



# **EMBU UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

*(A Constituent college of the University of Nairobi)*

## **PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST PROPOSAL AND THESIS WRITING WORKSHOP**

**For**

**MA., MBA., MEd., MSc and PhD Students**

**Held on 16<sup>th</sup> To 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at Embu University College**



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**For MA., MBA., MEd., MSc and PhD Students**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

**Venue: Embu University College**

**Organized by: Directorate of Postgraduate Studies  
Embu University College**

**Compiled and Edited  
by  
Prof Nancy Budambula  
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Overview

The first Proposal and Thesis Writing Workshop for postgraduate students at Embu University College was held on 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The workshop brought together 84 postgraduate students who were trained on research proposal writing, research design, data collection & analysis and thesis writing. The participants were also sensitized on what is expected from a postgraduate student from the proposal stage, through thesis to publication stage.

### Facilitators

The lead facilitators were:

Facilitator	Title of presentation
1) Dr. Njoki Wane University of Toronto	Thesis Proposal
2) Prof. Jospeter Mbuba Visiting Scholar Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne	USA A General Overview of Contemporary Research Methods: Efficient Research Design, Effective Data Collection Instruments and Attendant Modalities
3) Prof Simon Thurania Chairman, Department of Education and Social Sciences Embu University College	Thesis Writing School of Education and Social Sciences
4) Dr. Benson M. Mwangi Senior Lecturer and Chairman, Department of Biological Sciences, Embu University College	Writing Skills and Presentations
5) Prof. Nancy Budambula Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies Embu University College	A Postgraduate Student's Journey From Proposal Through Thesis to Publication

### Principal's Remarks

In his opening remarks, the Principal, Embu University College emphasized the role of postgraduate research in a university. He reiterated the commitment of management of EUC to postgraduate studies and the need for postgraduate students to publish their results.

### Student Supervisor Relationship

The student supervisor relationship dominated the plenary discussions. It was agreed that a healthy student supervisor relationship is core to the success of a student's research project. It is therefore **recommended** that a workshop be held to sensitize supervisors and all academic staff on effective supervision, mentoring and postgraduate student management.

## **DAY ONE    16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2016**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Embu University College (EUC) is cognizance of the fact that Proposal and Thesis writing are some of the most challenging components in postgraduate work and contribute significantly to success or failure of any graduate student. In this regard, EUC through the Directorate of Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS), organized a two day Workshop on Proposal and Thesis Writing.

On the first day, the workshop started at 9.00am as scheduled, with a word of prayer from one of the participants. The Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) introduced the members of the Board of Postgraduate Studies. The Director further requested the Chairman of the Board, Deputy Principal Academics, Research and Extension (DPARE), to invite the Principal of EUC to make his remarks and officially open the Workshop.

### **DEPUTY PRINCIPAL (ARE) REMARKS**

The DPARE, Prof Kotut, in his remarks noted that EUC being a young institution it is good to start doing things in the right way and with big plans. He further pointed out that currently EUC has postgraduate students across all the schools except the School of Nursing. The DPARE stated that the purpose of the workshop is to provide a platform to exchange views, share knowledge and for students to interact with supervisors. He observed that a slight difference exists between thesis and proposal writing.

Overall, postgraduate work need not be taken as impossible. That Francis of Assisi once quoted “Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible”. Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence. It is important for postgraduate students to be ready for correction and progressive improvement

The DPARE requested the Principal to receive a donation of books from a visiting scholar from Indiana University, Prof. Jospeter Mbuba, who was also a workshop facilitator. The DPARE urged the participants to make good use of the books. After the session DPARE thanked both the visiting scholar and the Principal for giving and receiving the donation respectively and later made his remarks.

## PRINCIPAL'S REMARKS

The Principal, Embu University College (EUC), Prof. Daniel Mugendi, Welcomed the participants to the workshop and urged them to take advantage of the opportunity to learn and interact with the facilitators for maximum benefit in their postgraduate studies. Emphasized the importance of research in academic life. He further emphasized that excellent research begins with a well prepared research proposal that clearly outlines the objectives of research and the methodology that will be used.

The Principal reiterated that EUC Management was committed to support the growth of Postgraduate studies in the College. The management had demonstrated this by:

- Establishing a Directorate of Post graduate studies
- Appointing of the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS)
- Providing research space –laboratories, library, e-resources
- Recruiting quality and competent staff with excellent research, publications and postgraduate supervision experience
- Allocating research space in the University farm
- Organizing workshops and seminars like this where students can meet and share ideas and experiences with role models and mentor

The Principal recognized the contribution of postgraduate programmes in the realization of EUC's Mission and Vision especially in; staff development/training, web ranking, promoting quality research in a university, growing the image and standing of EUC, encouraging innovation and resolution of community needs. This workshop will benefit postgraduate students by improving their skills in proposal writing, equipping them with skills in writing fundable grant proposal and will further help the students in produce quality publications.

Reporting of results through publications and dissemination completes the research cycle. The Principal noted that in the past it was enough to write a thesis and keep it in the university library. At present it is now generally agreed that postgraduate research findings should be shared through publications. Over the last two decades it has become increasingly common for universities to require that postgraduate students to publish their work before they are allowed to graduate. To keep up with the global trends EUC will gradually move in this direction.

After making these remarks the Principal declared the Proposal and Thesis Writing Workshop officially opened.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Five presentations were made up to equip graduate students with knowledge and skills in their journey in postgraduate studies.

### **FIRST PRESENTATION.**

**PRESENTER: PROF. NANCY BUDAMBULA** (*Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies, EUC*)

### **TOPIC: A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT'S JOURNEY FROM PROPOSAL THROUGH THESIS TO PUBLICATION**

#### **Highlights on Regulations for Master and Doctoral degrees**

##### **Masters Degrees-Duration**

Minimum - 2 academic years.

Maximum- 4 academic years for fulltime and 5 year for part time student.

##### **Doctoral Degrees-Duration**

Fulltime Minimum- 3 academic years and Maximum 5 academic years.

Part time Minimum- 5 academic years and Maximum 7 academic years.

#### **Provisional admission for PhD**

Three months to prepare and defend proposal –up to school level

School then forwards proposal to College BPS for consideration for substantive registration.

#### **Supervision of projects and thesis**

- Supervisors recommended by Department then School to BPS
- Appointed by College BPS on behalf of Academic Board and not by Students.
- Statutes provide for 2 supervisors-stop overloading proposals with Supervisors.
- Additional supervisors will be appointed when necessary.
- CVs of non EUC staff members must be provided and will be vetted before appointment.
- Though not written it is expected there will be a lead supervisor in the supervision team

#### **Obligations of the supervisor**

- To supervise and direct the student- as per appointment letter.
- To report/notify BPS of non-progressing student.

#### **Obligations of the student**

- To do his/her work.
- Consult supervisor at least once a month.
- submit progress reports every 3 months for Masters and 6 months for PhD.
- Give at least 2 seminars for Masters and at least 4 seminars for PhD.
- Intent to submit 3 months before submission.
- Submit 6 copies of proposal and 6 copies of thesis for examination.



## **BPS**

- In case of disagreement between student and supervisor BPS Appoints arbitration Committee.

## **Supervisor Management**

- Choose someone you can work with and who has time for students.
- Allow lead supervisor to identify other members of the supervision team.
- Maintain professional conduct and contact with your supervisor.
- Avoid meetings at odd times or places-set boundaries.
- Flee buying and selling of goods in the market place.
- Learn the expectations.
- Strive to outdo their academic expectations from you.
- Avoid unreasonable demands on their time.
- Know preferred mode of communication-call, sms, email, verbal.
- Learn to read their moods.
- Avoid fights with your supervisor. S/he is your mentor.
- If the worst happens seek help-open door policy, don't just vanish.

## **Project and Thesis examination**

- Projects are processed like any other examination
- Thesis submission - Department to School to BPS for examination processing
- At defense one of the following decisions will be made:
  - 1) Award subject to minor corrections-resubmit 3 months/4months for MSc/PhD.- no new examination required
  - 2) Award subject to major corrections-resubmit 6months/8months for MSc/PhD. - no new examination required
  - 3) Revise and resubmit for examination 8-12 months - dangerous place to be (only one resubmission).
  - 4) Do not award.
- The BPS Directorate is an examination Centre. Deans, Chairmen of Departments (CoDs) and Supervisors to follow up examination of thesis not students.

## **Submission of Thesis**

To be checked before a thesis is accepted for examination:

- Admission letter/substantive registration.
- Approved Proposal and approved supervisors.
- Progress reports (at least 2 for Masters, 4 for PhD).
- Intent to submit.
- Fees clearance.
- Complete list to be availed later in the year.



