compare them, contrast them, organize them, and lump similar ones together.

A common student compliant is that theories on the exact problem are not available; dissertation students must find related theories on some part of the topic. For example, if the problem is about lack of effective use humor in leadership to motivate employees, literature will not be specific to this exact problem. The dissertation student must find theories and relate them together on humor, leadership, employee motivation, and traditional leadership styles.

Dissertation student must properly cite references for each quote or paraphrase, or any idea built upon in each paragraph. Once a study is found that stimulates dissertation student's thinking, make certain a record the author's name, title of the study, journal where the study is published, date of publication and page number is kept. Report on the samples that *the author*s used and how the samples were selected, what instruments were used to obtain data and the conclusions drawn. Report on

any flaws found in the study and how the study relates to the problem the dissertation learner is investigating. Compare and contrast studies on similar topics and approaches.

Primary sources are preferred over secondary sources in a dissertation literature review. Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually and reflects the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer. A secondary source is a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event or phenomenon. It is generally at least one-step removed from the event. Many people consider secondary references "hearsay." Please see chapter 4: Reading Literature Theories for more tips on how to write a literature review for a dissertation.

Conclusion

Learning about methods is critical in the same manner it is important for a mountain hiker to learn about good hiking boots that will not give the hiker blisters – without proper gear, the hiker will fail to hike up the mountain – without proper knowledge and careful selection of the design, the dissertation learner fails to select a design that will solve the problem. Chapter 2 focused on the general designs and overall steps to developing an effective unique problem statement.

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Chapter 3

Working as the Chair – Tips to Train Online Doctoral Students for the Mountain Climb

Brent Muirhead, Gary Robinson, and Marilyn Simon

What is the Dissertation Chair's Role?

There are two primary designations for the lead faculty on a dissertation, chair or mentor. Each role has essentially the same duties that are described below and the differentiation of which role is used is a function university preference. Successful chairs use a variety of leadership styles in common terminology defined as a coach, a rocker climbing guide, a content editor, a resource director, and a nag. Chairs must be comfortable with the design the student chooses to match the problem, subject matter experts to some degree, and good editors, as well as directors to find good resources if the student requires additional help. For example, some students need a good editor to help with grammar and APA; other students may need the guide of a statistician; yet other students may need research book and reference suggestions. As a practical tool the learner might create a responsibility matrix that helps all to understand who has what responsibility.

The dissertation chair's role is akin to that of a manager in the sense that the manager does not do the actual work but instead ensures that the job is on time and on budget. Dissertation chairs should not write the dissertation, edit for every APA mistake, or correct every grammar mistake. Dissertation chairs provide guidance on dissertation design, methods, resources, APA format, and editing. Successful chairs concentrate on the design of the dissertation proposal and acting as climbing guide, direct students to resources needed at the time. Chairs have a prerogative with respect to dissertation sequence. Some chairs may prefer to have dissertation students complete a chapter at a time and others may prefer to complete the proposal before asking for committee input but ultimately the chair is responsible for the management of the dissertation process and the dissertation student should take cues from the chair regarding how to proceed.

Chairs work with students over a period of months, often years and should be available to edit content of major revisions over the dissertation period but should not edit new drafts of dissertation proposal every week. A typical time for editing is several iterations of the problem, purpose, and research questions, when chapter 1 is completed, another edit of chapter 1 with chair suggestions incorporated, chapter 1, 2, and 3, and a few more edits of the entire proposal before the committee is asked to provide suggestions. Subsequent edits of the dissertation are before sending with committee signatures to the university board for acceptance or rejections, review, and edits with required changes, and after writing chapter 4 and 5, and one final edit of the entire dissertation before scheduling orals. Occasionally, requested dissertation edits by the Dean requires one additional edit by the chair before the dissertation is signed.

If a university dissertation review indicates further edits or changes, these required changes are made and resubmitted. Because reviewers are subject to human fallibility and could be wrong about a particular requested change or it may be a matter of a difference of professional opinion the chair and/or committee may take issue with the school reviewer's comments. Any discussions of changes or modifications are the responsibility of the chair, many times with the advice and consent of the committee. One final edit of the entire dissertation is usually required before scheduling orals. After orals the final dissertation approval or required edits is a matter of university process. For example, some final dissertation review boards require a further reading by an outside person or the dissertation may go to a university office for form review and editing.

How Dissertation Chairs work with Students using Distance Education Mediums?

Online chairs can be just as effective using emails, live chat, and the phone for quick questions. The nature of the online medium allows chair to respond in a timely manner despite any location or other duties; the online chair is typically online daily so no formal appointment or physical presence is required. For example, one of the authors of this book successfully chaired United States based students who have since graduated from Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, and Europe.

Faculty who chair dissertations on a face-to-face basis with students many times question whether online, virtual, chairs can provide the level of support that is needed to help dissertation students write good dissertations. Face-to-face chairs believe that availability on a face-to-face mode is not only essential but also vital

to the process. Students often need chairs help at different times and in an on ground environment can drop by to visit the chair at odd times or set up appointments.

Experience of online dissertation chairs and students has shown that online medium can be just as effective and successful to produce timely, good dissertations; online students simply shift means to obtain help, instead of dropping by to visit the chair at odd times or set up appointments. For example, online chairs and students can be just as effective using emails, live chat, and the phone for quick questions.

One medium that dissertation chairs and students can employ is the use of VOIP. VOIP allows the student and chair to have instant contact with the other on a constant basis while both are online in a live environment; this tool is a viable alternative to the face-to-face process and available free or at reasonable cost. Examples of VIOP software are Skype.com, Yahoo messenger, or MSN messenger; these technologies provide for sending attachments, and face-to-face features through web cams as well as conference calls.

An additional advantage of the online medium for chairs and students is accessibility. Online mediums allow chairs to respond in a timely manner to dissertation students from anywhere there is internet connectivity. If a specific discussion between the chairs and students is needed then a meeting can be accomplished through the telephone or VOIP. For example, one of the author's of this book successfully chaired United States based students who have since graduated from the United States while working as a chair located in Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, and Europe.

What are Chair processes to follow?

Every university has a set of policies and best practices chairs must obtain and become familiar with to guide the dissertation student up the dissertation mountain. Checklists for chapter requirements, consent forms, deadlines for milestones, signatures, addresses, and emails to send proposals and dissertations are examples. APA is a common thread; most universities require the formatting of the dissertation following APA guidelines.

What are the First Chair Steps?

The problem drives the entire research study so chairs should work with dissertation students as the first step to create a solid problem statement. Giving advice on selecting a doable, and yet significant problem statement is part of the first step. Chairs must analyze the topic and judge if the topic covers a problem that is significant. For example, the University of Phoenix requires problems that are significant to leadership; problems about traffic flows would not be a significant leadership topic unless the student can relate the topic to leaders in city planning who need a framework of plans that prevent accidents proven by the student's topic!

Once the problem statement is has a matching design, the purpose and research questions/ hypotheses are created, and suggestions from the committee used to draft chapter 1. Chairs should recommend designs that may solve the problem with the data access permission the student could get permission to collect data. For example, if a student does not have permission to interview a sample, but could analyze patterns in archival files on a topic, a quantitative design is impossible but a qualitative case study feasible.

Chairs should, coordinate committee suggestions, and ensure suggestions are implemented that meet the requirements of university dissertation checklists, and direct the learner to university resources such as the online library, editors, and statisticians. Other resources that shared with the student are tips on how to write in an academic manner, specific databases to search on the topic, reference lists and good journals to read, and examples of content ideas for key sections in the dissertation proposal.

Teaching Online Dissertation Students to be Self-directed

Today's distance teachers often advocate a self-directed learning philosophy because it encourages personal and professional growth. The concept of self-directed learning is vital to creating an educational setting or environment that promotes critical thinking. Moore (1993) advocates learner autonomy in distance education that involves a combination of instructional structure and dialogue. Knowles (1990, p. 135) relates that learners demonstrate self-directed learning skills by:

1. Diagnosing their own needs for learning
2. Formulating their own learning objectives
3. Identifying effective human and material resources for accomplishing their objectives
4. Choosing and implementing effective strategies for using these resources
5. Evaluating the extent to which they have accomplished their objectives.

The level of cognitive maturity will vary among students that will require having teachers to make creative adaptations to their teaching plans and activities (Bullen, 1998). Curriculum changes should not reduce the academic quality of the course work. Online degree program administrators must avoid the temptation to dumb down their curriculum standards to increase their student enrollment numbers. The lowering of educational standards appears to help more students experience a measure of academic success. It really represents a patronizing view of people that questions their

ability to take on new intellectual challenges and it reflects an ambiguous view of equity. Furedi (2004) relates "… by treating people as weak and vulnerable individuals who are likely to stumble when confronted by intellectual challenge, such cultural attitudes serve to create a culture of low expectations" (p. 138). Distance education administrators, admission personnel and teachers need to work together to maintain high intellectual expectations for their students and uphold the academic integrity of their institutions.

Teach Time Management Skills

Chairs must help their students to develop short and long-term goals for their research plans. It is important to remember that changing individual learning habits takes time, patience and a willingness to practice. Instructors can assist students through class activities that offer clear insights into their thinking processes. Writing assignments can be an excellent opportunity for students to practice being self-directed and reflective. Students should learn how to effectively select a topic and conduct research on it. The author has graduate online students learn about critical thinking by using this topic as the focus of one of their Power Point presentations. The initial student reaction to this assignment is somewhat apprehensive about teaching something as complex as this topic. The author shares lectures and charts on critical thinking principles that help alleviate their anxiety.

Students are required to develop either a handout, pamphlet or outline notes on their Power Point presentation. Student comments after their presentations indicate that reflective thinking is less of a mystical concept to them and it is more practical than they had realized. Online teachers who want to offer practical advice to encourage more intentional critical thinking in their students should consider sharing the following nine strategies (Paul & Elder, 2000)

1. Use 'wasted' time
2. A problem a day
3. Internalize intellectual standards
4. Keep an intellectual journal
5. Reshape your character
6. Deal with your ego
7. Redefine the way you see things
8. Get in touch with your emotions
9. Analyze group influences on your life (p. 40).

Chairs should view the full-spectrum questions as a tool for enhancing dialog. The choice of questions can be used to guide the discussion and help energize online interaction. It is wise not to overuse a particular question approach because students will begin to lose interest if the process becomes too predictable or even annoying. For instance, instructors who frequently respond to a student's comments with a question are guilty of over using a learning strategy. In addition, it can annoy students who want more in-depth interaction over their ideas. Instructors can spark a lively dialog by using quotes, pictures, cartoons, simulations, or graphics at different times during the course. A thought provoking quote can stimulate discussion and breathe new life into an apparently stale topic.

Chairs and dissertation students are confused about what constitutes genuine reflective thinking and that complicates efforts to integrate it into the curriculum. Woolfolk's (1990) chart helps to clarify what are some of the major elements in the critical thinking process:

The chart can seem a bit overwhelming to educators who want to include higher order thinking in their instructional plans. It is important to recall that the essence of critical thinking is making good judgments which includes having criteria, self-correcting procedures, and being aware of context (Brookfield, 1987). The chart offers an excellent resource to create lesson plans and discussion questions that support higher order skills and creativity.

The discussion has briefly explored helping students to be creative in their online dissertation work. There is a degree of mystery associated with the subject of creativity that challenges educators to continue studying how individuals translate imaginations and ideas into innovative dissertations. It is a vital educational issue that holds the promise of enriching student-learning experiences as students become more effective at utilizing their cognitive skills and knowledge.

Online Dissertation Students and Metacognition, Synthesizing, and Best Research Practices

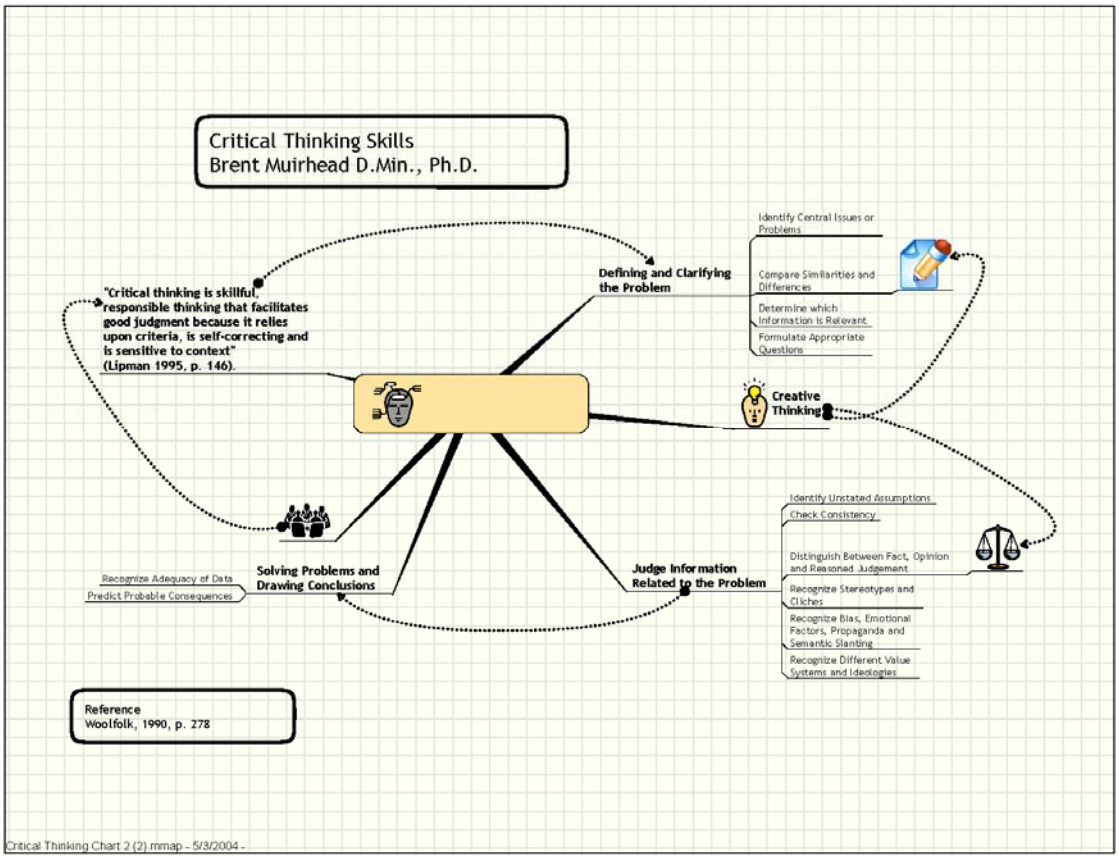
- How can I help my mentees discover best research practices?
- How can I help mentees develop metaconginition skills?
- How can I help mentees develop synthesizing skills?

