

# EDU 651: Understanding & Conducting Educational Research

## Action Research as Master's Thesis

### CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction to the Topic (no heading for this section)
  - A. Identify the problem or area of interest.
  - B. Provide background information.
2. Purpose Statement (heading, centered)
  - A. State purpose of paper/study. Example: *The purpose of this paper was to examine the writing workshop in my second grade and to describe effective implementation practices.*
  - B. Put the purpose in the form of one or more questions. Example: *The specific research questions are:*
    1. *What is happening during my writing workshop?*
    2. *Is the writing workshop effective in developing my students' writing skills?*
    3. *If so, how should the writing workshop be implemented in a primary grade setting?*
3. Importance of the Study (heading, centered)
  - A. Tell why this study is important.
  - B. Example: *The information here will be of value to. . . It will also provide elementary teachers with a plan to . . .*
4. Definition of Terms (heading, centered)
  - A. List important terms.
  - B. Briefly describe each term using one or two complete sentences.

### CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1. This builds the foundation for your thesis. Here you provide background information to support your question or to put your research topic in a theoretical context. Also, you want to see what others have found related to your topic that may be of use in your action research.
2. Gather material. Consider using 25—40 sources. Use current, peer-reviewed journal articles whenever possible.
3. After reading each piece, take notes listing the citation at the top and only those items of importance below. Use headings whenever possible.  
This will make it easier to organize your notes.
4. Begin thinking about the structure. Some people like to web or outline to find structure initially. As data in the form of your notes are gathered, begin to look for categories. Your initial structures should be very flexible because they most likely will change.
5. As you write this chapter, use headings and subheadings to break up the text. It is very hard to read several pages of text without headings.
6. Describe empirical research related to your topic. When describing research studies, try to use one or two sentences to describe each of the following: (a) the question or purpose of the study, (b) the number and type of participants, (c) the treatment or conditions involved, (d) the type of measures, and (e) the results and conclusions.

7. This chapter ends with a brief summary of the major points covered that is generally about one paragraph in length. Sometimes the summary is put in list form with each point cited.

### **CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY**

1. Participants (heading, centered)
  - A. Describe the people involved. The reader should know ages, number, gender, ethnic makeup, and anything else you feel is pertinent to your research.
  - B. Describe the environment: classroom, school, or community.
2. Materials (heading, centered)
  - A. Describe any materials used in your research. If you are using a particular curriculum, product, or procedure, describe it fully. Include relevant examples in an appendix. Remember that the reader knows nothing.
  - B. Describe all types of measuring devices. If surveys, checklists, rubrics, or rating charts are used, describe them briefly, then include a sample in the appendix.
3. Procedures (heading, centered)
  - A. Describe the length of the study.
  - B. Describe how you collected the data, how much, and how often.
  - C. Use past tense in describing all aspects of your methodology and findings. Research always exists in the past, in a specific time and place.
  - D. If you use a special curriculum, technique, or procedure, let the reader know exactly what it is. This section should be described in such a way that one could pick up this chapter and replicate your procedures.
4. Analysis (heading, centered)
  - A. Describe how you will organize and analyze your data. Inductive analysis will most likely be used for your field notes and other qualitative data.
  - B. Quantitative data will generally be analyzed using totals and mean scores. Here a simple comparative analysis will be made. It is outside the scope of this book to talk about statistical methods; however, statistical analysis is also an option.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

1. Restate your research questions.
2. Describe the data that answer that question (this chapter is often the longest chapter in an action research thesis).
3. Describe the themes, categories, and patterns.
4. Use illustrative examples for each category.
5. Use tables, graphs, figures, and artwork as necessary.
6. Use headings and subheadings to make the structure readily apparent.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

1. Overview of the Study (heading, centered)
  - A. Restate the general purpose of the study.
  - B. Briefly describe how the results were obtained.
2. Summary of Findings (heading, centered)
  - A. Provide a brief summary of the findings.
  - B. This may be one to two paragraphs.
3. Conclusions (heading, centered)
  - A. Move beyond the data. Tell what these results mean.
  - B. Describe possible implications of the results.
4. Recommendations (heading, centered)
  - A. Describe how the results might be used in your classroom.
  - B. Describe how the results may be used to bring understanding to other classrooms or situations.
  - C. Sometimes the conclusions and recommendations merge.
5. Limitations of the Study (heading, centered)
  - A. Describe those things that may have hindered or affected your findings.

The last word

I have found that graduate students like to have some idea of what goes into a thesis; however, I once reiterate: The structure described above is a flexible guideline that should be adapted to meet the needs of your particular questions.

Source: Chapter 15 Action Research As Masters Thesis