## Concerns

-Most PhD students have expired provisional registration.-Some Masters and PhD Students at EUC collecting data without an approved proposal or approved supervisors.

## Publications by postgraduate students

- Research does not end at thesis. Communicate-locally and globally through publications.
- Generally accepted-globally
  - Masters should give at least 1 paper
  - PhD should give at least 3 papers
- Proposals to be discreetly evaluated if they can produce above publications in refereed Journals
- Rule already in effect in major universities (private and public) in Kenya
- Rule on its way to EUC

## How do I publish my work?

- Duty of the student to read widely and draft the manuscript.
- Duty of the supervisor to guide the student.
- Student first author and principal investigator or senior scientist last author/corresponding author.

## Some guidelines

- Literature review should indicate type of journals likely to publish the work.
- Visit Journal website, see instructions to author, see sample papers.
- Evaluate your work honestly, don't be over ambitious.
- Write the results chapter and use it to determine the quality of journal that can accept.
- In general online submission journals faster than hardcopy ones.
- PhD Candidate - approach it objective by objective.
- Publishing is not for faint hearted, prepare for rejections, try again and again.
- Reflect manuscript preparation and publishing in work plan.

## The kind of student every supervisor doesn't want

- Doesn't keep time.
- One who expects the supervisor to do the research and write for them.
- Brings corrections after several reminders.
- Returns corrections undone/doesn't explain why corrections are not done
- Overstays with work, brings in a hurry and expects supervisor to read overnight.
- Is a 'much know' and doesn't consult supervisor.
- Doesn't follow instructions.
- One who doesn't pick or return calls.
- Always defensive/ready to fight.

## Examination of Research

1. Examiners are extremely busy, avoid annoying them.
2. Examiners are extremely thorough, don't deceive yourself they won't notice.
3. Projects and Theses are examinations and examination regulations apply
4. Don't submit work that is not ready for examination.
5. Caution-Avoid
  - Plagiarism
  - Cheating
  - Writer for Hire

✚ At defense a candidate must demonstrate mastery of subject and new contribution(s) to science/knowledge.

## “Building the Research Muscle”

### Emerging concerns

- Poor quality proposals.
- Students are not reading.
- Citation of old literature without updates.
- Sketchy hurriedly prepared proposals.
- Students at EUC don't know how to use E-resources- generously and freely available at EUC Library

### Intervention measures

- Proposal and thesis writing training workshop such as this one.
- School and departmental proposal and project/thesis clinics.
- Prescreening of proposals before tabling at college BPS.
- Departments and Schools please screen proposals before forwarding.
- Compulsory E-resources training August 2015 for all postgraduate students in EUC.

### Parting shot

- ✚ Postgraduate research is not for the passive individual who hopes to get a degree certificate without effort.
- ✚ A postgraduate student must be research centered; think research, do research, visualize research, dream research.
- ✚ Postgraduate studies call for hard work, determination, devotion, focus, passion.

## SECOND PRESENTATION

**PRESENTER: PROF.NJOKI WANE** (*Visiting Scholar, University of Toronto*)

### TOPIC: TOPIC SELECTION AND PROPOSAL PREPARATIONS

#### Outline of Research Proposal

- Preamble.
- Introduction.
- Thesis statement.
- Literature Review.
- Theoretical framework.
- Methodology.
- Work plan including time table.
- Implications of research.

#### Quote by Kumar

“Knowledge is not outside oneself. It is already there. It is covered with a golden disc of illusions. By being aware, awake and present in the moment one is able to release the free spirit within... (Kumar, 2003, p.61-62).

#### Initial steps

- Make an outline of your thesis proposal before you start writing.
- Prepare figures and tables.
- Start reading widely on your topic.
- Talk about your idea to your supervisor and ask him/her what they think?
- Methods Purpose.
- The thesis topic addresses a significant problem.
- An organized plan is in place for collecting or obtaining data to help solve the problem.
- The methods of data analysis have been identified and are appropriate to the data set.
- Identified an issue that you would like to investigate.
- Significance, new knowledge to your area of specialization.
- Supervisor - Good compatibility means, you have a ‘good marriage’ that will not end up splitting before the end of your journey.

#### Title page

- ✚ A catchy title – that should give an idea of your study.
- ✚ Authors Name, Institution, Department.

## **Abstract**

- The abstract is a brief summary of your thesis proposal
- Length about 200 words
- It should have brief introduction
- Make the key statement of your thesis
- Give a summary of how you want to address the issue
- Include a possible implication of your work

## **Table of contents**

- ◆ List all headings and sub-headings with page numbers
- ◆ Indent subheadings

## **Introduction**

- Your introduction sets the context for your proposed study and must capture the reader's interest.
- Background literature
- Theories
- Methods
- Significance.

## **Thesis Statement**

The statement can take the form of hypothesis, research questions, project statement or goal statement. That is in a couple of sentences; state your thesis. This statement should capture the essence of the intended study.

## **Literature Review**

An extensive literature review of your topic is a must. A good literature review will enable you to highlight the gaps that you want to study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theories employed for your study must speak to your topic. You must provide a rationale as to why you are situating your work on them.

## **Methodology**

The methodology contains an overall description of your approach, materials, and procedures, such as

- What methods will be used?
- How will data be collected and analyzed?
- What materials will be used?

In your methodology you include technique, procedure, equipment, detail limitations, assumptions, and range of validity.

### **Work plan including time table**

This section provide detailed plan of your work until completion. What you are supposed to do is to list the stages of your project in a table format, indicating the deadlines you have set you have for yourself for each stage of the project. In this section, you can also discuss any particular challenges that need to be overcome

### **Implications of Research**

What are the implication of your research, what new knowledge will the proposed project produce that we do not already know? Why is it worth knowing, what are the major implications?

## THIRD PRESENTATION

**PRESENTER: PROF. JOSPETER MBUBA** (*Department of Public Policy Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne USA*)

### TOPIC: RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### What is Research?

Research is defined as;

**Merriam-Webster Dictionary:** Careful study and investigation for the purpose of discovering and explaining new knowledge.

The systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

Performing a methodical study in order to prove a hypothesis or answer a specific question.

Research must be systematic and follow a series of steps and a rigid standard protocol.

#### Why Do We Do Research?

##### Purposes of Research

**1. Exploratory Research** – research in which the primary purpose is to examine a little-understood issue to develop new ideas and move towards redefined research questions.

Researchers may need to first use Exploratory Research in order to compose a more extensive follow up study.

**2. Descriptive Research** main aim is to “paint” a picture using words or numbers and to present a profile, a classification or an outline of steps to answer the questions such as who, what, when, where, or how (but not why).

**3. Explanatory Research** – main aim is to explain why events occur and to build or test theory. It looks for causes and reasons.

**4. Evaluation Research** – main aim is to assess the effectiveness of a program or policy, and to provide recommendations for improvement

Evaluation research takes two forms: formative evaluation and summative evaluation

- Formative evaluation provides information for program improvement
- Summative evaluation provides information on whether to continue or discontinue a program.

## **Research Categories**

Research takes two main categories:

1. Quantitative research uses numerical data
2. Qualitative research uses text and visually-based data

### **Examples of Quantitative Research.**

- High crime rate is due to police incompetence.
- Most people shout for help, not call police.
- Police enforce the law differentially.
- Risky to get too close to police.
- Risky to report crime to police.
- Police use excessive force most of the time.
- Police arrest only poor people.
- Police provide an important service to community.
- Overall you are satisfied with police in crime fighting.
- Overall you are satisfied with police response to distress.
- Never volunteer any info to police; crime is their duty.

### **Example of Qualitative Research**

“once you are in prison, it doesn’t matter what you did; you are controlled until you almost feel like a little kid; you have to be told when to eat, when to go to the toilet, what to wear, when to go to sleep, and you miss everything; you miss eating ice cream, holding a TV remote, taking a shower, all those matter a lot.”

## **Common Research Methods**

### **1. Survey and Interview**

These methods use a written questionnaire or formal interviews to gather information from a large number of respondents. Difference is in administration (face-to-face and remote)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each over the other?

### **2. Experiments & Surveys**

What’s the difference?

Survey research records many answers to the same questions

Experimental research manipulates a situation to record different reactions

### **3. Nonreactive Research**

This is the unobtrusive collection of data that have usually been left behind by others

Two main types of nonreactive research:

1. Existing Documents/Statistics Research
2. Content Analysis



### **Existing Documents/Statistics Research**

Involves collection and reanalysis of existing quantitative data

Examining public records such as health records, economic data, enrollment statistics, etc.