An important part of the research design is identifying the appropriate research methods for data collection. The author will discuss insights into selecting research methods.

Selecting Research Methods

It is vital to begin taking a larger view of the research process before selecting specific methods. Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (2001) recommend asking eight questions to help

dissertation students make relevant and realistic plans:



What does the student need or want to find out?

The research proposal will create a need to answer a specific question or set of questions. The terms need or want refer to the realization that time you must consider time and resources in your evaluation of potential methods to use in your study.

What skills does the dissertation student have?

Every researcher has certain research skills that have been developed during formal education, work projects, and daily living. It should be noted that everyday or routine research skills could include questioning, reflecting, organizing information and a diversity of other skills. A key question that dissertation students need is what type of work does the dissertation student prefer?

There are individuals who enjoy talking to people while there are those who are passionate about studying documents. The preferences provide insights into potential research techniques such as interviews or observations for those who are like interacting with others. Individuals sometimes choose techniques that will cause them to develop new skills but must be careful not that excessive amount of time is required to acquire the skills.

Will methodological preferences answer the questions?

The researcher must investigate whether their research preference will answer the research question. The methodology has to provide the best possible opportunity to have techniques that affirm reliability and validity.

How will methods affect the answers you get?

The use of in-depth interviews will acquire greater depth of information than surveys that are highly structured instruments. In contrast, interviews are more open-ended and offer opportunities to acquire responses that are more sophisticated.

How will the researcher bias affect the research?

The researcher has a degree of impact on the study. For

instance, the researcher has a set of questions that he or she wants to ask and perhaps a perspective on potential answers. The researcher can monitor and minimize these effects and establish the appropriate level of objectivity for their project.

Which methods are acceptable?

The acceptability of a method requires taking the time to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages that are associated with various approaches to your research project.

Using more than one method

Often, researchers will have one main data collection method such as a survey that includes complimentary interviews to offer more information that is detailed. The combination of methods can involve a blend of qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

Allowing for changes of direction

The research process can be fluid at times because the research design might require modification. For instance, if a survey is not acquiring adequate data, then the researcher might need to utilize another instrument to gather more information.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001, pp. 114-116) have developed a creative self-evaluation instrument to help individuals to determine the feasibility of their research project.

The Problem

1. What area (s) will the problem deal?
   ____People
   ____Things
   ____Records
   ____Thoughts and Ideas
   ____Dynamics and Energy

2. Are there data that related directly to the problem available for each of the categories you've just checked?
   ____Yes
   ____No

3. What academic discipline is primarily concerned with the problem?

4. What other academic disciplines are possibly also related to the problem?

5. What special aptitude do you have as a researcher for this problem?
   ____Interest in the problem
   ____Experience in the problem area
   ____Education and/or training
   ____Other (specify)

The Data

1. How available are the data to you?
   ____Readily available
   ____Available with permission
   ____Available with great difficulty or rarely available
   ____Unavailable

2. How frequently are you personally in contact with the source of the data?
   ____Once a day
   ____Once a week
   ____Once a month
   ____Once a year
   ____Never

3 Will the data arise directly out of the problem situation?
   ____Yes
   ____No
   If your answer is "no," where or how will you secure the data? _____

4. How do you plan to gather the data?
   ____Observation
   ____Questionnaire
   ____Tests or inventories
   ____Photocopying of records
   ____Interview or tape recording
   ____Other (explain)_____

5. Is special equipment or are special conditions necessary for gathering or processing the data?
   ____Yes
   ____No
   If the answer is "yes," specify:_____

6. If the answer to the preceding question was "yes," do you have access to such equipment and the skill to use it?
   ____Yes
   ____No
   If the answer is "no," how do you intend to overcome this difficulty? _____

7. What is the estimated cost in time and money to gather the data?_____

8. What evidence do you have that the data you gather will be a valid and reliable indicator of

the phenomena you wish to study?

_____

The self-evaluation checklist is a useful tool to evaluate the feasibility of your action research project. It is important to select a research problem that is relevant and narrow enough in scope to be properly managed within our degree program. Also, establish a time line and check list of activities and resources that need to be accomplished to complete the research study. The selection of data collection techniques should flow from the nature of the problem being examined. Data collection techniques (qualitative or quantitative) must provide appropriate and accessible information for the researcher. Mills (2000) related, "it is not a mysterious quest, but it is quite simply an effort to collect data that increases our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 49).

Give Dissertation Students Direct Advice That Works

One of the author's of this book, Dr. Marilyn Simon has assisted hundreds of online doctoral students in a successful completion of the doctoral dissertation. The following are some helpful hints chairs should share with dissertation learners to climb the dissertation mountain.

1. **Develop a thick skin.** Dissertation students are striving for perfection; a lofty and extraordinary aspiration. Dissertations require a great deal of work. This is likely the first time a dissertation student is conducting a doctoral dissertation so you need to understand the process and understand the advice of the dissertation chair. It is likely that dissertation students will do more re-writes than the student can count. A dissertation student must develop the attitude that each critique is good advice and each feedback received will move him or her closer to the top of the dissertation mountain.
2. **Keep in constant contact with the mentor or chair**. Dissertation students should develop a working rhythm with the chair and send component parts of major sections of the dissertation proposal work as it becomes available.
3. **Manage time wisely.** The key point in time management is recognizing the finite nature of time as a resource; this is both good news and bad news. The bad news, of course, is that time is limited. Time moves at the same rate and there is no way to manipulate the passage of time. The good news is that time is a constant. Time is known and, hence, its stability provides a basis for predicting future outcomes. Good time management includes program planning whereby resources (people, time) are effectively managed. Effective time management includes making time for loved ones and time to de-stress. Daily work is made easier when a model provides a continuing guide for action, various levels of accountability and responsibility, and when essential tasks and sequences of tasks are specified along with a timeline for completion.
4. **Develop a dissertation student support system**. Commiserate with someone who is going through the same process, trying to climb an equally high dissertation mountain. Make sure to include family and close friends in planning and share dissertation difficulties with them. If the dissertation student does not have current friends who would understand, find new friends that have been there or are at the same part of the dissertation mountain.
5. **Consult experts as needed in the dissertation process**. For example if plans include hiring a dissertation editor ensure the editor has experience working with doctoral-level scholarship. Ask other students who have recently completed a dissertation or the chair for referrals. If you plans include a statistician make certain that the statistician can explain every step of the process to because the dissertation student is are responsible for every component of the dissertation and must explain and defend all tests and measurements used in the dissertation.

Some Metaphors to Consider

Previous graduated dissertation students have equaled the dissertation mountain as similar to a roller coaster ride. There are days when everything goes great and the student meet all the goals set for the day, and then some. There are also those days when Murphy does his mischief and the student is running backwards. Dissertation students should keep a journal to record personal trials and tribulations along with successes; this will help the dissertation get through the tough times – the student can re-read the successes for motivation to keep going.

Completing a dissertation is like having a baby. Once a dissertation proposal is approved, it takes an average of 9 months to complete most dissertations. Dissertation students must prepare its creation and arrival. There are times when the process is painful, especially during the final stages of creation; this is something that will be associated with the dissertation student for the rest of the student's life; the dissertation journey is literally a life-changing experience. There is likely to be a period of post partum depression a few weeks after the dissertation is complete, the doctoral degree is granted, and the partying subsides. The primary treatment is supportive care and reassurance that this depression condition is transient in nature and that you have truly accomplished a unique and amazing feat.

Remember that a dissertation is a marathon up the mountain, but at the end, it will be a sprint for the top. Similar to the mountain hiker, if dissertation students pace the process, the dissertation student will make it to the finish line – the top of the dissertation mountain!

Conclusion:

What are the Subsequent Chair Processes?

Chapter 4 teaches the dissertation chair how to teach the online doctoral student how to write a literature review. Chapter 5 gives specific tips on how to break down the entire process into doable steps. Chapter 6 discusses how to write chapter 4 and 5 of a dissertation once the proposal has been approved, chapter 7 discusses how to conduct a successful dissertation orals for online students, and chapter 8 concludes with graduation and last minute processes required for the dissertation process to successfully climb the mountain.

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Chapter 4

Adding Limitations

Ina Von Ber

Once the dissertation student writes the dissertation basics in chapter 1 including a solid problem, purpose, and research questions, the theoretical framework explained, and the nature of the study described along with definitions, the online doctoral student should address the significance of the study and the limitations.

Every Study has Limitations

It is important to clarify to the reader what are the *limitations* of the dissertation study. The more limitations doctoral students identify the more solid the final research will be considered by other readers. Similar to the mountain climber Acknowledging the limitations of the unique mountain regarding difficulty means that the doctoral student has considered all major variables that can interfere with the validity of the study's results including variables that cannot be controlled. For example, what are the limitations of the study's sample? To what extent are the findings specific to a particular socio-cultural context? In what ways is the interpretation of the findings related to the study's theoretical assumptions? What insights into the phenomenon does the study seem to offer? What could readers learn from the results of the study?

Major Limitations Maturation

The first threat in a research study is maturation. During the course of the research, the subjects might experience biological changes and environmental changes. These changes could be aging, illness, death in the family, having to move or other issues that occur during periods while people are involved in research and affect the outcome and the performance. Dissertation students should summarize how maturation could affect the research study.

Testing

If the sample subjects are involved in pre and posttests the sample posses excellent memory, the sample might remember how they answered on the pre test and therefore prepare better on the posttest. The researcher should account for possible memory of the sample when interpreting the results.

Instrumentation

The ability of the tester to use the instrument and to interpret the results will have an impact on the reporting of the collected data. If the tester is very apt in administering the instrument and knows how to interpret the data gathered, the results will be more accurately reported than by a tester who is less trained in this area. A seasoned tester might have a better way of administering the instrument than a novice that will have an impact on the collection and interpretation of the data.

Statistical Regression

Extreme scores tend to regress toward the middle. Therefore, if researchers get extremely high or low scores, the researcher is more likely to eliminate them in order to control the internal validity.

Selection

The subjects who participate in your study might differ significantly from subjects who choose not to participate. Dissertation students might address the motivation and abilities of the sample. For example, subjects who learn foreign languages with ease, will be more likely to participate in a foreign language training program then subjects who have difficulties in that area.

Differential Mortality

Differential mortality refers to the drop out rate. Subjects who choose to drop out of your study might differ significantly from subjects who choose to continue. People who experience success or gain are more likely to continue than people who do not. If the dissertation student bases results on this population, the study must discuss the specific characteristics of the populations

Experimenter Bias

Experimenter bias implies that the experimenter will project his/her own values onto the study outcome or subjects in the study. Because of these expectations, the experimenter would treat subjects differently. So, if the dissertation student tells an experimenter that s/he will be testing subjects who's IQs are very high, he/she will treat subjects as if they are very intelligent.

Dissertation students should be careful when discussing the about the validity of the research study. Dissertation students should discuss the above limitations in order to cover the limitations of the results.

Controlling Threats to Internal Validity

Luckily, there are methods of controlling the threats to internal validity in a dissertation proposal. The most commonly methods are discussed below

1. **Random assignment** – everybody has a chance to be assigned to the experiment.
2. **Matching** – involves pairing up subjects and then administering the experiment.
3. **Blocking** – assigning subjects to pre-selected groups. Subjects who score very high or very low are then assigned to the same group.
4. **Holding an extraneous variable constant** – looking at a homogenous group

Interaction between Selection and Treatment

Of course people who volunteer for the dissertation study will be different from people in the general population. There is also going to be interaction between history and treatment. For example, if people saw a movie about cultural sensitivity the day before you tested them on their knowledge about cultural sensitivity, thee ability to recognize cues in the test will be heightened. The results will not be due to the training program you developed addressing cultural sensitivity, instead of watching the movie on the topic.

Interaction between Testing and Treatment

If a pretest is used, many subjects might become sensitized to the topic. If a pretest is repeated, the sensitivity might be heightened and show up in the results.

Interaction between History and Treatment

Some facts cannot be generalized beyond setting and time. What was valid in the 1930's, if conducted today, would not have the same validity. Just remember this as an example.

Demand Characteristics

Demand characteristics are cues in the environment that allow subjects to guess the hypothesis. If the subject knows that the dissertation student is looking for symptoms of depression, the subjects might respond in a depressed way in order to meet expectations.

