

# E-Content

## Research Methods

### Semester: III

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## SYLLABUS UNIT-1

### Research Problem

The term 'problem' means a question or issue to be examined.

Research problem refers to some difficulty or need which a researcher experiences in the context of either theoretical or practical situation and wants to obtain a solution for the same.

#### **Sources of problem:**

Reading

Academic Experience

Daily Experiences

Exposure to field situation

Consultations

Brain storming

Intuition

Research

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## *Defining the Research Problem*

Technical terms and words or phrases, with special meanings used in the statement of the problem, should be clearly defined.

Basic assumptions or postulates (if any) relating to the research problem should be clearly stated.

A straight forward statement of the value of the investigation (i.e., the criteria for the selection of the problem) should be provided.

The suitability of the time-period and the sources of data available must also be considered by the researcher in defining the problem.

The scope of the investigation or the limits within which the problem is to be studied must be mentioned explicitly in defining a research problem.

## Criteria of Research Problem Formulation /Selection

Internal / Personal Criteria –

Researcher's academic background,

Researcher's interest, experience, values, behaviour,

Researcher's competence / ability, aptitude,

Researcher's own resources – purpose and objective, training

Finance and time.

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## Criteria of Research Problem Formulation /Selection

### External Criteria –

Research ability of the problem,  
Importance and urgency,  
Novelty of the problem,  
Feasibility, Facilities,  
Usefulness and Social relevance,  
Research personnel.

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## Techniques involved in defining Research Problems

### Statement of the problem in a general way

For this purpose, the researcher must immerse himself thoroughly in the subject matter concerning which he wishes to pose a problem.

In case of social research, it is considered advisable to do some field observation and as such the researcher may undertake some sort of preliminary survey or what is often called pilot survey.

### Understanding the nature of the problem

The best way of understanding the problem is to discuss it with those who first raised it in order to find out how the problem originally came about and with that objectives in view.

If the researcher has stated the problem himself, he should consider once again all those points that induced him to make a general statement concerning the problem.

## Techniques involved in defining Research Problems

### Surveying the available literature

This means that the researcher must be well-conversant with relevant theories in the field, reports and records as also all other relevant literature.

He must devote sufficient time in reviewing of research already undertaken on related problems.

This is done to find out what data and other materials, if any, are available for operational purposes.

### Developing the ideas through discussions

This is quite often known as an *experience survey*.

Discussion concerning a problem often produces useful information. Various new ideas can be developed through such an exercise.

Hence, a researcher must discuss his problem with his colleagues and others who have enough experience in the same area or in working on similar problems.

### Rephrasing the research problem into a working proposition.

Finally, the researcher must sit to rephrase the research problem into a working proposition. Through rephrasing, the researcher puts the research problem in as specific terms as possible so that it may become operationally viable and may help in the development of working hypotheses.

## AN ILLUSTRATION

“Why is productivity in Japan so much higher than in India”?

In this form the question has a number of ambiguities such as:

What sort of productivity is being referred to?

With what industries the same is related?

With what period of time the productivity is being talked about?

In view of all such ambiguities the given statement or the question is much too general to be amenable to analysis. Rethinking and discussions about the problem may result in narrowing down the question to:

“What factors were responsible for the higher labour productivity of Japan’s manufacturing industries during the decade 1971 to 1980 relative to India’s manufacturing industries?”

This latter version of the problem is definitely an improvement over its earlier version for the various ambiguities have been removed to the extent possible. Further rethinking and rephrasing might place the problem on a still better operational basis as shown below:

“To what extent did labour productivity in 1971 to 1980 in Japan exceed that of India in respect of 15 selected manufacturing industries?

What factors were responsible for the productivity differentials between the two countries by industries?”



## References:

<https://library.sacredheart.edu/c.php?g=29803&p=185918#:~:text=A%20research%20problem%20is%20a,meaningful%20understanding%20and%20deliberate%20investigation.>

<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/introduction/researchproblem>

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Thank you

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