Problem is, data may be old and outdated

Extensive examination of statistics can be overwhelming

### **Content Analysis**

A nonreactive method used to examine the content, or information and symbols, contained in written documents or other media

Can be either quantitative or qualitative

Allows researchers to examine specific details in certain materials that are overlooked.

### **Ethnographic Field Research**

Researcher engages the natural environment of the subjects for a close, personal, and highly detailed understanding of the subjects' culture

Researcher joins the subject group and learns everything about the subjects by observations and interviews

*In situ* research yields a “*thick description*” of the reality

### **Sampling.**

What's a Sample and how do you draw it?

### **The Vocabulary of Sampling**

- Sample: A small set of cases that are randomly or non-randomly selected from a large pool for generalization to the entire population
- Sample Case: A single unit from a sample
- Population: The abstract idea of a large group of cases from which a sample is drawn and to which results from a sample are generalized
- Target Population: The concretely specified large group of cases from which a sample is drawn for purposes of generalization
- Sampling Frame: A specific list within a population from which a sample is chosen (eg. telephone directory, driving license records, voter registration).

### **Random Samples**

- ✚ Random sample: A sample that utilizes a random number table or other random process so that each element in the population has an equal probability of being selected
- ✚ Simple Random Sample: A random sample that utilizes a sampling frame and a pure random process to select cases so that each element in the population has an equal chance of being selected.

### **Common Types of Sampling**

- ✚ Systematic Sampling: A random sample in which every  $k$ th case in the sample frame is selected using a sampling interval
- ✚ Stratified Sampling: A random sample in which the researcher first identifies a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories and then selects cases in numbers that are proportional to the size of each category.

### **Haphazard and Quota Sampling**

- ✚ Haphazard Sampling: A nonrandom sample in which the researcher selects anyone who happens to come across.
- ✚ Quota Sampling: A nonrandom sample in which the researcher first identifies general categories into which cases will be selected, and then selects cases to reach a predetermined number in each category.

### **Purposive and Snowball Sampling**

- ✚ Purposive Sampling: A nonrandom sample in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult-to-reach population.
- ✚ Snowball Sampling: A nonrandom sample where researcher begins with one case, and then, based on information about interrelationships from that case, identifies other cases, and repeats the process again and again.

### **Hidden Populations & Mixed Sampling**

- ✚ Hidden Populations: A population of people who engage in clandestine, socially disapproved, or concealed activities and who are difficult to locate and study (e.g., drug dealers, prostitutes, homosexuals, etc.).

### **Case Study**

- ✚ A focus on a selected case. In-depth understanding of a case.
- ✚ Draws heavily on qualitative methods but can be mixed method.
- ✚ Is one of the most frequently used designs in research.

### **Focus Group Discussion**

- ✚ Involves unstructured collective interviews on a group of about 12 respondents sitting together
- ✚ Researcher facilitates discussion by posing questions to the group
- ✚ Notes are taken and later transcribed for coding and eventual analysis

### **Mixed Methods Research**

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques, surveys and interviews, focus group discussions, and so forth, in a single study or series of studies on the same topic.

## **Scientific Research and Time**

Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Studies

### **Cross-Sectional Research**

Study that examines information on many cases at one point in time.

Advantage: it is simple and inexpensive

Disadvantage: it cannot illustrate change

### **Longitudinal Research**

Examines data across more than one time point

Usually more complex and expensive

Better at showing trends and cause & effect

## **Literature Review**

### **What is it and why do we do it?**

Involves reviewing of previous studies in order to:

- Better understand the object of study
- Refine our research question
- Suggest the most successful research method

### **What materials do we review?**

#### **Sources of Relevant Literature**

- Periodicals - Newspapers and magazines
- Scholarly Journals – peer-reviewed research works
- Scholarly Books – Edited Books/Readers
- Original research for Masters and PhD degrees
- Government Documents – reports and hearings
- Policy Reports, conference presentations, etc.

#### **Locating Relevant Materials**

- Google: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Google Scholar: [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)
- Library shelves
- Library website

## **After Assembling Your Reading, What Next?**

### **Evaluate suitability of the articles for citation**

After you locate published studies, read and evaluate them

First, look at the title carefully

A good title is specific and indicates nature of research without describing results

### **Evaluate suitability of the article**

Next, read the abstract

A good abstract summarizes critical information about a study

Abstract gives the study's purpose, tells methods used, and highlights major findings

Use the title and abstract to determine initial relevance of the study for your purpose

### **What Does a Good Lit Review Look Like?**

A good literature review requires planning and clear writing

Wrong way to write a review is to list a series of research reports with a summary of the findings of each

Right way to write a review is to organize common findings or arguments together.

### **Data Collection**

Data Collection Instruments

Most common data-collection instruments are interviews and surveys - they both use questionnaires

### **How do you create an effective questionnaire?**

#### **Be Clear and Precise**

Bad QN: Tell me what you think about devolved government?

Good QN: On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 highest, how much do you think devolution has succeeded?

#### **Avoid Ambiguity**

Ambiguous question: How many cups of coffee or tea do you drink per a day?

Solution - Separate the question into two

(1) How many cups of coffee do you drink per day?

(2) How many cups of tea do you drink per day?

#### **Accommodate all possible responses**

Bad question: What car do you own?

(i) Nissan

(ii) Toyota

(iii) Honda

**Solution:**

Add all possible responses.

1. Do you own a car (yes/no)?
2. If yes, what make? (Circle all that apply)
  - (i) Nissan
  - (ii) Toyota
  - (iii) Honda
  - (iv) Chevy
  - (v) Other

Match Question with Answer Options

**Question:** Have you had pain in the last week?

(i) Never (ii) Seldom (iii) Often (iv) Very often

**Solution:** Reword either question or answer to match.

Have you had pain in the last week? (Yes/No)

How often have you had pain in the last week?

(i) Never (ii) Seldom (iii) Often (iv) Very Often

**Things to Avoid**

- Avoid jargon
- Emotional language (Do you support introduction of welfare for terminally ill destitute children?)
- Double-barreled questions: (Do you like the taste and the feel of this brand?)
- Leading questions (You don't smoke, do you?)
- Overlapping response categories. Example - Age: 1-10, 10-20, 20-30

**Things to Keep in Mind**

- Be sure to introduce the study to the respondent
- Begin with the simplest and least intrusive questions
- Move steadily towards the more demanding questions
- End with the most challenging questions
- Remember to thank the respondent at the end
- Think of what you will do with the answer to your Question.

## **Types of Questions**

1). Open-ended question:

Research question in which respondents are free to offer any answer they wish.

What are your views about devolved government?

2). Close-ended question:

Research question in which respondents must choose from a fixed set of answers

On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rank the success of devolution?

## **Research Variables**

What are they?

### **Research Variables**

- **Variable:**

A concept that varies, or an empirical measure that can take on multiple values (e.g. gender, religion, occupation)

- **Attributes**

Categories of a variable (e.g. male, Islam, nurse)

- **Independent variable**

A cause variable that produces an effect on a dependent variable in a causal hypothesis.

- **Dependent variable**

The effect variable that is impacted by an Independent variable in a causal hypothesis.

- **Intervening variable**

A variable that comes between the independent and dependent variables and shows the link or causal mechanism between them.

## **FORTH PRESENTATION**

### **PRESENTER: PROF. SIMON THURANIRA**

*(School of Education and Social Sciences, Embu University College)*

### **TOPIC: THESIS WRITING & DEFENCE**

#### **Introduction**

- Writing in order to think, rather than thinking in order to write.
- Your topic your companion- choose a topic that interests you.
- Begin and continue working on your thesis 30 minutes or 1 hour every day.
- Attitude change-imagine yourself a scholar!
- Best way to begin is not sitting in the library and writing chapter 1-approach your thesis through imagination-in your mind.
- Develop passion, curiosity and questions about your thesis.
- Are you writing thesis for purpose of the masters-professional growth-as means to an.
- End or an end in itself-but remember it can help one learn producing scholarly work.
- Discuss with colleagues, advisor, spouses etc.

#### **Choosing a Topic**

- What do you want from your thesis? Curiosity, passion, & ownership.
- Writing a thesis is very much like being in a long-term r/ship: there are likely to be some very good times and some perfectly dreaded ones, and it helps if you like what you've chosen.
- This relationship requires you to give up a lot of other pieces of your life, work tirelessly and post-phone or differ gratification.
- Your advisor can also help you choose a topic.
- He/she can help you clarify and interrogate your ideas.
- Choose your topic based on your area of specialization.
- Course work is a source of a topic-which particular courses, assignments, projects and presentation held your interests, or what interests you in other peoples' work.

#### **Choosing an Advisor/Supervisor**

This is one of the most important decisions you (we) make in the thesis writing.