Hawthorne Effect

The Hawthorne effect is named after the famous Hawthorne Factory Studies in factories. The original studies were concerned with the effects of illumination and improved working conditions on performance of factory workers. What researchers found was that just because workers knew that they were being observed, workers performed better. Translated to in a dissertation study, just because subjects agree to participate and know the researcher is are observing them, their performance might improve.

Order Effects

Order effects are also known as carryover effects. Subjects are exposed to three different levels of treatment (A, B & C). Treatment C might turn out to be the most effective, more effective than treatment A and B. This could be because C followed A and B, and the subjects learned from A and B.

Random Selection

Discussed in an earlier section, allows each member to have a chance to be selected for the experiment.

Naturalistic Research

This allows the subject or action to unfold without interference. The observation is what is recorded. Naturalistic research allows an increase in external validity.

Single-Double Bind Study

The researcher does not know who the subjects are and the subjects to not know which group they have been assigned to. For example, subjects do not know if they get the treatment or the placebo and the researcher does not know which subjects received the treatment or the placebo.

Counterbalancing

Counterbalancing controls for order effects. Different subjects in the same group receive the treatment in different order. This means, subject #1 in group #1 receives treatment A, B & C, subject #2 in group #1 receives treatment B, C & A and subject #3 in group #1 gets B, A & C. Therefore, no order effects can occur.

Latin Square Design

Latin Square design is a special type of counterbalancing. This specific type of counterbalancing design calls for ordering of administration of treatment in such a way that each treatment appears only once in every position. Therefore, treatment A, B & C appear only one time in the first, second and third place in the same group.

Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the replication, consistency, stability and accuracy of the dissertation study's form of measurement. Do not confuse reliability with external validity. External validity concentrates on the ability to generalize or representative ness of the study findings. The question there is, to what extent is the findings generalize- able to the population within known limits of the sample error; it is a very subtle distinction but one that dissertation students should be familiar with.

After the dissertation student has listed the limitations of the research study, the student, should reiterate the strengths and address further research the study stimulated. Dissertation students can state that a carefully designed and standardized research instrument and research method were implemented, and conclude by pointing out as many strengths of the study design as possible The limitation section should naturally lead into recommendation for further research.

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Chapter 5

Reading Literature Theories – Enabling Dissertation Students to Learn about Climbing Gear

Brent Muirhead

The Challenge of Doctoral Dissertations

The doctoral dissertation is one of the most intense academic experiences that individuals encounter in their lives. One of the tragic interpersonal moments in the academic community is when individuals share that they were not able to complete their dissertation. The initial ABD –All But Dissertation that signifies this academic state is a reminder of the difficult journey to earn the coveted doctoral degree. Curran-Downey (1998) related "being in graduate school and making it all the way through the classes, the exams and the defense of the dissertation is ---take your pick--- marathon, wasteland, jungle, rat race" (para 6). The high attrition rate for students in American doctoral programs is a dark aspect of doctoral education that continues to plague the higher education community. It reflects a degree of failure at the institutional level to assist talented individuals in what is often considered the ultimate academic challenge and represents a tremendous waste of human resources that often undermines career plans.

An important step in developing a research plan is facing the fears associated with writing. A major issue for some students is a negative mindset concerning research writing. Some view the dissertation project as a near impossible task because they doubt their abilities and are fearful of having their proposal rejected. Severe emotional turmoil may diminish a student's ability to work through the more difficult phases of his dissertation. It can halt the writing process and some individuals are tempted to abandon their degree program. Jensen (2005, para 5) encourages a student to identify when what she calls the Inner Critic is attacking by being alert to three negative signs:

1. **Mental signs**: self-criticism, procrastination, excessive worry, negative thoughts about your options, black and white thinking, confusion, feeling stuck.
2. **Emotional signs**: loss of motivation, discouragement, feelings of failure, depression, low self-esteem, fear, feeling powerless.
3. **Physical signs:** lack of energy, fatigue, sickness or injury.

It is crucial to implement strategies to overcome mental or psychological barriers to keep the dissertation process moving steadily forward towards completion. The key is to be proactive, dedicated, and create a realistic study plan that breaks the dissertation into manageable parts. Maxwell (1999) recommends measuring personal commitment by examining how much time and energy is devoted to research and writing. A good question to ask yourself, do your daily activities support your goals? The next step is to affirm that certain goals are worth great personal sacrifices. Morris (1994, p. 286) developed seven principles of success that help individuals to formulate goals for their personal and professional lives.

1. We need a clear **conception** of what we want, a vivid vision, a goal or set of goals powerfully imagined.
2. We need a strong **confidence** that we can attain our goals.
3. We need a focused **concentration** on what it takes to reach our goal.
4. We need a stubborn **consistency** in pursuing our vision, a determined persistence in thought and action.
5. We need emotional **commitment** to the importance of what we're doing, and to the people with whom we're doing it.
6. We need a good **character** to guide us and keep us on a proper course.
7. We need a **capacity** to enjoy the process along the way.

Research Skills

Tremendous expansion of electronic information resources has exponentially increased research opportunities. This fact makes it important that students are properly prepared to use the new technologies. Hart (1998, p. 5) has identified two basic types of skills required for researchers:

1. **Core skills and abilities**- while the differences make subject disciplines distinctive, there exists a common core of skills and attitudes which all researchers should possess and should be able to apply in

different situations with different topics and problems.

2. Ability to integrate theory and method- research for all disciplines involves an understanding of the interrelationship between theory, method and research design, practical skills and particular methods, the knowledge base of the subject and methodological foundations (Hart, 1998, p. 5).

Graduate degree programs are an excellent place to develop and refine research skills. Hart (1998) states, "it is important that research education and training does produce researchers who are competent and confident in a range of skills and capabilities and who have an appropriate knowledge base" (p. 6). Students create projects that demand having effective skills in conducting a literature review, developing a research design, writing and presenting their study. Therefore, it is vital that students must have a sound knowledge of the entire research process to produce research that demonstrates quality work.

The concept of scholarship should include competent investigations and it should transcend multiple activities while involving a diversity of skills and activities. The process requires knowing how use one's imagination and creativity to read and interpret arguments, organize ideas, make connections between academic disciplines and effectively write and present ideas. The scholar must maintain a mindset that is open to new and innovative research methods and they should be willing to experiment with information and ideas. The skill of integration is a vital element in scholarly work. According to Hart (1998), "integration is about making connections between ideas, theories, and experience. It is about applying a method or methodology from one area to another; about placing some episode into a larger theoretical framework, thereby providing a new way of looking at the phenomenon" (p. 8). Integration demands individuals be systematic and reflective in their investigation endeavors. It requires being patient while re-examining and interpreting knowledge and being open to new perspectives on existing theories.

Dissertation students should develop a research plan that helps them focus on developing skills that foster integration in their work. They should realize this might take time and substantial effort. It is encouraging to realize that studies on those who are associated with being a genius reported that they were very hard working individuals. Howe (1999) observes, “like ordinary men and women, major authors have had to invest large amounts of time and effort in order to become unusually skilled. Their heavy dependence on training and preparation is one of the many aspects of the human experience that creative geniuses share with other people.” (p. 175)

The Literature Review Process

Reviews vary greatly in the scope and depth of material examined. The selection of study topic is a key factor and students should avoid selecting topics that transcend the requirements of their degree programs. A primary reason for studying the literature is to demonstrate familiarity with research in the field and establish credibility for the individual's current investigation. The literature review should reflectively build upon the work conducted by other researchers who are part of a larger intellectual community (Neuman, 1997).

A metaphor that helps drive home the importance of the literature review process is a good horse without a harness. The horse symbolizes the problem, but without a solid harness the horse cannot pull the weight of the carriage. A literature review that is well designed and thorough gives the problem weight. Everything that has been done before is pulled with the problem and the researcher makes it clear that despite the heavy carriage of literature, the horse can accomplish the task because the harness is strong. The harness is a solid literature review.

The dissertation committee expects students to produce literature reviews that uphold high academic standards. Neuman (1997, p. 89) described four major literature review objectives:

1. **To demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility**. A review tells a reader that the researcher knows the research in an area and knows the major issues. A good review increases the reader's confidence in the researcher's professional competence, ability, and background.

2. **To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked to it**. A review outlines the direction of research on a question and shows the development of knowledge. A good review places a research project in a context and demonstrates its relevance by making connections to a body of knowledge.

3. **To integrate and summarize what is known in an area**. A review pulls together and synthesizes different results. A good review points out areas where prior studies agree, where they disagree, and where major questions remain. It collects what is known up to a point in time and indicates the direction for future research.

4. **To learn from others and stimulate new ideas**. A review tells what others have found so that a researcher can benefit from the efforts of others. A good review identifies blind alleys and suggests hypotheses for replication. It divulges procedures, techniques, and research designs worth copying so that a researcher can better focus hypotheses and gain new insights.

The literature review helps the student to understand the historical context of their subject while focusing on current research efforts (Hart, 1998). Literature reviews offers opportunities for students for learning how to identify areas of concern and it increases their awareness of any neglected issues.

Literature reviews can stimulate student to make changes to their topic choice because, during the literature review process, individuals sometimes discover a more important topic to address in their doctoral research. Also, the literature review can help a student to develop a framework for his own study by noting what others have done with their particular research design such as the data-collection techniques. Reading the literature provides an overview of the major theories and ideas that guided previous researchers. Students must have a good working knowledge of the key concepts in their field of study to develop an appropriate vocabulary and database for writing and communication of ideas (Hart, 1998).

Literature reviews should cover the material related to the research problem. The wise researcher will conduct a review including the following sequential steps:

1. Analyze the problem statement.
2. Search and read secondary literature.
3. Select the appropriate index for a reference service or database.
4. Transform the problem statement into search language.
5. Conduct a manual and/or computer search.
6. Read the pertinent primary literature.
7. Organize notes.
8. Write the review (Introduction to educational research, 2003, p. 73).

Students must systematically investigate the literature and cover both electronic and print sources of information. One part of the plan should contain a basic record keeping system that will help organize work accomplished to develop leads for future research and avoid loosing valuable data. For instance, students can save links to Internet articles as favorites or bookmarks in their web browser. This makes it much easier to locate the article for future use. Students can improve their ability to recall important ideas and concepts by creating a basic set of questions prior to reading an article (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 1998).

A review of the literature requires a systematic analysis and appraisal of each research article. Begin the process by creating a descriptive summary of the study. Next, analyze the article to understand the author's purpose and decisions. Hart (1998) notes "you are aiming to make explicit the nature of the connections between the methodology choices an author has made and the data they have collected through to the interpretations they have made of their data" (p. 56).

Identify the style and structure of the author's reasoning. Explore issues such as methodological assumptions, aims, and purposes of the research and evidence presented. The critical analysis of articles is one of the more demanding aspects of the literature review but it helps the student discern the quality of work produced within the field (Hart, 1998).

Students should strive to demonstrate their careful and reflective investigation of research studies and vital information resources. Their discussion should reflect a vivid awareness of theories and arguments and acknowledge both their strengths and weaknesses. A balanced review will affirm the usefulness and merits of a theory and at the same time explore areas that need improvement. Research criticism must be based on understandable arguments that identify inadequate or flawed evidence or reasoning. Students may be able to use aspects of different writers work to develop their own synthesis of ideas and offer new perspectives on their subject matter.

The following criteria are useful to evaluate information (Lawlor & Gorham, 2004, p.17):

1. Authority—who is the author of the material?
2. Date of publication—when was the information published?
3. Type of publication—is the material published in an academic article, a newspaper or a textbook?
4. Relevance of content—how relevant is the material to your research?
5. Hypotheses/Purpose—what led the author(s) to their hypotheses? What is overall purpose?
6. Methods employed—what methods were utilized by the author(s) and why?
7. Results—what results were obtained?
8. Support for hypotheses—were hypotheses supported?
9. Conclusions/Recommendations—what were the author(s) conclusions/recommendations?
10. References—does the author provide a detailed list of references/bibliography?
11. Cited or reviewed—has the article, book or website been cited or referred to by other authors?

Literature reviews require patience and diligence to carefully select and examine research studies. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) highlight seven common mistakes that people can make during the review process:

1. Does not clearly relate the findings of the literature review to the researcher's own study.
2. Does not take sufficient time to define the best descriptors and identify the best sources to use in reviewing the literature related to one's topic.
3. Relies on secondary sources rather than on primary sources in reviewing the literature.
4. Uncritically accepts another researcher's findings and interpretations as valid, rather than examining critically all aspects of the research design and analysis.
5. Does not report the search procedures that were used in the literature review.
6. Reports isolated statistical results rather than synthesizing them by chi-square or meta-analysis methods.
7. Does not consider contrary findings and alternative interpretations in synthesizing qualitative literature (pp. 161-162).

Dissertation students sometimes err in their approach to studying the literature by striving to read everything that is remotely related to their topic. The result is to waste time on trivial articles and materials. A good literature review will focus on the most important and relevant documents. Students can spend so much time reading that they fail to write about their project. People tend to choose reading over writing because it is less demanding than writing. The writing process is another way to reflect upon ideas and foster a better understanding of information relationships (Language Center, 2004).

Literature reviews build upon established knowledge. Researchers read other studies to glean insights from the academic community that provide direction for their own work by noting any gaps or weaknesses in previous investigations. Contemporary literature reviews can be quite diverse in their scope and depth of knowledge due to the intent of the reviewer. Dissertation reviews must transcend being merely familiar with the material. The literature review is a scholarly essay that establishes credibility for the entire research project. Therefore, it is vital to create a specific review focus that offers the best perspectives on significant studies related to the research problem. Neuman (1997, p. 90) highlights six review types:

1. Self-study reviews increase the reader’s confidence.
2. Context reviews place a specific project in the big picture.
3. Historical reviews trace the development of an issue over time.
4. Theoretical reviews compare how different theories address an issue.
5. Methodological reviews point out how methodology varies by study.
6. Integrative reviews summarize what is known at a point in time.

The six review types reflect different approaches and research goals in the literature review process. Self-studies are considered to be personal investigations and lack the depth of coverage of a formal review. Students must devote adequate time to studying primary and secondary sources to avoid missing significant information related to their research problem. It is wise to be patient and open-minded when evaluating the material to avoid hasty interpretations or generalizations about previous studies. The authors encourage students to use the following literature review checklist to improve the quality of their work:

1. Show a clear understanding of the topic
2. Cite and discuss all key landmark studies
3. Develops, through gradual refinement, a clear research problem
4. States clear conclusions about previous research using appropriate evidence
5. Shows the variety of definitions and approaches to the topic area
6. Reaches sound recommendations using coherent argument that is based on evidence
7. Shows a gap in existing knowledge
8. (Hart, 1998, p.198)

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Chapter 6

Breaking Down the Steps – Teaching Online Doctoral Students to Slow Down –Walking Up the Dissertation Mountain Step by-Step

Kimberly Blum

Introduction – Teach Students to Slow Down

The mountain of fear of the dissertation process is a huge barrier for doctoral students. The mountain of the dissertation can cause an otherwise highly intelligent student who has earned full credit for all doctoral classes to run. Sometimes the student runs the other direction and quits the doctoral program becoming *an all but dissertation* for the rest of the student's life. Another student reaction to the dissertation mountain is to attempt to complete the entire dissertation at a full-fledged run up the mountain. Similar to attempting to run up an entire mountain, attempting to write an entire dissertation in a short time frame results in failure.

Writing the proposal is the first step to succeeding at scaling the dissertation mountain, previous chapters in this book addressed how to write chapters 1, 2, and 3. The success subsequent chapter depends on the clarity and content of previous chapters, and the learner should work on each section at a time. For example, chapter 3 includes some of the exact statements found in chapter 1; so the development of chapter 1 is the first step. Chapter 4 will have many of the literature findings as supporting citations found in chapter 2. Writing successful proposals takes time and reflection. Students try to write the entire proposal quickly and tend to get frustrated when the proposal is not approved in a short time frame and no clear 1-10 plan of what to do next. The plan depends on the problem, access to data, and the design, and good chairs work hard to slow the students down to reflect on the steps needed for success.

Editing and Reflecting – Resting at Switchbacks

Similar to the manner a hiker rests while climbing, a dissertation learner should rest for short time periods when writing and editing the dissertation in order to reflect and make changes to increase clarity for the reader. The key is to rest for short time periods, because if the learner rests for a long time period, similar to cramps the hiker may experience when starting back up the mountain after too long of a rest, the dissertation student has trouble starting the dissertation climb again. Resting for short time periods and starting again refreshed often results in the student finding errors in content, grammar, formatting, and APA; errors in any error causes a rejected proposal. Non-stop writing causes student burnout, ABD's, and an inability to see writing errors.

Using Committee Feedback – Talk to Climbers Coming Down the Mountain

By the time the chair has edited the proposal and has deemed that, the proposal meets the university's checklist of proposal requirements; the average chair has the entire document memorized and finds it difficult to see any additional errors to edit. When the proposal is the stage where the mentor cannot find any more errors, the committee suggestions are invaluable. Similar to the climber who is trying to make his or her way up the mountain, gathering information from climbers who have already been to the top helps the learner keep going, gives time for reflection, and valuable inputs to make the dissertation better with more chances for success.

Chairs should help learners find good committee members that possess the skills needed to succeed the dissertation mountain climb. For example, if the chair has strong qualitative skills but does not have a great deal of leadership background, and the learner is working on a qualitative leadership subject dissertation, asking a committee member to join the committee with strong leadership knowledge would round out the skills needed for learner success. Another committee member with both leadership and qualitative experience would add considerable value to the team. Learners often select committee members based on nothing but exposure to meeting the faculty member in a class; directing students about how to select committee members results in the creation of a better team with skills needed by the learner to succeed. Teaching the learner about the reasons why committee selection is critical can overcome the selection of a team that does not have the skills needed by the learner.

A good committee member will check the content, design, APA, and transitions in the proposal. A

committee member who returns the proposal with nothing more than a “good job” or “excellent work” has not helped the learner improve the dissertation nor has the committee member worked as a team to help the learner succeed. Some chairs recommend the student find new committee members at this early stage to avoid problems with failure to provide good suggestions with the final dissertation.

A good practice is to have a meeting on the phone or using emails and tell the committee what to expect from the learner; the chair should inform the committee what to expect from the learner and at what points in time. For example, the chair in this article sends an email to the selected committee members, informing the committee feedback is needed when the chair approves the problem, purpose, and research questions/hypotheses as ready for committee suggestions, chapter 1 is ready for comments and editing, chapter 1, 2, & 3 and a change chart incorporating all committee suggestions into chapter 1 and 3, and one more time for a final signature with additional committee suggestions on the entire dissertation proposal with a change chart reminding the committee of each suggestion (see below). The final dissertation is sent to the committee for one more round of suggestions, and re-sent after revisions for final committee signatures and to schedule the learner’s Dissertation Orals.

One of the author’s of this book teaches new committee member and chairs how to give appropriate feedback to students in proposals. All the training in the world on research does not give new committee members and chairs how to provide effective feedback that is useful but not devastating to the learner. Feedback must be honest but the chair must remember the reader is a human being, and personal experience of articles and lectures edited and ripped into shreds lent insight into how the dissertation student must feel. A good chair must help the committee by modeling examples of good notes to send to the dissertation student and praises to add in the dissertation proposal.

Even if one has to search hard for a good section to praise, including this in the feedback is critical to the student to give the learner incentive to continue up the dissertation mountain. Similar to a real story where one of the author’s was encouraged a son to keep walking up the Grand Canyon by standing behind him stating, “think food, right foot, left foot, look up there is the restaurant on the top -- you can do this,” the dissertation chair must respond to the entire team with encouragement, thanks, and instructions to the student on how to implement committee suggestions.

Revisions and Tenacity – One-step up, Two steps sliding Back in Snow or Shale

When a proposal is returned by the committee members with suggestions and comments, the chair should prepare the learner for the comments, sharing the philosophy that additional edits are helpful to improve the dissertation, the work is being edited, not the student. Preparing the learner for reading edited work is critical; it is very hard to read edits on work that has become personal to the learner. Similar to the mountain climber who is struggling up a mountain in snow or shale, one step up often results in the climber taking two steps back because of the slippery content of the shale or snow. Tenacity and dedication is required to climb though slippery sections as well as frequent stops to rest. Chair support and knowledge of the process reduces some of the personal responses to committee edits that by necessity, have very little praises interspersed throughout the proposal; successful committee edits are designed to help the learner’s dissertation pass and must be to the point with the areas that need refined.

Dr. Carolyn Salerno has been a successful mentor and chair for over a decade working with online doctoral students. Dr. Salerno lists are a few personal roadblock challenges that may serve as to make the dissertation student journey up the dissertation mountain less stressful.

1. Encourage the dissertation student to expect an iterative process. I know that some doctoral candidates expect that a final of chapter 1 can be ready to go before they write chapter 2 and chapter 3. However, I have not found this to be the case, since they may write something in chapter 3 that they forgot to mention in chapter 1.
2. Encourage the dissertation student to address all recommendations and edits of their committee members, whether it is large or small. When the final three draft chapters arrive for my review and I make suggestions for changes and edits, after spending a few hours reading and tracking for APA edits, and the mentor invites the dissertation student to ignore the recommendations or the mentee ignores my edits.
3. Encourage the dissertation student to be respectful their committee members' time when substantial feedback is requested. When I receive a request to review a draft chapter, and a new revised draft of the same chapter arrives the next morning while I am still editing the first draft, I get a little anxious. On the other hand, I make recommendations and edits to a revised three chapters and the revised three chapters arrive a second time without addressing the recommendations and edits. I think that this concern may be due to the mislabeling of the versions in a logical manner.

4. Encourage the dissertation student to be patient with the committee member's time limits and send reminder messages. It is possible that the chapters did not arrive to the mail box because; (a) he size limits of the BOLD, (b) the committee members did not receive access to the newsgroup, (c) the mentee did not receive the feedback that was sent, and/or (d) the version sent was the same as the previous version (C. Salerno, personal communication, 2005).

One technique of implementing dissertation committee suggestions that is subsequently useful to remind the committee of the changes suggested later (faculty are often on multiple committees and a reminder is helpful) is providing an example of a change chart to include with the next revision. Below is one example of a change chart that helps guide the dissertation proposal revisions. The change template gives the committee a quick glance of the page numbers the requested change was made and by whom.

Change Requested by Whom: Dr. Smith	Change Made	Page Number
The abbreviation for the United States is incorrectly used (US) and should be corrected in all locations. The Abstract is the first location.	DONE	iii
Spacing between words is not consistent and should be corrected. Examples can b found in the Abstract, "…study of New England, …" on page 11, "Wrigley (2002)…" on page 33, ",,,"a conglomerate,,," ad on page 78 "….Ferris et al,. 1996;)".	DONE	p. iii, 12, 33, 78
Slang, jargon, and other conversational words and expressions should be identified and revised to be more specific and ultimately increasing the academic tone of the study. One such example is located in the Abstract: " A key result of this study is that women remain divided and neither needs direction nor blames nor sides with either gender, but presents a stronger and gender blind future." Additionally it is not clear what is meant by "key result," perhaps the result was essential or significant	Changed said to found, changed he to the author's last name, and changed key result to a full subject of what results.	p.iii, p. 3, 22

Proposal Rejected – Now what?

In spite of the committee and chairs best efforts, the university's reviewing board can reject dissertation proposal. Good chairs prepare the student for possible rejection and teach the student to concentrate on making only the required changes and leaving any item not requested for changes as is. Chairs should work quickly and with quality with the learner, providing timely editing when revisions are completed, and requiring a change chart and cover letter to send back to the reviewing board for re-consideration. Rejections of proposals are not personal, the dissertation chair should stress that every time the dissertation is read establishes another opportunity for editing to improve the dissertation. Similar to the climber who always makes it half-way up the mountain but has trouble breathing because of altitude sickness and must go back down the mountain, but keeps trying to reach the peak in later climbs, the dissertation learner must re-group, re-train, and re-try again!

After Proposal Approval – half-way stop for rest, ropes, and crampons.

Once the university's Internal Reviewing Board (IRB) has approved the student's proposal, the learner should take a few days to rest and celebrate. Some learners submit the proposal more than once to the IRB for final approval; approval can take months or even years so it is important for the chair to recognize the learner's achievement and encourage the learner to celebrate and rest a few days to recognize a major achievement in the dissertation mountain!

Chapter 7

Gathering Data and Writing Chapter 4 and 5 – Working with Ropes and Teams

Kimberly Blum

Introduction

After university approval of the dissertation proposal, the dissertation learner naturally celebrates because the proposal approval is a huge milestone in the dissertation mountain but the chair should not let the celebration continue for more than a few days before pushing learner to keep walking up the dissertation mountain. The dissertation student *is closer* to the top of the mountain ***but*** the slope is steeper. Similar to the mountain climber who needs a team of fellow climbers, crampons (spikes strapped to the bottom of hiking boots to grab snow), and ropes to keep the climber from falling back down the mountain, dissertation students writing chapter 4 and 5 require specific help from the chair on how to gather and present data collected. The following sections outline sections of chapter 4 and 5 the chair must guide the dissertation student to write.

Chapter 4 Overall Guidelines

Chapter 4 presents the research findings (Blum, Edwards, Goes, Morelli, Salerno & Simon, 2005). Chapter 4 opens with an introduction to the content. All statements in chapter 4 are supported by the results of the data (Blum, et. al). Write chapter 4 in scholarly language (accurate, balanced, objective, and tentative). The writing is clear, precise, and avoids redundancy and hyperbole. Statements are specific and topical sentences established for paragraphs. The flow of words is smooth and comprehensible and bridges established between ideas.

Chapter 4: Collecting Data

Chapter 4 presents the research findings (Blum, Edwards, Goes, Morelli, Salerno & Simon, 2005). All statements in chapter 4 support the results of the data (Blum, et. al). Collecting data should be the *fun part* of the dissertation mountain to the learner, the dissertation student should share results with the chair in an excited manner during the data collection process; if this does not occur something is drastically wrong and the chair should ask questions to determine the reason. For example, one of the dissertation students of the author of this chapter was not sharing stories of new patterns found in primary data not discovered in literature. When the chair asked about new patterns, the chair discovered the dissertation student was struggling with the qualitative analysis software program and had yet to find new patters; the chair promptly called the student and helped the student overcome technical barriers to learn the software. The student proceeded to find very significant patterns on leadership placement practices that literature did not find; foster care leaders were assigning mental health services consisting of one psychologist for foster children labeled as behavioral problematic who were addressing 9 out of 10 of the problems by giving foster children psychiatrics drugs instead of the full range of mental health services (Berry, 2005). Foster children without behavioral problems had a full range of mental health services instead of just one psychologist and leadership placement practices did not include prescribing drugs (Berry). When the student discovered this significant pattern, excitement was very clear in the learner's voice and should be part of gathering data for chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Data Collection Methods – General

Data collection methods depend on the design (Creswell, 2004). Qualitative methods may or may not have primary data (Yin, 2004). For example, a historical case study cannot employ interviews of deceased individuals; a content analysis of archival files or published case studies or decades of literature would be the possible ways to gather data in historical designs.