- Ideally, your advisor would be a mentor, expert, coach, editor, counselor, guide, teacher, and someone to encourage you and not to discourage.
- The advisor can help or hinder thesis writing, but can't make it happen.
- For PhD in some countries, candidates have committees.
- You have to use your advisor well. Don't write a thesis that belong to the advisor-don't be
- Establish clear guidelines with advisor e.g. what time to call, regular meetings and timelines.



- Be realistic about what your responsibilities are and don't expect him/her to think for you or work for you.
- Don't through tantrums; remember your advisor is there to help you improve your work and not to rubber stamp it. Let your advisor tell you the truth the way he sees it.
- Stay in-charge of your own writing; remember you are the owner. Speak up but politely

### Doing Research & Thesis Writing

- How you do research varies depending on field and topic.
- Know the gate-keepers in the field.
- As you collect data make notes.
- All the researchers have to transform the results/data from the field into written form.
- Research requires that you engage your mind in the material you collect; interrogate it, ask it questions and act upon it.
- Read other peoples' thesis to get ideas, but avoid the temptation to copy.
- You begin writing by making a mess, then you start to clean it up.
- Avoid assigning yourself more than you can accomplish.

### Doing Research & Thesis Writing

- The best way to get into a good writing rhythm is to *write every day*. Create a writing addiction.
- Avoid lifting other peoples' work-plagiarism is serious academic crime.
- Have deadlines.
- There are always interruptions-external-work stations, pregnancies & internal-ambivalence, static, writing scared.
- In dealing with interruptions, try not to panic, seek help from the support group and close people.
- Keep a hard copy of every version of your thesis.
- Learn computers.

### Thesis Support Group (SG)

Choose your support group carefully e.g. people you trust, classmates, hardworking.

- ✚ SG offers good company-you are in the same boat, supportive atmosphere, reliable people
- ✚ Who can encourage, empathize, criticize, cheer you, push you, readers, edit for you and maybe you can reciprocate.
- ✚ Avoid doing the same work or copying and pasting.
- ✚ SG should be focused and have a group leader.
- ✚ Thesis writing is a lonely process. SG=Happy moments

## Thesis Defense

- Avoid hitting the wall; ‘so near yet so far’
- Thesis defense-investigate what to expect during the defense. Ask your advisor, other students or lecturers.
- Defenses are not mere formalities. Someone can fail.
- Defense is also a test for the advisor.
- If your advisor has been seriously reading your thesis, then it’s likely that you will pass.
- It’s rare for the thesis to be accepted without revisions.
- Sometimes you feel like not parting with your topic you’ve been buddies.
- Welcome to a very often boring, old, odd company of highly educated women & men!
- CELEBRATE! Allow yourself to indulge in the pleasure of a major accomplishment.

## Conclusion

- ✚ Don’t hire someone to write for you. You will feel guilty for the rest of your life.
- ✚ Writing requires dedication and seriousness.
- ✚ You can have your thesis published as a book or article.
- ✚ Ask questions and consult.
- ✚ Read widely.
- ✚ Don’t stop there-go for the PhD!

## **FIFTH PRESENTATIONS.**

**PRESENTER: DR. B. M. MWANGI** (*Department of Biological Sciences Embu University College*)

### **TOPIC: WRITING SKILLS AND PRESENTATIONS**

#### **Professional writing**

- Good Proposals are professionally written
- Professional writing is about action
- Its about change
- Its about getting results
- Making something happen
- It's not about "informing" or "sharing"
- Professional writing skills are acquired through practice (do it yourself principle) Review of proposals

#### **Reviewers of research proposals,**

Whether they are faculty, funding sponsors or peer reviewers they:

- Want a clear idea of what the researcher plans to do,
- How and when various tasks are to be accomplished.
- Whether the researcher is capable of successfully following the proposed plan of action.

#### **What do reviewers look at in proposals?**

1. Is the title of the proposal appropriate and clear?
2. Have the procedures been presented in enough detail to enable a reader to duplicate them?
3. Do you find any content repeated or duplicated?

A common fault is repetition in the text of data in tables or figures.

#### **Key aspects that reviewers check for**

- Significance of the proposed research
- Specific objectives to be achieved
- Variables to be measured
- Research ability
- Feasibility in terms of time available, budget, subject availability, Facilities, and equipment, researcher experience)
- Ethical considerations

### Approaches to professional writing

- ✚ You are the expert
- ✚ You have the first-hand knowledge to the situation
- ✚ You know more than the reader
- ✚ You are the one who has collected and analyzed the data
- ✚ Your understanding of the situation matters

### Responsibilities of the proposal writer

- ✚ Investigate the situation using a range of tools and points of view.
- ✚ Analyze – understand the causes of the problem to be solved.
- ✚ Describe and explain – help your donor/examiner/supervisor to see the situation the way you see it.
- ✚ Develop a plan of action – set objectives, devise strategy, schedule activities, develop a monitoring and evaluation mechanism and management plan.

### Rule of thumb in proposal writing

Persuade your reader that:

- There is a problem
- The problem is worth solving
- It can be solved
- You can do it

Problem statement is the most critical part of the proposal. Most people look at this before anything else.

### Proposal format - Title Page

- Title (**not more than 20 words**).
- Authors-full name followed by the highest qualification in brackets (e.g. B.Sc., B.E.D and M.Sc.).
- Registration number below the name.
- Signature and date below registration number.
- Department name below the signature line.
- A statement below department about the degree being fulfilled (e.g. “A research proposal submitted for the degree of Master in Science in the School of Pure and Applied Sciences of Embu University College)
- Supervisors (at least two) beginning with the main university supervisor, listed by title, signature and date below each supervisor

## **Abstract**

- Abstract is a brief overview of the proposal
- Should not exceed 500 words for proposals submitted to SPAS.
- The abstract should contain
  - Background to the study (2-3 sentences)
  - Problem statement/aim of the study
  - Study objectives
  - Summary of methods
  - Data analysis
  - Study significance

## **Acronyms/abbreviations**

- Explain meaning of abbreviations (e.g. AIDS, WHO, HIV), and acronyms (such as child, Adolescents etc.)
- Don't abbreviate everything, apply only to internationally accepted abbreviations

## **Introduction**

- Background - In this section, you need to show how your intended research builds on what has already been done in the area.
- Problem statement
  - The problem should be stated in such a way that its importance is apparent to the reviewer
- Research questions
- Research hypothesis
- Research objectives
- Justification (or significance) of the problem

## **Review of literature**

- This involves identifying and searching for information on a topic and developing a comprehensive picture of the state of knowledge on that topic.
- The breadth and depth of the literature review will depend on your knowledge, the level of study and purpose

## **Methods**

Should be thorough covering the following;

- The research design?
- The sampling plan, instrumentation, specific procedures and analytic strategies.
- Data collection methods

## **References**

- All books and articles cited in your proposal must be listed alphabetically according to the author's name, the same way they are cited in the text.
- Additional lines after the first, should be indented at least three spaces from the margin of the first line point to remember whenever you write, you are writing for action hence, the following aspects are critical as they contribute to the results.
  - how you organize your writing,
  - how clear your ideas are,
  - The language you use,
  - Your style,
  - And correctness of your writing

### **Common problems with proposal writing**

1. Lack of clear objectives
2. Poorly-organized and difficult to follow
3. Lack of conciseness
4. Lack of clarity
5. Poor use of language
6. Poor style
7. Poor spelling, grammar and punctuation

#### **1. Lack of clear objectives**

Proposal must be 100% clear

- Avoid providing too much information, most of which will most likely be irrelevant and Unnecessary – makes reading extremely boring
- Have a clear progression of ideas
- Let there be clear distinction between major and minor ideas
- Avoid to be seen as confused, with no clear purpose in mind
- Let your objectives be SMART

#### **2. Poorly-organized and difficult to follow**

##### **a) Write effective paragraphs**

- A paragraph should only expound on one idea. If you have two important things to say, write two paragraphs.
- A paragraph should not be deeper than your page width.
- Paragraphs must connect with one another
- All paragraphs must start with their conclusion
- The supporting data/explanations should come after the main point.

### Rule of Thumb

- Conclusions come BEFORE evidence.
- Use the **inverted pyramid format**
- First sentence of each paragraph sums up or concludes from the data.
- Then follow in decreasing order of importance or go from general to specific
- The first sentence is called the TOPIC SENTENCE

### b) Writing effective topic sentences

#### Examples

- There are various causes for underemployment in urban areas.
- The non-formal education programme has had the following results.
- There are three main reasons for the high rate of HIV infection in the county.
- Mediation has led to three important results.