Qualitative Designs

Qualitative data collection gathers data in the form of interviews or observations as well as analyzing archival files (Creswell, 2004). Triangulation of results with different sources to compare patterns for similarities and differences increases reliability (Simon & Francis, 2004).

Qualitative methods typically use content analysis, searching for patterns and general themes in the data (Yin, 1991). Stacking copies of the data in each category or making cards was a typically historical manner for analyzing patterns; new software such as QSR or Atlas allows the dissertation learner to input transcribed or electronic data into the program and discover patterns in the data itself, reducing the chance for researcher bias.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation - Qualitative Designs

Organization of Qualitative data is around the unit of analysis, themes, constructs, patterns, meanings, systems, codes, and periods. Chapter 4 described the process by which the data generated, gathered, and recorded is clearly described. Give an account of the number of documents, interviews, and sources analyzed, and explain the parameters, and the units of measurement. Chapter 4 also describes the systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings (research logs, reflective journals, cataloging systems) (Blum, et. al, 2005).

Qualitative findings build logically from the problem and the research design, and presented in a manner that addresses the research questions. Discrepant cases and nonconforming data are included in the findings. Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings supported by the data. Accounting for all salient data are is included in the findings. Counts and modes for all patterns is presented as well as tables and narrative format, organizing themes using the initial parameters, new patterns, and unit of measurement. Data in qualitative designs should be narrated in tables and figures with an Appendix created for large tables or raw data. Quotes from participants or sources to back up the patterns should be included as key points (i.e. vital and crucial element) (Blum, et.al, 2005).

A discussion on evidence of quality shows how this study, followed procedures to assure accuracy of the data (e.g., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation, etc.). Appropriate evidence occurs in the appendixes (sample transcripts, researcher logs, field notes, etc.) Some of chapter 4 may also appear in chapter 5 to support conclusions (Blum, et. al, 2005**)**.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation - Quantitative Designs

Quantitative findings in chapter 4 are structured around the research questions and/or hypotheses addressed in the study, reporting findings related to each. Chapter 4 presents assurance that data collection instruments, measures obtained, and standard procedures for each measurement. Adjustments or revisions on the use of standardized research instruments are justified, including a description of any effects on the interpretation of findings (Blum, et. al, 2005). Data presentation is consistent with the research questions or hypotheses, and the underlying theoretical conceptual framework of the study.

Where appropriate, outcomes of hypothesis-testing procedures report clear findings (e.g., findings support or fail to support....) and, do not contain any evident statistical errors. Tables and Figures are as self-descriptive as possible, informative, and conform to standard dissertation format, are directly related to and referred to within the narrative text included in the chapter, have immediately adjacent comments, and are properly identified (titled or captioned) (Blum, et. al, 2005).

An example of a table for a quantitative chapter 4 is below.

Table 7

***Company A: Training Conditions and Self-Efficac*y,**

Re-printed with permission (Yokoobian, 2005)

Training condition	N	Mean change in self-efficacy	Confidence interval 95%
Personal training	8	1.13	-1.82 / 4.07
Team learning training	8	1.75	1.53 / 5.03
No-training control	8	-2.75	-6.40 / 0.90

Comments on findings address observed consistencies, inconsistencies, and possible alternative interpretations. Discussion includes any surprises in relationship to the theoretical framework, limitations, and assumptions. Chapter 4 presents the outliners – data that does not fit well into categories or patterns that distorts the data, and the readers explained how such instances were treated (Blum, et. al).

Chapter 4 includes a statement of copyright permission if any instruments or tables are not in the public domain. Finally, chapter 4 concludes by logically and systematically summarizing in relation to importance the research questions and hypothesis and a transition to chapter 5 presented (Blum, et. al). Below is a detailed checklist to use as a guide for chapter 4.

Dissertation Checklist for Chapter 4

Qualitative Designs

Checklist	Covered?
Is there a transition from Chapter Three as part of the introductory paragraph (no section title).	
Does the introductory paragraph have an Explanation of what Chapter Four will cover?	
Are Research questions listed as a separate section and match Chapter One and Three?	
Is there a section explaining how the researcher coded and checked for quality of the data results? How did the researcher make sure the results were valid?	
Is there a section explaining how the size and characteristics of the sample included and how the sample was chosen?	
Is there an explanation of the Data Analysis *Procedure* in a separate section covering the process of how the data was gathered, analyzed, and recorded clear and detailed?	
Is the system for cataloging data clearly described with its meanings? For example, how was QSR software used to categorize initial themes? By what means was data sorted into patterns?	
Was an explanation of the unit of measurement, and initial data parameters included? Units of measurement for qualitative studies example are analyzing files for *Leadership Foster Care Placement Decisions – the unit of measurement*. Parameters are the *initial data categories* based on what literature indicates are major themes such as mental health visits per year (parameter one), number of foster care home moves (parameter two), and visits with biological families (parameter three). Files were divided up into children who had no reported problems compared to those who had many problems.	
Was an explanation of how data was triangulated included?	
Were specifics and on how many articles and documents, with specific numbers listed that were reviewed noted?	
Was raw data displayed in an organized manner?, For example, if this is a qualitative study with a content analysis, themes or patterns shown in a table format with columns for each pattern, either in the dissertation or if the table is huge, attached in an Appendix.	
Is there a Data Analysis and Results section clearly reporting on the ***results and findings*** generated by the analyses of data and reported without editorial comment in an organized manner?	
As much as possible are graphical methods presented to make the data results easier for the reader to understand?	
Are figures and charts correctly labeled following APA formatting (this is a most common mistake)? If copyrighted tables are used, is copyright permission shown?	
Is every statement made in Chapter 4 directly supported by the results of the data analysis? No statement should be made in chapter 4 that is not directly supported by the results of the data analysis.	

Are there Section titles describing each of pattern or theme discovered?	
Is data grouped together, ranking information and structuring the information so that Chapter 5 can flows naturally from Chapter 4?	
Is the data presented in a logical manner, similar to a presentation for a board meeting presenting the research data and your analysis about what the data means comparing against major theories?	
Are described patterns supported by the data itself?	
Are results are compared with major theories in literature and similarities or differences described (but not analyzed, save this for Chapter Five).	
Were all literature and theories presented in Chapter 4 are covered in Chapter 2?	
Are new patterns or results not in literature very clearly highlighted in a separate section? This is the meat of the dissertation, the findings that are significant.	
Are contradictory results clearly described or graphically shown?	
Are non-confirming results included that do no fit any patterns?	
Are possible alternate interpretations presented?	
Is there a section explaining how results are were triangulated and validated?	
If a pilot study was included, is this described before the final study results, and are the results of the pilot compared with the results of the final study noting similarities and differences?	
Are the outcomes presented in the summary logically and systematically summarized and interpreted by their importance to the research questions?	
Does the summary section lead into Chapter 5?	

Quantitative Designs

Checklist	Covered?
Is there a transition from Chapter Three as part of the introductory paragraph (no section title).	
Does the introductory paragraph have an Explanation of what Chapter Four will cover?	
Are hypotheses included as a separate section and match Chapter Three?	
Were sections describing the independent, dependant, and moderating variables included?	
Is there a section explaining how the size and characteristics of the sample included and how the sample was determined?	
What data collection tools were implemented and were these implemented correctly?	

Is there an explanation of the Data Analysis *Procedure* in a separate section covering the process of how the data was gathered, analyzed, and recorded clear and detailed?	
Is there an explanation of how data was triangulated?	
Were specifics and on how many articles and documents, with specific numbers listed that were reviewed noted?	
Is there a Data Analysis and Results section clearly reporting on the ***results and findings*** generated by the analyses of data and reported without editorial comment in an organized manner.	
Do the reported findings ***all*** clearly relate to answering the research problem and hypotheses?	
As much as possible are graphical methods presented to make the data results easier for the reader to understand?	
Are figures and charts correctly labeled following APA formatting (this is a most common mistake)? If copyrighted tables are used, is copyright permission shown?	
Is every statement made in Chapter 4 directly supported by the results of the data analysis? No statement should be made in chapter 4 that is not directly supported by the results of the data analysis.	
Are section titles used to organize and ***show*** the results of ***each*** statistical test?	
Are data grouped together, ranking information and structuring the information so that Chapter 5 can flows naturally from Chapter 4?	
Are measures displayed following standard statistical reporting formats?	
Are any adjustments to standardized survey instruments discussed and explained?	
Is the data presented in a logical manner, similar to a presentation for a board meeting presenting the research data and your analysis about what the data means comparing against major theories?	
Do the results directly relate to the problem statement and the hypotheses addressing each hypothesis in Chapter Three?	
Are any statistical errors in evidence?	
Are results are compared with major theories in literature and similarities or differences described (but not analyzed, save this for Chapter Five).	
Were all literature and theories presented in Chapter 4 are covered in Chapter 2?	
Are new results not in literature very clearly highlighted in a separate section? This is the meat of the dissertation, the findings that are significant.	
Are contradictory results clearly described or graphically shown?	
Are possible alternate interpretations presented?	

Is there a section explaining how results are were triangulated and validated?	
If a pilot study was included to test a survey instrument, is this described?	
Are the outcomes presented in the summary logically and systematically summarized and interpreted by their importance to the hypotheses?	
Does the summary section lead into Chapter 5?	

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 begins with a paragraph that summarizes the following: (a) research problem, (b) purpose of research, (c) research methods, (d) limitations of the study (bring the limitations presented in Chapter 1 to Chapter 5), and (e) the organization of Chapter 5. APA note: This introductory paragraph does not require a separate heading.

Organize Chapter 5 into four discussion sections, depending on the research design: (a) the research study questions and the hypotheses, (b) the conclusions, (c) the implications of the findings, and (d) the future recommendations. Reflecting on each analysis and result concluded in chapter 4 (Blum, et.al, 2005).

Chapter 5 is where the dissertation student exhibits fine critical thinking; stating in his or her own voice what the findings presented in chapter four mean. The design is re-stated, and the major findings summarized and compared to literature – what findings were similar as found in literature and what did the study find regarding significant new results? Begin with a brief overview of why and how was the study done, reviewing the issues being addressed, and a brief summary of the findings presented in chapter 4 (Blum, et.al, 2005).

Chapter 5: Interpretation of Findings

The researcher presents conclusions that address all the research questions, containing references that addresses the outcomes of chapter 4, discussing all data findings, interoperates the findings, bounded by the evidence collected, and relates the findings to a larger body of literature on the topic including the conceptual theoretical framework.

Qualitative Studies Guideline for Chapter 5

1.	The process by which data were generated, gathered, and recorded is clearly described for the reader.
2.	The systems used for keeping track of data and emerging themes is described in detail.
3.	Results build from the problem and design and address research questions.
4.	Discrepant cases and nonconforming data are included in the study results.
5.	Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings are supported by the data. New themes are highlighted that are significant in the by counts and modes. All salient and outliner data are accounted for in the findings; unexpected outliner themes are discussed
6.	A discussion on followed procedures to assures the reader of accuracy of the data (e.g., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation, etc.). Appropriate evidence occurs in the appendixes (sample transcripts, researcher logs, field notes, etc.) (May appear in chapter 5). Secondary data sources are compared with at least two other sources for similar or dissimilar themes and discussed.

Quantitative designs logically and sequentially describe the findings of all hypothesis and discussed for failing to or supporting literature findings, and do not contain any evident statistical errors. If a clear picture did not emerge in the findings, chapter 5 discusses if the results indicate that the item was possibly poorly phrased or conceived, and if the limitations influenced the findings (Blum, et.al, 2005).

Tables and figures are self-descriptive as possible, informative, and confirm to standard dissertation format. All tables are directly related to and referred to within the narrative text included in chapter 5, have immediate adjacent comments, are properly identified (titled or captioned), and copyright permission is shown (Blum, et.al, 2005).

Chapter 5: Recommendations for Action

Chapter 5 recommendation for action flows logically from conclusions and contains steps to useful leadership action, stating who needs to pay attention to the results, provides recommendations for dissemination of results. Recommendations for further study describe topics that need closer examination and may generate a new round of research questions. Recommendations for policy makers and leaders are highlighted.

For qualitative studies, include a reflection on the researcher's experience with the research process with discussion on possible personal biases or preconceived ideas and values and the possible effects of the researcher on the participations or the situation. Reflections include how the researcher changed thinking because of the study. For example, if the researcher was surprised about one finding that contradicted literature studies; the researcher must present this conclusion. Finally, the findings must show a sense of urgency to leadership – who, why, and what would leaders care about the findings of your study of a practical nature?

A detailed checklist is below. Checklists are guidelines for dissertation student to write chapter 5.

Dissertation Checklist for Chapter 5

Checklist	Covered?
The chapter begins with a brief Overview of why and how the study was done, reviewing the questions or issues addressed, and a brief summary of the findings.	
The Interpretation of Findings includes conclusions that address all of the research questions, contains references to outcomes in chapter 4,covers all the data, is bounded by the evidence collected, and relates the findings to a larger body of literature on the topic, including the conceptual/theoretical framework.	
The Implications for Leadership Change are clearly grounded in the significance section of chapter 1 and outcomes presented in chapter 4.	
Clear evidence of the researcher's critical thinking analysis of the findings is evident; findings and literature are used as examples to back up key findings as noted by the researcher and highlighted in chapter 5.	
Recommendations for Action should flow logically from the conclusions and contain steps to useful action, state who needs to pay attention to the results, and indicate how the results might be disseminated.	
Recommendations for Further Study point to topics that need closer examination and may generate a new round of questions.	
For qualitative studies, chapter 5 includes a reflection on the researcher's experience with the research process that the researcher discusses possible personal biases or preconceived ideas and values, the possible effects of the researcher on the participants or the situation, and her/his changes in thinking because of the study.	
The work closes with a strong concluding statement making the *take-home message* clear to the reader. Major findings are highlighted that are not part of previous studies.	
The entire dissertation follows a standard APA form and has a professional and scholarly appearance. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are correct. Citations exist for the following: direct quotations, paraphrasing, facts, and references to research studies. There is no over-reliance on limited sources and 85% of all sources are more recent than 1999. The in text citations are found in the reference list.	

Major Mistakes on Dissertations

Dissertation chairs must help students understand that each checkpoint of edits, from the mentor to the Dean is an opportunity to improve the research study. Before submitting the final dissertation to the Dean after orals, the dissertation must be perfect. Check the entire dissertation for errors from content, grammar, and common errors causing dissertation rejections using this list as a guiding tool.

1. Font must be times or courier, size 12. Margins are one inch all the way around except for the left side – margins are 1.5 on the left for dissertations; entire document is double spaced, no header on the title page, and page numbers are "1" starting with the Introduction; preliminary pages start with I, ii, iii (lower case).
2. Title page must be perfect, and signature page correct using the format in www.bold-ed.com; all preliminary pages must be included.
3. Final dissertations include the abstract; the abstract is critical for readers with key words.
4. Abstracts have the problem, design, and the major results and implications for readers, 350 words for a dissertation – write the abstract last.
5. Chapter 1 starts with a formal Introduction, all in CAPS
6. Most dissertations use all five levels of titles; see APA page 113 for examples.
7. Proposals use future tense when talking about your study; all other studies have already been done, so use past tense.
8. When the proposal is approved, all tense is changed to past tense for the dissertation.
9. Methodology in Chapter 1, all sections, must match methodology in Chapter 3, 4, 5. For example the purpose statement must be stated the same in the entire document.
10. Include a methodology map as an appendix and any long tables.
11. Chapter 2 must thoroughly cover historical, current, and gaps related to each variable in the problem statement – 100 sources are not enough, a range of 250-400 is more acceptable for doctoral level dissertations. Make sure all theories relate to the problem; avoid covering areas that have nothing to do with your problem.
12. Chapter 3 is an outline of how you will accomplish the study, why you choose the design you did (backed up by sources), why the opposite design will not work, what variables, or initial categories to analyze data, how you will gather the data and from whom, sample size, how you will analyze the data, and present the data, with a conclusion. Chapter 3 is a longer version of the Nature of the Study with more details.
13. Start with the purpose of Chapter 4, explain what Chapter 3 talked about, and then transition into what Chapter 4 will discuss.
14. If you are using a qualitative method; Chapter 4 must have quotes from the sample to after the main patterns are described and always have a table of the patterns found with counts. Use the Appendix for long tables. Compare patterns with literature, one or two lines for each major pattern – does literature state the same?
15. Chapter 4 for a quantitative version must have properly labeled figures after each narrative for every variable.
16. Independent and dependence variables are defined in a separate section at the beginning for the reader.
17. The statistical hypothesis should be re-stated at the beginning for the reader
18. Pilot studies to test the survey should be at the beginning and the validation process fully explained.
19. Figures must follow APA and avoid vertical lines as much as possible (see APA).
20. Tables and figures must be labeled and including in the list of Tables and Figures in the preliminary pages.
21. Narrative of what the figures and charts actually represent and MEAN to the reader should be included. Avoid back-to-back charts with no explanations.
22. Chapter 4 must include a summary of presentation of findings with no new information and a conclusion leading into Chapter 5.
23. Chapter 5 should start with the purpose, what Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, covered and what Chapter 5 will discuss.
24. Chapter 5 must not be written such as "the researcher believes" instead "the results indicated … " Stress what is a new pattern or test results that is significant and new, not found in literature.
25. Chapter 5 should stress what NEW findings you found, what was in the data that not reported before OR did your findings replicate other studies – who cares, why is this significant to leaders?

26. Chapter 5 must include recommendations for practice – so who cares and how can others use your significant findings?

27. Lead into paragraphs with a transition you wrote – an example is *highlighted in italics*. For instance, one could declare about current findings on a variable: *Recent literature findings indicate the glass ceiling is reducing for women in higher education*. For example, Smith (2004) found (paraphrase).

28. Search for it, they, their, these, this. Replace all with a defined ***subject.*** For example instead of "it is apparent the limitations will be overcome" write "because data was triangulated with multiple data source, limitations were reduced with repeated patterns".

29. Search for words that are not academic, examples are thought of instead of reflected, read every sentence aloud, use the thesaurus to find more academic words.

30. Avoid one or two line paragraphs, use 4-5 sentences.

31. Make sure each paragraph has one subject. Start a new paragraph for a new subject, add a transitions line (see number 1). Avoid one- and two-sentence paragraphs not fully developed, in that they are short or choppy and reduce the academic readability of the study. Well-constructed paragraphs will help the author to attain clarity at the sentence level. A paragraph is a short collection of sentences dealing with a single idea. Each sentence in a paragraph should serve to promote the main idea by saying more about it, illustrating it, or summing it up. A well-written paragraph has unity, because it is about one idea, and order, because the sentences arranged in a way that logically develops the topic of the paragraph. A paragraph usually consists of four or five sentences grouped together around one idea.

32. Start each paragraph with your own thought, written in third person. Use PIE, statement, then theories, information, and examples. Never use back-to-back paragraphs with nothing more than citations or quotes.

33. Use section titles to guide the reader.

34. Avoid adding more theories to Chapter 2 that have NOTHING to do with the subject, the section title, or the dissertation.

35. Use U. S. instead of US and do not add a comma with March 1999, use March 1999 in a sentence.

36. Get rid of all fluff words, however, in addition, therefore, -- reword the sentence.

37. Formatting must be perfect, all paragraphs indented, all spacing between sources one space, citations perfect, figures and tables perfect, TOC must be perfect, with correct page numbers, always include the Table of Figures and List of Tables, and all preliminary pages.

38. Editors are good tools, but are not perfect, YOU must edit the document returned from an editor for additional grammar and APA problems – it has to be perfect or it is returned despite approvals at Orals.

39. Check entire document for the appropriate use of the words "which" vs. "that".

40. You must clarify why a sample size was chosen. For example determine why 20 were actually selected. Clarification on how the 20 women selected should be incorporated as appropriate.

41. Literature documents reviewed and selected must be exhaustive – 100 is not enough, 400-500 reviewed and a number selected tends to be approved more than just 100.

42. Citations MUST be perfect, check and re-check. For example, in text citations for quotations do not all align with the APA Manual's prescribed guidance? For example, page 11: "(Bajado & Dickson, p. 399)" where the year is not provided. All citations should be reviewed and revised as appropriate.

43. Avoid using the word *argued* for a book source such as Creswell. Paraphrase or quote but not argued. One example turned down was this: *A better choice of words to indicate the author's intention is warranted in other places (than noted above), in particular when offering quotes from an author's book*. One such example suggests that the author "argued" when such *argument* is not evident: "Creswell argued that 'quantitative methods explain relationship among variables' (2004, p. 62)".

44. Check the entire document for personal bias. One example: The author tends to reflect bias and personal commentary in some statements such as the lead-in to this sentence (page 3) and ultimately detracts from an otherwise objective presentation of the research study: "Though the lack of recognition for female roles has been prominent, the reality of the female situation in business.

45. Check the format of years: 1980's" should be "1980s."

46. Subjective references detract from a clear understanding of what the doctoral candidate is trying to convey to the reader. In this example on page 1, "...female leaders are not in top

leadership positions in higher education." it is not detailed as to what level of position is a "top" leadership position

47. The abbreviation for the United States should be U.S. not US.
48. Never use others, define the authors. "From the early stages of discussion as reflected by Kanter and others..."
49. Mid-sentence nouns that denote common parts of books (i.e. chapters) are not capitalized per the APA Manual guidance (para 3.15). An example from page17: "The connection between gender and leadership opportunities as presented in Chapter 1 of this dissertation remains a key topic for females seeking higher education leadership positions."
50. Add what future studies could study based on your findings.
51. Do not forget the conclusion. Review the problem, design, major finding, and implications in one paragraph, no new information -- be concise.
52. Check all references and formatting for errors; dissertation are rejected for formatting issues alone
53. Delete all comments and accept all changes before uploading to the dean; call technical support after uploading to confirm receiving dissertation and comments are off.
54. Fix page numbers to address all modifications and reflect this in the TOC and change chart (if required).
55. The cover page (iii) is missing necessary information, such as the names of the committee members.
56. The use of commas in series of three or more items should be reviewed throughout the document, as a comma should always come before "and" in such lists.
57. Chapter transitions, for each chapter is incorporated to improve the flow of the content from chapter to chapter.
58. The author's role is indicated and steps taken during the study are described, when it is a given that the author is the one who conducted the study; therefore, the author may limit descriptions to what occurred, leaving the many references to the author out of the document. Such a revision will improve the readability of the study.
59. Slang, jargon, and trite sentence structure eliminated and replaced with purposeful, specific, and succinct content to increase the academic tone and readability of the study (Blum, 2005).

References

Berry, J. (2005). *Foster care leadership practices that successfully place children: case study*. Dissertation, University of Phoenix.

Blum, K. D., Edwards, R., Goes, J., Salerno, C & Simon, M. K. (2005). Chapter 4 and 5: *The sequel*. Unpublished presentation, University of Phoenix.

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Creswell, J. (2002) *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Simon, M. & Francis, B. (2004). T*he Dissertation and Research Cookbook*, 4th Ed. Dubuque, IA: Kendall- Hunt.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Chapter 8

Oral Exams --- Almost to the Top of the Dissertation Mountain but Running out of Oxygen and Energy

Freda Turner

When the author of this chapter was a doctoral candidate and realized that participation in an *oral defense*, similar to the mountain climber almost at the top of a very cold mountain – this causes a frozen-type reaction – the author froze in spot, staring at the end goal, yet unable to breathe right or move forward, scared and tired.

There was not much in the literature on how to prepare for an oral defense and only verbal war stories from survivors and non-survivors to help as the author tried to move up the last part of the dissertation mountain -- preparing for the oral defense. The author of this chapter wondered about the resources needed to prepare for the oral defense – would tear gas or oxygen be needed to help escape from grueling committee members? Could the author make it up the last steps in with little oxygen to breath, to the top of the dissertation mountain?

Once the author earned the doctoral credential and subsequently successful mentored numerous doctorate candidates, dismissing some of the mystery involved with the process of the virtual dissertation oral defense is helpful to both chairs and online doctoral students. The process was grueling, but the last climb up the dissertation mountain to reach the top is an important process. The chair plays a vital role in helping doctoral candidates scale the final steps of the dissertation mountain and successfully defend their research. The author will share insights on the oral defense from both chair's perspective and from the experiences of previous doctorate candidates who have made it to the top of the dissertation mountain. Survivors of the dissertation orals provide 'survival' tips for a successful end to the doctoral journey.

Mentor/Chair Perspective of the Virtual Oral Defense

The dissertation defense is a scholarly, tradition-bound component of doctoral programs. Universities using online modalities continue to honor the tradition. It is in this process that the learner demonstrates the significance of his/her research as they explain the research process to those in attendance. The student is eligible for an oral defense when the mentor/chair and dissertation committee agree that the student has completed work of sufficient quality to merit the doctoral degree. As in a traditional university, the learner must coordinate timing, logistics, and a PowerPoint of the items that will be presented in the virtual oral defense.

Below is a typical virtual oral defense process from the mentor's view point.

From the Mentor/Chair Prospective of the oral defense

1. The virtual dissertation oral exam will consist of learner and committee members using an online and teleconference format.
2. Doctorate candidate identifies a timeframe convenient for all committee members and then arranges for a teleconference typically by contracting with a telephone conferencing service. The learner pays all expenses for the teleconference. Most services will tape record the conference and it is advisable for the learner to purchase the recorded version of the conference. This allows the learner an opportunity to capture any recommendations of the committee and to have documentation that the oral defense occurred and the outcome.
3. The online learner prepares visuals, which are typically in a PP format, and emails them to all committee members at least one week prior to the oral defense conference. Most PP presentations consist of 15-20 slides that can be used to trigger the learner's thoughts to facts of the study like background of the problem, the problem, purpose statements, research question, hypothesis (if applicable), the population, methodology used to gather the data, findings, and significance of the study. One golden rule for the use of the PowerPoint presentation is to practice and continue to polish the presentation, do not make the slides too busy with words and place a number on each slide. This is a virtual presentation and when a reference is made to a specific slide, all committee members can quickly locate the correct slide number. It is advisable for the doctorate candidate to make good use of the notes section of PP to access during the defense. The learner should have great, engaging graphics that compliments each slide. The learner should also be prepared for defense questions from committee members especially as it relates to stats/methods, selection of population, implications of the research or what might have be done differently. Each committee member should come prepared with 1-2 questions. This is a traditional sign of respect among scholars.