#### Task

Read the following passages and write an appropriate topic sentence

Mpeketoni District can be reached by driving 14 hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle from the capital city of Kenya. The winding road passes through dense forests and is prone to banditry attacks. Many parts of the district can only be reached on foot. Daily life in Mpeketoni is a challenge for the people, most of whom are farmers. Access to education and social services is lower in Mpeketoni than in other parts of Kenya.

#### Suggested solution

- The text has two ideas, which is against the rules of paragraphing
- ..... and .....

Two ideas in the text

1. Location, which we conclude is remote; and
2. The other describes the status of social services

#### Possible topic sentence

Mpeketoni is one of the most remote and undeserved parts of Kenya. Mpeketoni District can be reached by driving 14 hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle from the capital city of Kenya. The winding road passes through dense forests and is prone to banditry attacks. Many parts of the district can only be reached on foot. Daily life in Mpeketoni is a challenge for the people, most of whom are farmers. Access to education and social services is lower in Mpeketoni than in other parts of Kenya.

### 3. Lack of conciseness

- To be concise, avoid too much irrelevant information
- Avoid unnecessary details



- Proposal should not be too long (masters= 15 pages less references and appendices; PhD = 21 pages)
- If too long, then it takes too long to say anything and important ideas are lost
- Avoid causing fatigue to the reader.

#### **4. Lack of clarity**

- Avoid long sentences – sentences should be short (average 15 words) so as not strain the reader.
- Use shorter, more **familiar words** wherever possible (avoid words such as flabbergasting, debilitating)
- Avoid writing to show off your vocabulary pushing your reader to look for a dictionary
- Do not use too much linker such as together with; as well as, etc. as this makes our sentences less clear and reduce our readers ability to follow our message
- Long words and long sentences destroy your readers' concentration

#### **How to reduce long sentences**

Reduce unnecessary words

##### **Example 1**

The meeting between community leaders and project staff afforded us an opportunity to share perspectives on progress.

##### **Edited**

- The meeting between community leaders and project staff allowed us to share perspectives on progress.

##### **Example 2**

- As a consequence of the awareness raising activities in the district, the number of girls enrolled at primary level has almost doubled.

##### **• Edited**

Because of (or Due to) awareness raising activities in the district, the number of girls enrolled at primary level has almost doubled

#### **Task- Edit the following sentences**

1. It is compulsory to follow the application guidelines carefully.

##### **Answer:**

You must follow the application guidelines carefully.

2. Despite the fact that there was a delay in starting the project, all activities were carried out on time.

##### **Answer:**

Although there was a delay in starting the project, all activities were carried out on time.

### **Task 3**

3. Frequent disputes over land in conjunction with lack of any trained mediators have contributed to social unrest.

**Answer:**

Frequent disputes over land and lack of any trained mediators have contributed to social unrest.

### **Get Rid of meaningless phrases**

Some phrases commonly used in writing are nothing but hot air.

**Example:**

I would like to take this early opportunity to thank you for your continued support in my project activities.

**Edited:**

Thank you for your continued support.

Not necessary to go round. After all you are saying a positive thing.

### **Task – Strike out the unneeded phrases**

1. As far as we are concerned, there is no need for any major changes at this point.

**Answer:**

There is no need for any major changes at this point.

2. I am of the opinion that Forest User Groups have made an enormous contribution to raising the living standards of the poorest members of the community.

**Answer:**

Forest User Groups have made an enormous contribution to raising the living standards of the poorest members of the community.

3. I would like to say that there is a strong need for more transparency at community level on how decisions are reached centrally.

**Answer:**

There is a strong need for more transparency at community level on how decisions are reached centrally.

### **5. Poor use of language**

- Choose words appropriate to your reader
- Use simple, modern and brief words wherever possible
- Use English NOT mother tongue
- Avoid creating acronyms as this makes reading hard work e.g. Embu Agricultural Show (EAS), Embu County Government (ECG)
- Only use acronyms of large organizations such as FAO, WHO, etc.

## 6. Poor style

- Aim at being persuasive and interesting
- Avoid using too much tentative words such as “could have been due to, might, believe, etc.
- Such words indicate lack of confidence
- In science, research is objective and you should not use phrases such as “As I have said, I observed, I think ... and so on.
- Instead use phrases such as “results showed that ..., Results suggests that ....

## 7. Poor spelling, grammar and punctuation

- Writing shows who you are.
- Accuracy is very important
- It gives the right impression
- Avoid common errors by spell-checks and attentiveness
- Take particular care of nouns – don’t write Embu University, K.U, Nairobi University, etc.
  - Keeping it simple, brief, and clear should help you avoid most common errors
  - When you read a proposal or thesis full of errors, the conclusion you draw is that this is not a serious person however good the idea is.

## Proposal Presentation- Preparations

- ✚ Make sure you know exactly how long you will have to present, and prepare accordingly.
- ✚ If you are given 15 minutes to present, target about 15 slides (each slide per minute)
- ✚ Focus on the important aspects of your presentation
- ✚ Before coming to present, practice over and over again and time yourself.
- ✚ Slides should be clear (select fonts carefully)
- ✚ Avoid crowding tables and figures
- ✚ Slides 8-10 lines, well spread out

## Focus on important areas only

- Background information
- Problem statement
- Research questions
- Hypothesis
- General objective
- Specific objectives
- Conceptual framework (optional depending on subject)
- Methodology (Very important)
- Results and discussion
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

### **When presenting**

- Avoiding presenting facing away from the audience – you lose them
- Slides should not be too crowded
- Keep contact with your viewers when presenting

### **Title slide**

- Slide should have the topic, your name and those of the supervisors
- Do not read everything including your supervisors' names. Let the audience read for themselves.
- Just open by saying “My investigations were on.....” Or my proposal is on the topic ..... and then quickly move on to the second slide

### **Background slide**

- You should be very brief
- Just present the key background to the study with 2 or 3 references
- Quickly jump to the next slide of research questions followed by hypothesis and research objectives.
- Do not include literature review in your presentation.

### **When presenting**

- Do not strive to show with your technical expertise or command of English. You will lose your audience.
- Use plain language as far as possible
- Use photos, figures and tables whenever possible instead of descriptions

## **PLENARY DISCUSSION**

Participants had a chance to interact with the presenters by asking questions and giving their comments and seeking clarifications as follows.

### **Question**

1. At what stage should one have a supervisor?

### **Answer**

You can start with the supervisor in the concept paper

You can get a supervisor before writing a proposal and vice versa.

-Check for qualified Supervisor through BPS

### **Question**

2. Who can be the supervisor?

### **Answer**

At least one supervisor should come from EUC and other qualified ones

-Supervisor one (1) is the key supervisor (Subject expert and driver of the project)

- A Supervisor can come from any part of the world even research institutions provided that, S/he is qualified.

**Question**

3. From the time a thesis is presented how long will it take to graduate?

**Answer**

It will depend on other requirements e.g. Examiners, BPS et al

- A defense will be called within 30 days after an approval from the examiners

**Question**

4. How does the do not award option arise despite the supervisors' guidance?

**Answer**

The probability is very low

-Never pressure the supervisor to sign the thesis

**Question**

5. Whether in the Masters Level one is required to defend the proposal and thesis

**Answer**

Proposals and thesis must be defended.

**Recurring Question**

How does one work with a difficult supervisor? What do you do when a supervisor does not read your work? Can one drop a difficult supervisor?

Issues on Student-Supervisor relationship kept arising in the plenary discussions on both days. The matter was not exhaustively addressed.

**Recommend**

It is therefore recommended that a workshop be held to sensitize supervisors and all academic staff on effective supervision, mentoring and postgraduate student management.

**General Comments from the Director BPS**

- Schools could choose to organize for a mock defense before the real defense.
- Students to interact with the supervisors to get the expectation of the examiners
- It's a must for postgraduate students to publish, however the requirement will be implemented gradually in EUC.