4. The learner is responsible to notify all committee members of the logistics of participating in the conference call. Some learners call each committee member while other doctorate candidates elect to use a service where the participants call a central number. It is wise for the learner to list all logistics in the newsgroup. Once the conference call starts, the mentor will introduce and acknowledge the presence of each person and then turn the leadership role over to the learner for the oral presentation of the PP slides. This portion of presentation should not last more than 20-30 minutes. At the conclusion of the learner's presentation, the mentor invites formal and extensive questions from the committee members and the learner defends or offers explanations as applicable.

5. At the completion of the question period, the mentor/chair asks the committee members to vote on two items. One, does the study provides new contributions to knowledge, and secondly, is the dissertation, in the faculty's professional opinion, ready for presentation for the Dean's review and signature. If the committee votes the dissertation is not ready, the doctorate candidate must revise as recommended by the committee and request a second defense in the future, following the same procedures as for the initial defense. The mentor will explain to the doctorate candidate what steps are to be followed.

6. Once the doctorate candidate has successfully pleased the doctorate committee, they are then responsible to obtain the mail addresses of each committee member. Learners will purchase envelopes/postage and address all envelopes to each of the three-committee members and the dissertation coordinator. The learner should place three, unfolded copies of the signature page along with the preaddressed envelopes into a package and send to the first committee member with instructions for that member to sign, and then forward to the next committee member in a round robin fashion using the stamped, addressed envelopes provided. Original signatures are required for the dissertation. A faculty member's signature on the research signature page signifies pride and professional satisfaction with the quality and contents of the study. The last committee member that signs the signature page will insert all signed, unfolded pages into the last stamped envelop and mail to the Doctorate Dissertation Coordinator.

7. The learner uploads the dissertation for the Dean's review and recommendations for edits. This review process takes about 15 business days. The chair is notified by the Dean when the dissertation has been approved.

Student Experiences of the Virtual Oral Defense
Student #1 Perspective/Experience of the Oral Defense (note "I" is the dissertation student).

I reviewed a PP presentation conducted by a former student. My motto is there is no sense in re-inventing the wheel. Additionally, I reviewed my prospectus and proposal to achieve that start from the beginning feeling. This was important because in rewriting and editing the dissertation so many times resulted in my forgetting how the study had morphed. I was starting to see the process. I needed a conference call service so I used the Internet and googled "cheap conference call" and "discount conference call" to research cost effective services. I decided on SAVEONCONFERENCES.com. I do not know if they are much cheaper than the rest, but I chose them because a person actually answered the phone when I called. At that point, I had my own personal conference call number . . . yippeee! Before developing the PowerPoint (PP), I had to tell myself: "Okay Popeye, the dissertation is done, now summarize it." I kept the PowerPoint slides as succinct as possible, with only enough words to make sense. I used the notes section under each slide to help me recall facts that I did not want to forget. To synch up the committee's schedule, I sent out an email and put out several time frames in a two-day window. The committee gave me their inputs and I narrowed the window down to a day (i.e. 8:00 AM to noon on 12 June). I put out options of that day again to the committee and settled on a specific time. I had to work out the time zones and put out an email with the following information:

Time: (where I specified each committee member by name and their time zone) Conf call #: Conf call code: (attached a copy of the PP for the orals) (posted latest copy of dissertation to the newsgroup) I posted a final email reminder to the newsgroup and copied each committee member. Finally, on the day of the oral, I sent out a reminder on the times, conf call #, and conf call code data once again. I also attached another copy of the PP that I would use in the virtual orals. The day of the oral exam, I called the conf call number two hours before the conference to make sure it worked. One hour before the oral, I prepared my workspace. I had two laptops up and running, one laptop with my dissertation on it and one with the orals on it. Fifteen minutes before the oral, I called the conference call number to ensure I, as the host, was the first one to report. Now here is where it gets funny . . . my home telephone line is prone to interference from a local radio station that plays Hispanic music. Typically, the interference is hardly noticeable. But, as luck would have it, the interference on the day of my orals was extremely loud. So I had to go to plan B, which I had to make up on the fly. I asked all the committee members to call back in within 5 minutes so I could change phones. I left the house, took one computer with me, and drove to a residential area and parked which turned out to be in front of some lady's house, who kept looking out her window. I'm sure she was

wondering why some crazy looking guy in a jeep was sitting in front of her house, talking on a cell phone and looking down at my PP slides. I was hoping I could get the orals completed before the police came to take me away. Fortunately, the police never came and so I've never been seen on "Bad Boys." Using my cell phone, in front of some stranger's house, I talked through my orals answering questions from the committee. The orals took approximately 45 minutes. It was a wonderful way to tie everything together and to take in some final feedback before uploading the dissertation.

Student #2 Perspective/Experience of the Oral Defense

Sweaty palms and rapid heartbeat; these are descriptions of the feelings that many, if not most, doctoral candidates have when they take their oral examinations. If your mentor and committee members could see your pasty-colored complexion and the sheer, unadulterated, look of horror on your face, clearly they would think you had just gotten off a giant roller-coaster ride. Maybe superheroes can leap over buildings with a single bound. Maybe super heroes can swing from building to building with gigantic webs. But not even superheroes have had to battle this kind of enemy; they have not had to take an oral examination to defend a dissertation in a virtual environment. In the virtual environment, one can not even read body language of the team that will cast a vote that might impact the rest of your life. Does the terms oral defense bring feelings of fear to doctorate candidates? You bet.

But wait. In a sense, you are a superhero of a different kind. You have entered the academic arena and you have prevailed, so far! You have conquered your own enemy, one course at a time, and you have won every battle. You are the victor here, not the defeated. Otherwise, you would not be at this point; so take heart and enjoy this roller-coaster ride known as Orals. If you pass the orals and if the Dean signs your dissertation after 8 levels of review, you can use the title of Doctor and be part of the 1% of the population that has a terminal degree.

The best way to overcome the fear of the presentation is to prepare.

Even Superman would have trouble being hired as a leader if he did not understand his mission. Like Spiderman or Batman, know your personal strengths and weaknesses and be sure that humility is top of your list of strengths. All great superheroes have this trait and it makes them who they are and empowers them to succeed. Remember, your committee is comprised of individuals just like you; they have done this, too. Take heart and know that they really are on your side. But, also remember that they have leapt over this building and it is you who must perform this feat. This is a humbling task, but you can do it.

The Oral Examination is your chance to demonstrate your knowledge of a topic you have spent what seems like a lifetime researching and assimilating. You know you have new knowledge to contribute and that is the purpose of the dissertation. It is a chance for you to present what you have learned -- and why you think what you have written is important to others. Your work is important. Otherwise, you have wasted a lot of time, a lot of effort, many resources, and a lot of money. This is your moment to shine. You are the hero; show them what you have! I, a doctorate candidate that just passed my orals suggest the following:

1. Prepare an aesthetic, easy-to-follow, PowerPoint summary using no more than a dozen slides; make sure you have introductory, overview, summary, and question sections.
2. Study your dissertation to be sure you have an idea of how to proceed through the presentation. Keep in mind that you are the "world's expert" on this topic!
3. Find a quiet place to make the call, after ensuring all of your contact information is correct. You start sweating again. Maybe you have screwed up the time to place the call. You review your notes and start breathing easy again. You are o.k. there. Then spend some time in the room prior to the call to think about this important event, and how to ensure there are no interruptions from the dog, the cat, children, neighborhood kids selling candy, the spouse, co-workers. These are additional stressors that one has to worry about in a virtual environment that individuals doing traditional orals do not have to address.
4. Pre-arrange the call and now triple check on those arrangements. Send a message to your committee several days a head and on the designated day reminding them of your incoming call.
5. Try to relax.
6. Be professional. Answer questions promptly and directly; try to address the person making the inquiry, ensure that the question is clear, and answered.
7. Present your PowerPoint. Your committee's first reaction sets the tone for the rest of the discussion. Ask your mentor in advance if there are any specific expectations regarding your presentation. Make sure the overall impact is pleasing and that the presentation is not too complicated or too busy in appearance. It should reflect you and your study. You will probably post it in the newsgroup or online a few days ahead of time. Reflect on what you want it to reveal about you and your study.
8. Do not put your answers on your slides. You

should know them at this point. Do not try to read from a script. This is boring – the committee will be able to tell also. You should dictate the pace of the call and understand that a prepared dialogue will only get you in trouble. You will lose your place in the script and the focus of the call will suffer. Of course, you should have your study on hand, but only to refer to if need be. Make sure your committee knows what slide they should be viewing at all times. Talk about the slide and ask them to advance to the next one. Do not leave them guessing where they which slide you are discussing.

9. The most important issue is to be ready. Even Superman knows how to get to the nearest phone booth. Know what you want to say, how you want to say it, and be prepared to follow through. Make sure you are free from all distractions. Have a large glass of water on hand and a comfortable chair. That is an important part for being ready.

10. Check and double-check with your committee regarding the day, time (which time zone), and other specifics. Make arrangements with a phone company or service to place the calls. If you have conferencing ability at your office or at your home, be sure it works just the way you want it to work. This is no time for "a failure to communicate." Be ready early for the call; collect yourself and practice your slide presentation prior to the call if you think it will help.

11. Be as relaxed as possible. The exam begins the minute the phone rings on the other end. Give each of your committee members your full attention when you start. Have something prepared to talk about, other than the weather, if something goes wrong. I suggest an anecdote about your dissertation; something clever that occurred during the writing of the dissertation or perhaps the reason you chose to write on this particular topic.

12. Stick to your PowerPoint. When you are finished, turn the conference over to your mentor and ask the committee if there are questions. Also, remember that you will not have the advantage of an "in person" presentation and the subtle nuances of body language, so you have to maintain a pace and dialogue that will engender interest and participation.

13. Make sure you understand your committee members' questions. Active listening is an important tool. You should be as good a listener as you are a talker. Reflect the question back if you need to in order to successfully answer the question. Do not ramble; get to the point, make the point, and then thank the member for asking such an incisive question.

14. When it is over, be sure to thank your committee for all it has done for you. I found myself telling each of them what it was I appreciated from each of them. Do something that is natural for you. Otherwise, put proper closure to the call. They will tell you what they want you to do next.

15. When you hang up, rejoice in the moment; you are a super-hero. Embarking on a terminal degree is a true test of courage. Only a few people attempt what you just accomplished; about 1% of the population. Sure, it is not likely that you will ever become an action figure and the chances of your likeness becoming a Halloween costume are slim; but your reward will be much greater. You will be one of a select few in the world who have earned the doctoral title. You are, at least for this moment, larger-than-life. Enjoy the moment.

Congratulations, I made it up the final steps of the dissertation mountain. I am sure I will see you at the top soon!

Student # 3 Perspective/Experience during virtual orals (note "I" is the dissertation student)

After I finished beating myself up for hating statistics, so much I decided to make a go of it by thinking of every possible question that could be asked of me . . . especially as it pertained to statistics. I learned what every one of those tests and subtests meant and why it was included in my study. I bought three statistics books, which I studied like a demented person hoping it would get me released from the prison of fear and anxiety.

I put together a PowerPoint presentation after much pondering about how I was going to fit the Problem Statement into one PowerPoint slide. I broke up the problem statement into three components and discussed all the in between stuff.

Just before the defense, I called my close family and friends and told them to pray like they really needed hell to freeze over (smile). I positioned myself (after almost throwing up) with all of my notes and my PowerPoint slides (I had written all over them too and tried to relax. My hands were shaking; my knees kept moving . . . I was really nervous . . . especially about those stupid statistics.

When I first started my voice was shaky and I was afraid I would forget everything I had learned but the committee calmed me down so much so I actually began to enjoy talking about my research study. I started having fun with it.

Costs: There was little cost to me for the oral teleconference as I had a friend who let me use his bridge number so I did not have to pay for it. The only expense for the orals was those stupid statistics books and mailing the signature pages to the committee members.

Conclusion: the Dissertation Mountain Top Can be Reached – Successful Orals

From the doctorate candidate's perspective, the oral defense was a fearful leap into the unknown. In reality, the dissertational oral defense is an important part of a process and beginning of a new journey. As students, doctoral learners are always writing ideas and virtual oral defense is designed to allow learners an opportunity to debate in scholarly fashion using the phone.

Dissertation orals are a life-changing event. When dissertations orals are successfully completed, the student soon finds that No more jotting down issues relating to the dissertation topic on the steering wheel while driving, on napkins, in parks, bars, restaurants, and on the bedside table. Fast food and caffeine products will no longer have to be staple items of consumption and guilt over sleeping is no longer a concern.

The learner starts to realize there are seasons again and considers wearing clothes other than *research clothing* that consists of *favorite* sweats, t-shirts, and shorts. When the orals are completed, graduated doctoral students have a good PowerPoint on the dissertation to present to others on the topic at conferences and meetings in society. In short, it feels good to be a post-doctorate learner.

Once dissertation climbers have rested at the top of the dissertation mountain and start heading back down, doctoral students realize the dissertation has been a *process*. Warning all doctoral students -- just because students have faced numerous obstacles, overcome them, learned to put fear of the mountain aside, and are now a doctor -- the learning never stops and lives will be forever change making the doctoral student a true member of the *doctoral community*!

Chapter 9

After Dissertation Success at the Top of the Mountain - Publishing

Brent Muirhead

Introduction

Students who have conquered the mountain and completed their dissertation are initially exhausted. It is a natural response to a rigorous academic journey. The process of writing for academic publication is a unique professional challenge that requires being dedicated to creating professional writing goals. Individuals who have completed their dissertation would like to publish but are not quite sure how to get started. The author shall provide advice on how to develop a practical writing plan that will increase opportunities for academic publication.