## DAY TWO

### PhD PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS

Day two was scheduled for presentations of concept papers from post-graduate students of various schools. However, only the school of Education was ready for the session. Seven (7) PhD students from the school did their presentations and the panelist made their comments as follows;

#### 1. NDUKANIO PAUL

##### Questions/Comments/Observations

- ✓ An appropriate title
- ✓ Highlight other people who have done what you are doing
- ✓ What are gaps that you are addressing that have not been addressed
- ✓ Consider at least three regions (counties) in Kenya that have diverse characteristics
- ✓ How did you arrive at the sample size
- ✓ Doable and interesting title
- ✓ Project the title in such a way that you do not predict the outcome
- ✓ Research hypothesis three too long and need to be separated into two parts
- ✓ Not specific whether you are addressing the formative or summative
- ✓ Research hypothesis not appropriate consider using research objectives
- ✓ Be specific that your sample is on high schools
- ✓ Your references should not be older than five years
- ✓ Connect the title and the objectives

#### 2. MITAMBO MUCHIRI GEORGE

##### Questions/Comments/Observations

- ✓ Good topic
- ✓ Title: Impacts of orientation programmes **ON** not **TO**.....
- ✓ Only focusing on one factor, add more factors that would enhance the study to end up with a more vibrant study
- ✓ Objectives 2&3 focus on objective 1
- ✓ How do you measure increase in morale
- ✓ Why focus on one department, why not the whole school?
- ✓ Who are you going to pay attention to in the department? Be specific
- ✓ Who is a new employee in your case? Is it who is 2 months in profession or 5 years be specific
- ✓ Be consistent, you are talking of workers then employees- be consistent
- ✓ How did you arrive at 11 schools, 44%?
- ✓ Consider at least three counties in a wide range
- ✓ Fine tune on the title and the objectives

- ✓ Sampling formula is very important, give the bases of the formula you used
- ✓ Relate the performance to the orientation
- ✓ Fine tune the title by looking at how the school culture & traditions affect the performance

### **3. MUIA STEPHEN**

#### **Questions/Comments/Observations**

- ✓ Three counties observed but they are neighboring
- ✓ What criterion did you use to choose the schools, poor performing and good performing schools
- ✓ Avoid counties that are homogeneous in terms of performance
- ✓ How did you arrive at 60% as the sample size?
- ✓ There is an overlap between objective 1&2 ( 2 is a subset of 1)
- ✓ Use objective 3 as baseline objective- think about the objectives(get strong objectives)
- ✓ Consider your sampling in some cases use 20%, 10% depending on the population size
- ✓ Use well known acronyms avoid much of the acronyms
- ✓ Consider private schools too
- ✓ Research objective 2 not clear
- ✓ Establish the relationship between ranking and performance appraisal
- ✓ Give the number of schools then draw a sample
- ✓ Expand on the intervening variable

### **4. ASFORD KIRIMI M'RACHI**

#### **Questions/Comments/Observations**

- ✓ Introduction doesn't capture the thought you want to bring forth
- ✓ What is driving you to do this
- ✓ Consider what is going on worldwide
- ✓ Provide the number of schools/students first then draw your sample – work on the methodology
- ✓ Let the role of co-curricular in relation to health be seen clearly
- ✓ No objective that states how health will be measured – how do you tell that someone is healthy without the tools?
- ✓ There is a disconnect between the title and the objectives
- ✓ Co-curricular includes many activities, why did you concentrate on games only?



- ✓ Consider the schools which perform well in co-curricular activities and relate that to their academic excellence
- ✓ You have a strong idea that is not clear
- ✓ Think about your objectives
- ✓ Use fewer words on the title e.g The effects of co-curricular activities on performance of a student
- ✓ Only objective 4 matches your title
- ✓ Consider students' performance & co-curricular not health
- ✓ Rethink on your title

## **5. HELLEN NJURA**

### **Questions/Comments/Observation**

- ✓ Can you predict the results before going to the field?(YES), then what gap are you trying to solve by going to the field
- ✓ Is the research focusing on mixed schools or single sex schools?- not clear
- ✓ Why not focus on day schools?
- ✓ You already know the intervening factor hence no gap you are filling
- ✓ No stakeholders perception put into account
- ✓ Your title has two broad areas i.e. Stakeholders' Perception & Socio-Cultural factors – The title captures a lot that can be divided
- ✓ Wording of the title too long (26 words)
- ✓ This is a common knowledge, no new knowledge is generated
- ✓ Draw a conceptual framework after considering the moderating and intervening variables

## **6. BEATRICE MUGAMBI**

### **Questions/Comments/Observations**

- ✓ Sampling formula well generated and shown
- ✓ How will measure objective 3
- ✓ Objective 1&2 overlapping also 4&5
- ✓ Objectives should proceed from simple to complex
- ✓ Come up with a model that can be presented as contribution to ministry of Education
- ✓ Great topic and timely
- ✓ Show clearly exactly what you want to bring forth – narrow down and come up with what you want to address. e.g A reduction of destruction in secondary schools (Eliminate the word reduction)

- ✓ How did you decide on using form 3, how about form 4 who have equally stayed in school for quite some time?
- ✓ What is the difference between psychological distress and mental health
- ✓ Are you evaluating whether Guidance & Counseling is working or its effectiveness(role it plays)
- ✓ Assuming that in all schools there is Guidance & Counseling

## 7. MIRITI J. M

### Questions/Comments/Observations

- ✓ Doable work
  - ✓ Does the level of appraiser' social distance with the appraise matter?
  - ✓ Intervening Variable (Inadequate staff) is judgmental meaning that you are already taking position – change to adequacy
  - ✓ Widen your sample two colleges not adequate
  - ✓ Give us a model (product) we can take home
  - ✓ Spend time to prepare a work plan- spend 2-6 months in proposal writing
  - ✓ Show when you will be tackling each objective in the work plan
  - ✓ Show how you will go from objective to objective
  - ✓ Allocate enough time for the theses
  - ✓ Objectives 1,2&4 are overlapping only 3 stands on its own
  - ✓ Revise on research questions
  - ✓ How do you measure the employee performance
  - ✓ Why TTCs, why not hospitals, secondary schools etc.
-

## **ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

1. Prof. Daniel Mugendi
2. Prof. Kiplagat Kotut
3. Prof. Eucharika Kenya
4. Prof. Simon Thurania
5. Prof. Nancy Budambula
6. Prof. Njoki Wane
7. Prof. Joseph Mbuba
8. Mrs. Margaret k. Otolu
9. Dr. B. M. Mwangi
10. Dr. Fredrick M Njoka
11. Dr. Esther Arunga
12. Dr. Paul Njiruh Nthakania
13. Dr. Winnie Njeru
14. Dr. R. Mwirichia
15. Dr. Jackson Wachira
16. Samuel Ndirangu
17. Charles N. Onyari
18. Samuel Gitonga N
19. Mitambo Mushiri George
20. Ouma Ochieng' Stephen
21. Kariuki Stephen Warui
22. Rhodah Nzovila Nzovila
23. Isaac Kibet Kiptoo
24. Ann Kathomi
25. John Toroitich
26. Kaaria Lindajuan
27. Alex Muriithi Njue
28. Florence M Njeru
29. Francis Ngure
30. Irene Kageni Njagi
31. Reginah Ngari
32. Petronilla Serebwa Chibole
33. David Muchangi Mugo
34. Irene Kirimi
35. Mary Wanjiru
36. Barine Andoncan Mbae
37. Ephantus Njeru
38. Stephen Muthama Muia
39. Alexander M. Kanyi

40. John Mukundi
41. Hellen Njura Joseph
42. Zabed G. Muringi
43. Michael Omondi Onyango
44. Peterson Mutembei K.
45. Ireri Muthee Arphaxard
46. Venanzio Gacego Thianyu
47. James Njue
48. Njuguna R. Githaiga
49. Susan Gachora
50. Paul Ndukanio
51. Shivachi Allan
52. Miriti J. M
53. Tabitha Kendi
54. Catherine W. Njeru
55. Gichohi Patrick Mwangi
56. Daniel Mutiso
57. Sammy Musyoka
58. Alex C. Kipnyargis
59. Peter K Kariuki
60. Ann Waruita
61. Anne Kairu
62. Jackson Bundi
63. Eunice Wangari Mureithi
64. Maryanne Mucheru
65. Janice Nyaga
66. Rachy A Kirimi
67. Beatrice N. Mugambi
68. Muthanje Tarsianer Peter
69. Bridget Wanjiru
70. Kenneth K. Mugo
71. Aaron Chombah
72. Abel Nyangemi
73. John Mwangi Githaka
74. Nelson N. Namu
75. Stephen N. Kithinji
76. Jayne N. Mugambi
77. Frida Karani
78. Samson Murithi
79. Ogunah Joanne

80. Avedi Edith
81. Cheleste Kaumbuthu Nthiga
82. Fridah Mwaniki
83. Richard Muthakia
84. Jesse Mwangi
85. Anthony Kiranga Njagi
86. Harriet Karimi Gituma
87. Michael Nyaga
88. Julius Maore
89. Kaburu L. Ngai
90. Peris Nderitu
91. Samuel Ndirangu
92. Bosco Nyaga Mati
93. Moses Baithili
94. Gabriel M. Samuel
95. Sam Erick Kinyua
96. Zephania Mbaka
97. Stephen Mbunzi
98. Irene Wambui Mwangi
99. Isaac K. Chebet
100. Florence Kaumi Kirimi.
101. Onesmus Mulwa Munyao
102. Mariciano Mutiga

#### **Rapporteurs**

1. Sam Erick Kinyua
2. Gabriel M. Samuel

#### **Secretariat**

1. Irene Wambui Mwangi

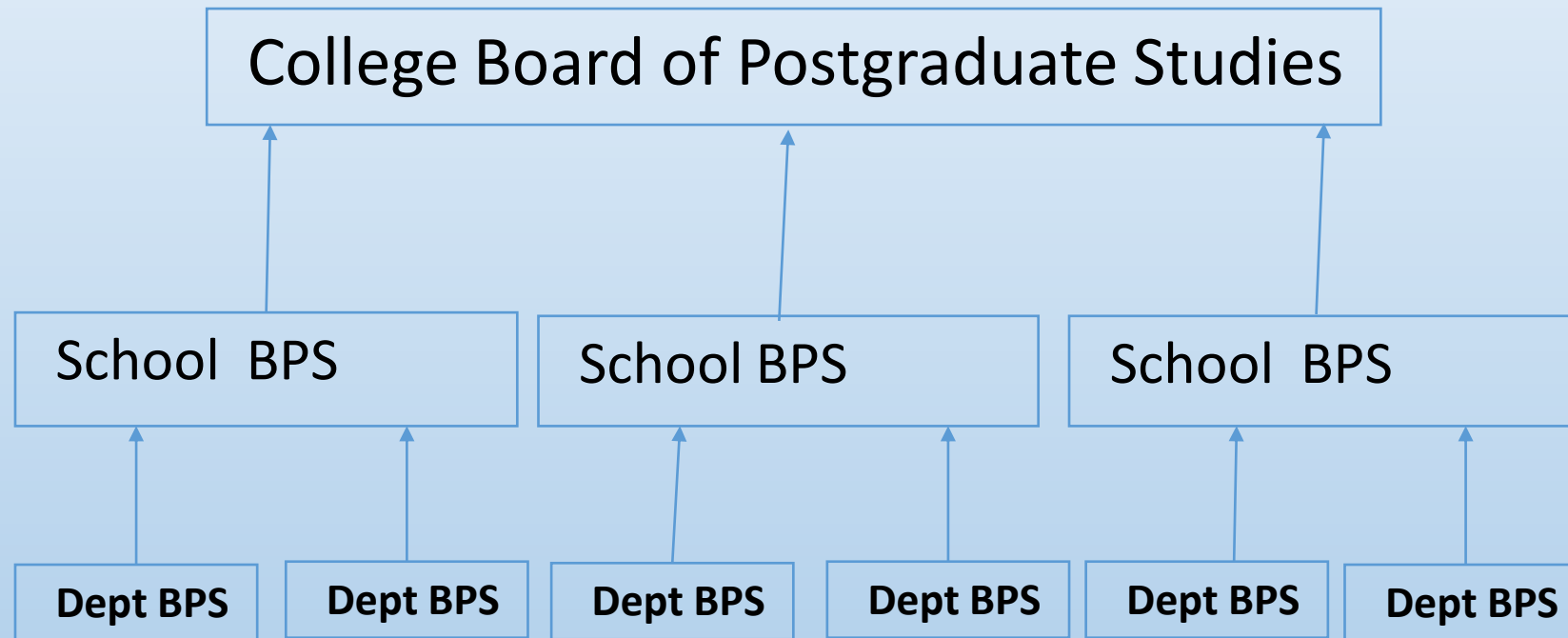
# **A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT'S JOURNEY**

## **From proposal through thesis to publication**

Presented by Prof. Nancy Budambula  
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies

Embu University College  
Postgraduate seminar  
16<sup>th</sup> July 2015

# An overview of the organization of postgraduate studies at EUC



# **Regulations for Master and Doctoral degrees- Highlights**

From Date of Registration

## **Masters Degrees**

- Minimum-2 academic years.
- Maximum-4 academic years for fulltime and 5 year for part time student.

## **Doctoral Degrees**

- Fulltime Minimum-3 academic years and Maximum 5 academic years.
- Part time Minimum-5 academic years and Maximum 7 academic years.

## **Provisional admission for PhD**

Three months to prepare and defend proposal –upto school level

School then forwards proposal to College BPS for consideration for substantive registration.



# Supervision of projects and thesis

- Supervisors recommended by Department then School to College BPS
- Appointed by College BPS on behalf of Academic Board and **not** by students.
- Statutes provide for 2 supervisors-**stop** overloading proposals with supervisors.

Additional supervisors will be appointed when necessary.

- CVs of non EUC staff members must be provided and will be vetted before appointment.
- Though not written it is expected there will be a lead supervisor in the supervision team.

# Obligations of Supervisor and Student

## Supervisor

- To supervise and direct the student- as per appointment letter.
- To report/notify BPS of non progressing student.

## Student

- To do his/her work.
- Consult supervisor at least once a month.
- submit progress reports every 3 months for Masters and 6 months for PhD.
- Give at least 2 seminars for Masters and at least 4 seminars for PhD.
- Intent to submit 3 months before submission
- Submit 6 copies of proposal and 6 copies of thesis

## BPS

- In case of disagreement between student and supervisor BPS Appoints arbitration Committee.
- *Sample progress report*

# Supervisor Management

1. Choose someone you can work with and who has time for students.
2. Allow lead supervisor to identify other members of the supervision team.
3. Maintain professional conduct and contact with your supervisor.
4. Avoid meetings at odd times or places-set boundaries.
5. Flee buying and selling of goods in the market place.
6. Learn the expectations.
7. Strive to outdo their academic expectations from you.
8. Avoid unreasonable demands on their time.
9. Know preferred mode of communication-call, sms, email, verbal.
10. Learn to read their moods.
11. Avoid fights with your supervisor..S/he is your mentor.
12. If the worst happens seek help-open door policy, don't just vanish.

# Project and Thesis examination

- ☐ Projects processed like any other examination
- ☐ Thesis submission- **Department** to **School** to **BPS** for examination processing
- ☐ At defense one of the following decisions will be made:
  1. Award subject to minor corrections-resubmit 3 months/4months for MSc/PhD.- no new examination required
  2. Award subject to major corrections-resubmit 6months/8months for MSc/PhD. - no new examination required
  3. Revise and resubmit for examination 8-12 months\* **dangerous place to be** (only one resubmission).
  4. Do not award.

The BPS Directorate is an examination centre. Deans, CoD and supervisors to follow up examination of thesis **not students**.

# Submission of Thesis

To be checked before a thesis is accepted for examination:

- Admission letter/substantive registration.
- Approved Proposal and approved supervisors.
- Progress reports (at least 2 for Masters, 4 for PhD).
- Intent to submit.
- Fees clearance.
- Complete list to be availed later in the year.

## Concerns

- Most PhD students at EUC have expired provisional registration.
- Both Masters and PhD Students at EUC collecting data without an approved proposal or approved supervisors.....

# **Publications by postgraduate students**

Research does not end at thesis. Communicate- locally and globally through publications.

- ✓ Publication requirement now in the CUE guidelines 2014.
- ✓ Generally accepted-globally
  - Masters should give at least 1 paper
  - PhD should give at least 3 papers
- ✓ Proposals to be discreetly evaluated if they can produce above publications in refereed Journals.
- ✓ Rule already in effect in major universities (private and public) in Kenya.
- ✓ Rule on its way to EUC.

# How do I publish my work?

- Duty of the student to read widely and draft the manuscript.
- Duty of the supervisor to guide the student.
- Student first author and principal investigator or senior scientist last author/corresponding author.

## Some guidelines

1. Literature review should indicate type of journals likely to publish the work.
  2. Visit Journal website, see instructions to author, see sample papers.
  3. Evaluate your work honestly, don't be over ambitious.
  4. Write the results chapter and use it to determine the quality of journal that can accept.
  5. In general online submission journals faster than hardcopy ones.
  6. PhD Candidate - approach it objective by objective.
- Publishing not for faint hearted, prepare for rejections, try again and again.
  - Reflect manuscript preparation and publishing in work plan.

# Count the cost

Consider two runners. Who is likely to win?



Run the race as per the rules

Excess baggage- what are some of the things to lay aside?

At defense one must demonstrate mastery of subject and new contribution(s) to science/knowledge.