Students who have just completed their dissertation have a tendency to neglect writing articles from their research project. Sadly, the dissertation and related notes are stored in files and boxes but not used for publication purposes. Chamberlin (1999) relates "… many others--relieved that the tome is finally behind them--let theirs collect dust on their desks or pack their notes and files into storage. One reason, say faculty, is that many recent graduates dread transforming their dissertations into journal articles" (para 3). It is wise to seek advice from people who have publishing experience such dissertation faculty members. Converting dissertation research into a journal article requires being selective about the material being used, having a writing plan to revise the information into a relevant format and highlight the most important findings. The article must be clear and readable which means avoiding a quick cut and past job which could undermine the potential for publication (Chamberlin, 1999).

A frequent question through the years has been what is the most difficult aspect of writing? Often, it involves simply getting started on a writing project because people often struggle with the initial steps. Individuals will offer an assortment of excuses for not writing for publication such as not having enough time. Perhaps, the deeper reason involves a personal awareness of deficient writing skills and a fear of rejection. It is important to face these concerns and realize that the self-confidence to be a successful writer will require taking some risks and developing a plan that will enhance the quality of their writing. The competition for publication is intense but the good news is there are specific steps that individuals can take to enhance their odds of getting articles published in journals and books (Henson, 1999).

The first step in the writing process should be to select a topic that will be informative and relevant to capture the attention of today's editors. There is no real formula for identifying a meaningful topic. Yet, the author has found that creative topics will flow from an individual's reading and studying habits. It is wise to have a diverse reading program that includes nonfiction books, journals and major national or international newspapers. Reading a variety of works offers a practical way to identify hot topics in a particular academic discipline and within the popular culture.

Encouraging Creativity in Writing

The term creativity can be an illusive term to define because writers do not want to undermine or diminish the positive aspects that are often associated with the word. A survey of definitions of creativity highlights the intriguing qualities of this term. Harris (1998) provides one of the best descriptions of creativity:

- **An Ability**: A simple definition is that creativity is the ability to imagine or invent something new.
- **An Attitude**: Creativity is also an attitude: the attitude to accept change and newness, a willingness to play with ideas and possibilities, a flexibility of outlook, the habit of enjoying the good, while looking for ways to improve it.
- **A Process**: Creative people work hard and continually to improve ideas and solutions, by making gradual alternations and refinements to their works. (para 2, 4 & 5).

The description highlights the multidimensional nature of creativity while stressing that individuals must realize that it involves hard work and a flexible mental attitude. White (2003) argues that Americans have settled for a superficial creativity built upon passively observing others display their imaginations in the entertainment industry. Business leaders have managed creativity into neat film or television show formulas that are financially profitable but fail to intellectually challenge people to be truly reflective and autonomous thinkers. "The culture informed by the strategies of the Middle Mind promises intelligence, seriousness, care, but what it provides in reality is something other. What the Middle Mind does is flatten distinctions. It turns culture into mush" (White, 2003, p. 10).

Promoting Creativity

It is important for mentors to eliminate myths about creativity dissertation students. Teresa Amabile, who heads the Entrepreneurial Management Unit at Harvard University, conducted a research project on creativity. Amabile's team collected information from 238 individuals from seven different companies involving almost 12,000 daily journal comments. Breen (2004, pp.75-78) relates how Amabile's research study has identified six myths about creativity:

1. **Creativity comes from creative types:** Creativity depends upon a number of things; experience, including knowledge and technical skills; talent; an ability to think in ways; and the capacity to push through uncreative dry spells.
2. **Money is a creativity motivator:** People are most creative when they care about their work and they're stretching their skills.
3. **Time pressure fuels creativity:** Time pressure stifles creativity because people can't deeply engage with the problem.
4. **Fear forces breakthroughs:** We found that creativity is positively associated with joy and love and negatively with anger, fear, and anxiety.
5. **Competition beats collaboration:** In our surveys we found that creativity takes a hit when people in a group compete instead of collaborate.
6. **A streamlined organization is a creative organization**: Creativity suffers greatly during downsizing. Every single one of the stimulants to creativity in the work environment went down significantly.

Chairs should communicate a picture of a creative thinker through their teaching style, sharing stories of innovative individuals and demonstrating novel ideas with charts, lectures, and Power Point Presentations. Brookfield's (1987, pp. 115-116) seven characteristics of a critical thinker are informative about understanding the illusive process of understanding how people become creative:

1. Creative thinkers reject standardized formats for problem solving.
2. They have interests in a wide range of related and divergent fields.
3. They can take multiple perspectives on a problem.
4. They view the world as relative and contextual rather that universal and absolute.
5. They frequently use trial-and-error methods in their experimentation with alternative approaches.
6. They have a future orientation; change is embraced optimistically as a valuable possibility.
7. They have self-confidence and trust in their own judgment.

Chairs and their dissertation students can learn valuable lessons about creativity from business organizations. A Gore-Tex fabric is a superb example of an innovative major corporation which has over 63,000 employees and $1.5 billion in annual revenues. W. L. Gore has developed a thriving organizational culture that emphasizes small teams, innovative products and leaders who regularly devote time to speculative thinking. The company has experienced continuous product breakthroughs that reflect a business built on long term goals. Gore's leadership philosophy and work rituals are designed to affirm creativity. Deutschman (2004) observes that the teams will celebrate both project successes and failures. Why do they celebrate a failure? It is an intentional way to affirm that risk takers are always honored in their endeavors. Perhaps, a missing ingredient in today's online doctoral degree programs is the absence of adequate number of student risk taking opportunities. Students must be given enough freedom to pursue imaginative and valuable work that sometimes transcends the normal curriculum.

Selecting Potential Topics

The author usually begins with several potential topics and then decides what topic would best fit the journal's theme or type of articles. This is a crucial step because it is wise to investigate several journals to clearly identify which one offers the best possibility of being published. For instance, it is important to understand certain basic facts about the publication such as the percentage of articles that are written by free lance writers, the average length of time to peer review an article and the acceptance rate for submitted articles. This type of information is an effective way to start exploring what would be the best journal or magazine to pursue publication. Brogan's (2005) *Writer's Market* is an example of books that examine publications. It offers practical advice and contact information for writers who are investigating places to submit their work. It is important to devote time to studying various publications before making a final decision on a topic and place of submission. If the purpose of the article is for an academic audience, then the journal should be scholarly and peer reviewed to insure recognition within the academic community. Ray (2002) recommends asking the following questions:

1. What is its purpose?
2. What regular departments or features does it include?
3. What seasonal material does it include?
4. What range of freelance-written topics does it cover?

5. What topics and articles have been recently published?
6. What elements and features do the articles include?
7. What writing techniques, structure, and organization do authors employ?
8. How long are the articles?
9. How deep is the information?
10. How do articles and accompanying graphics appear?
11. How formal or informal are the design, writing, and graphics? (paragraph 4)

The list of questions will help individuals to identify the top three or four potential journals or magazines that offer the best publication opportunities. The next step is to establish a series of short and long-term writing goals. It is essential that individuals create goals that help them continually write and practice their skills. The author writes letters to the editors on a variety of social issue to major newspapers such as *USA Today* and *The New York Times* because they represent competitive writing situations. Major newspapers receive between 800-1,000 letters a week. *The New York Times* will publish one letter every two months from the same author and they attract writers who are leaders in their respective fields. Therefore, it is a real honor to be published with these newspapers.

Serious writers will share knowledge and insights in a diversity of articles such as a literature review, reflections on a recently attended conference and book reviews. The articles can be creative and descriptive narratives that can reflect a good working knowledge of the literature. Editors will sometimes invite individuals who have specific expertise in an academic area to review a recent book. Fahey (2001) recommends, "a book review should not just summarize the book, but should incorporate personal judgments. You should be polite even if you disagree with the author (and especially if you are just beginning your writing/teaching career) (paragraph 20)."

Students should carefully read the feedback given to them by journal peer reviewers. There are times that only minor revisions are necessary and the article needs some minor edits to be ready for publication. The acceptance rate among academic journal varies, the author is an Associate Editor of *Educational Technology & Society* the journal accepts approximately 15%-18% of the articles submitted. Being rejected can be a frustrating experience but the feedback can used to enhance the quality of writing and increase the potential for acceptance in future article submissions. "Keep in mind that submitting the article to another journal without making the recommended revisions is considered unprofessional…The probability that the same article will be sent to one of the original reviewers may be high" (Chamberlin, 1999, para 23). The reviewers devote a great deal of time providing specific feedback on article revisions and they become quite upset when individuals fail to implement any other recommendations to improve their work.

Authors occasionally experience a time where they lack ideas and they draw a blank. It is wise to realize that others can have this problem and take a healthy perspective on this issue. Skinner and Policoff, 1994 offer five strategies to jump-start the writing process:

1. Establish a writing routine that creates a specific time and place to write and encourages daily practice.
2. Change your established writing schedule to a different time of the day.
3. Read books and articles in your research area with renewed sensitivity because it can promote new ideas.
4. Write a letter or poem that expresses your thoughts.
5. Exercise or listen to music to help energize your creativity (Skinner & Policoff, 1994).

Develop Good Relationships with Editors

The key is to be continually writing and networking with other writers and editors at conferences and online newsgroups. There are numerous professional organizations that offer formal and informal formats to meet others who are involved in research projects and publication related activities. For instance, The International Forum of Educational Technology Society (IFETS) provides an online discussion platform for sharing information and networking with others (Fahey, 2001).

It is essential that writers cultivate good relationships with their editors by learning to be attentive to the publishing process. The author is an editor and it surprising how people will often neglect to provide updates on how they are progressing on an article. Also, individuals will miss promised deadlines and then decide not to write the article but not inform their editor. Unfortunately, some writers can operate in a manner that undermines their relationships with editors and it can diminish the possibility of having future writing opportunities.

"But, while editors may assign an article based on a query and subsequent exchanges, they may choose not to work with you again if you became lazy midway through a project, didn't respect their time, were difficult or time-consuming to communicate with, or didn't follow through on what was promised (Ray, 2002, final para)."

Book Proposals

Chairs can assist their students who are considering the possibility of converting their doctoral dissertations into a potential book. Students who are interested in developing a book from their dissertation should realize that it will require a great deal of work. Those who have a strong interest writing a book should create a book proposal that will address the primary concerns of a publisher. A basic book proposal should include the following elements (Wisker, 2005, p. 355) "introduction, rationale and audience, market, draft chapters and contents, timing and length". The competition is intense and there are different reasons that proposals are rejected such as the quality of the presentation or the book fails to meet the publisher plans. Students must be prepared to devote adequate time to conduct the research and rewrites that are essential to producing a dynamic proposal. Wisker (2005) recommends that "students need to do market research, be honest about the competition and state why their book contributes something new, topical, is bound to sell and is necessary to the field (rather like research!)" (p. 356).

"Whatever Wells writes is not only alive, but kicking."
Henry James referring to H.G. Wells

Conclusion

The author has assisted doctoral students to publish in journals and mentors should explore the possibility of co-authoring with student projects that align with their areas of interest and expertise. Editors are always looking for creative and relevant articles that will meet the needs of their readers. Individuals should strive to develop positive communications patterns with their editors by submitting quality work, meeting promised deadlines and responding promptly to their e-mail or telephone messages. The author has found that the person's focus should not be on fears about their work being rejected. Rather, the key is being dedicated to producing excellent material that editors will want to publish. Mentors can encourage their students by reminding them of having just conquered the mountain of writing their dissertation. Students must face their fears about the publication process and make a deliberate choice to develop a realistic writing plan. Journal publications are a wonderful opportunities to make positive contributions to the academic community.

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Concluding Remarks

Brent Muirhead

The authors of this book have utilized the mountain metaphor to highlight the enormous task of writing a successful doctoral dissertation. Students gain valuable experience climbing the dissertation mountain and overcoming a diversity of obstacles that can derail the most dedicated individuals. Chairs play a vital role in guiding and assisting online students to effectively complete their dissertation projects to become skilled researchers.

There has been a steady increase in the number of online doctoral degree programs. Technology advances have increased student access to library content through e-journals, e-books and specialized databases. Contemporary online schools must continually upgrade their technology and curriculum to effectively prepare students for current and future jobs and educational opportunities. Nichols (2001) highlights six imperatives for educators in the 21st Century:

1. Increased capacity and efficiency - through enabling institutions to cater for the learning of a relatively large number of students at once.
2. Improved effectiveness - by encouraging deep learning approaches and the adaptation of knowledge to the real world.
3. Easy accessibility - by removing distance barriers and catering for a variety of learners' prior educational experience, physical abilities, and time commitments /lifestyles.
4. A competitive mindset - education with the potential to be offered internationally, within industry, and at a distance; providing more choice and convenience for the student.
5. A resource-based emphasis - enabling more student control over what, where, when and how they study and permitting non-linear learning; and
6. The personal touch - with more interaction between students and between individual student and tutor, enabling a degree of customization and the pursuit of individual students' learning goals in addition to the prescribed course learning outcomes (pp.13-14).

The six imperatives stress a wise and visionary use of technology that will create relevant and accessible student resources. Distance educators and instructional course designers must continue to explore creative ways to personalize and intellectually enrich the cyber environment. Educational leaders must be willing to make financial investments into technology enhancements, mentor training and professional development activities. Dissertation students are entering an exciting era as online degree programs are becoming more technologically sophisticated and growing Internet based research resources. Online Dissertation chairs will continue to play a major role in providing individualized guidance as students take the intellectual journey of a lifetime…climbing the dissertation mountain!

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