- **Postgraduate research is not for the passive individual who hopes to get a degree certificate without effort.**
- **Research centered: think research, do research, visualize research, dream research.**
- **Postgraduate studies call for hard work, determination, devotion, focus, passion.**

**Are you ready to pay the price?**



# **The kind of student every supervisor doesn't want**

1. Doesn't keep time.
2. One who expects the supervisor to do the research and write for them.
3. Brings corrections after several reminders.
4. Returns corrections undone/doesn't explain why corrections are not done
5. Overstays with work, brings in a hurry and expects supervisor to read overnight.
6. Is a 'much know' and doesn't consult supervisor.
7. Doesn't follow instructions.
8. One who doesn't pick or return calls.
9. Always defensive/ready to fight.

# Examination of Research

1. Examiners are extremely busy, avoid annoying them.
2. Examiners are extremely thorough, don't deceive yourself they won't notice.
3. Projects and Theses are examinations and examination regulations apply
4. Don't submit work that is not ready for examination.
5. Caution-Avoid
  - Plagiarism
  - Cheating
  - Writer for Hire

# Building Research Muscle

## Observations

- Poor quality proposals. **Daad**
- Students are not reading. **Daad**
- Citation of old literature without updates. **Bps**
- Sketchy hurriedly prepared proposals. **Bps**
- Students at EUC don't know how to use E-resources- generously and freely available at EUC Library.  
**CUE**

## Intervention measures

- Proposal and thesis writing training Workshop.
- School and departmental proposal and project/thesis clinics.
- Prescreening of proposals before tabling at college BPS.
  - Departments and Schools please screen
- Compulsory E-resources training August 2015 for all postgrads in EUC.

# **Thesis Proposal**

Dr. Njoki Wane

Professor

Visiting Scholar

University of Toronto

# Outline

- Preamble
- Introduction
- Thesis statement
- Literature Review
- Theoretical framework
- Methodology
- Work plan including time table
- Implications of research

# Quote by Kumar

“Knowledge is not outside oneself. It is already there. It is covered with a golden disc of illusions. By being aware, awake and present in the moment one is able to release the free spirit within.... (kumar, 2003, p. 61-62).

# Initial steps

- Make an outline of your thesis proposal before you start writing
- Prepare figures and tables
- Start reading widely on your topic
- Talk about your idea to your supervisor and ask him/her what they think?
- Methods

# Purpose

- the thesis topic addresses a significant problem;
- an organized plan is in place for collecting or obtaining data to help solve the problem;
- The methods of data analysis have been identified and are appropriate to the data set.



- identified an issue that you would like to investigate,
- Significance, new knowledge to your area of specialization.
- background
- Supervisor - Good compatibility means, you have a good marriage that will not end up splitting before the end of your journey.

# Title page

- A catchy title – that should give an idea of your study.
- author, institution, department,

# Abstract

- the abstract is a brief summary of your thesis proposal
- length about 200 words
- It should have brief introduction
- make the key statement of your thesis
- give a summary of how you want to address the issue
- include a possible implication of your work

# Table of contents

- list all headings and subheadings with page numbers
- indent subheadings

# Introduction

- Your introduction sets the context for your proposed study and must capture the reader's interest.
- background literature
- Theories
- Methods
- Significance.

# Thesis Statement

- The statement can take the form of hypothesis, research questions, project statement or goal statement. That is in a couple of sentences, state your thesis. This statement should capture the essence of the intended study.

# Literature Review

- An extensive literature review of your topic is a must. A good literature review will enable you to highlight the gaps that you want to study.

# Theoretical Framework

- The theories employed for your study must speak to your topic. You must provide a rationale as to why you are situating your work on them.



# Methodology

- The methodology contains an overall description of your approach, materials, and procedures, such as what methods will be used? How will data be collected and analyzed? What materials will be used? In your methodology you include technique, procedure, equipment, detail limitations, assumptions, and range of validity.

## **Work plan including time table**

- This section provide detailed plan of your work until completion. What you are supposed to do is to list the stages of your project in a table format, indicating the deadlines you have set you have for yourself for each stage of the project. In this section, you can also discuss any particular challenges that need to be overcome

# Implications of Research

- What are the implication of your research, what new knowledge will the proposed project produce that we do not already know? Why is it worth knowing, what are the major implications?

# Discussion

- Asante sana

# **A General Overview of Contemporary Research Methods: Efficient Research Design, Effective Data Collection Instruments and Attendant Modalities**

**Prof. Jospeter Mbuba  
Department of Public Policy  
Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne  
USA**

# What is Research?

# Research Defined...

3

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary: **Careful** study and investigation for the purpose of discovering and explaining new knowledge
- The **systematic** investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions
- Performing a **methodical** study in order to prove a hypothesis or answer a specific question
- **Research** must be **systematic** and follow a series of steps and a **rigid standard protocol**.

# Purposes of Research

Why Do We Do Research?



# Purposes of Research...

5

**1. Exploratory Research** – research in which the primary purpose is to examine a little-understood issue to develop new ideas and move towards redefined research questions

Researchers may need to first use Exploratory Research in order to compose a more extensive follow up study.

# Purposes of Research...

6

2. **Descriptive Research** main aim is to “paint” a picture using words or numbers and to present a **profile**, a classification or an outline of steps to answer the questions such as **who, what, when, where, or how (but not why)**.
3. **Explanatory Research** – main aim is to explain **why** events occur and to build or test theory. It looks for **causes** and **reasons**.

# Purposes of Research...

7

4. **Evaluation Research** – main aim is to assess the **effectiveness** of a program or policy, and to provide recommendations for improvement
- Evaluation research takes two forms: **formative** evaluation and **summative** evaluation
    - Formative evaluation provides information for **program improvement**
    - Summative evaluation provides information on whether to **continue** or discontinue a program.

# Research Categories

8

Research takes two main categories:

1. Quantitative research uses numerical data
2. Qualitative research uses text and visually-based data

# Example of Quantitative Research

Attitude towards the police (On a Likert scale of 1-5; 1 being the lowest and 5 highest)	N	Mean	SD
High crime rate is due to police incompetence	99	2.09	1.031
Most people shout for help, not call police	98	2.02	1.201
Police enforce the law differentially	99	2.23	1.086
Risky to get too close to police	99	1.54	.501
Risky to report crime to police	99	1.46	.501
Police use excessive force most of the time	100	1.86	.899
Police arrest only poor people	100	2.41	1.164
Police provide an important service to community	98	2.27	1.051
Overall you are satisfied with police in crime fighting	99	3.06	1.391
Overall you are satisfied with police response to distress	100	3.75	1.282
Never volunteer any info to police; crime is their duty	95	3.03	1.666

# Example of Qualitative Research

“once you are in prison, it doesn’t matter what you did; you are controlled until you almost feel like a little kid; you have to be told when to eat, when to go to the toilet, what to wear, when to go to sleep, and you miss everything; you miss eating ice cream, holding a TV remote, taking a shower, all those matter a lot.”

# **Most Common Research Methods**

# Survey and Interview

12

- These methods use a written questionnaire or formal interviews to gather information from a large number of respondents
- Difference is in **administration** (face-to-face and remote)
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each over the other?



# Experiments & Surveys

13

What's the difference?

- Survey research records many answers to the same questions
- Experimental research manipulates a situation to record different reactions

# Nonreactive Research

14

- This is the **unobtrusive** collection of data that have usually been left behind by others
- Two main types of nonreactive research:
  1. Existing Documents/Statistics Research
  2. Content Analysis

# Existing Documents/Statistics Research

15

- Involves collection and reanalysis of existing quantitative data
  - Examining public records such as health records, economic data, enrollment statistics, etc.
- Problem is, data may be old and outdated
- Extensive examination of statistics can be overwhelming

# CONTENT ANALYSIS

16

- A nonreactive method used to examine the content, or **information** and **symbols**, contained in written documents or other media
- Can be either **quantitative or qualitative**
- Allows researchers to examine specific details in certain materials that are overlooked.

# Ethnographic Field Research

17

- Researcher engages the **natural environment** of the subjects for a close, personal, and **highly detailed** understanding of the subjects' culture
- Researcher joins the subject group and learns everything about the subjects by **observations and interviews**
- **In situ** research yields a “*thick description*” of the reality

# Sampling

**What's a Sample and how  
do you draw it?**

# The Vocabulary of Sampling

19

- **Sample:** A small set of cases that are randomly or non-randomly selected from a large pool for generalization to the entire population
- **Sample Case:** A single unit from a sample
- **Population:** The **abstract** idea of a large group of cases from which a sample is drawn and to which results from a sample are generalized

# The Vocabulary of Sampling Cont.

20

- **Target Population:** The **concretely** specified large group of cases from which a sample is drawn for purposes of generalization
- **Sampling Frame:** A specific list within a population from which a sample is chosen (eg. telephone directory, driving license records, voter registration).



# Random Samples

21

- **Random sample:** A sample that utilizes a random number table or other random process so that each element in the population has an equal probability of being selected
- **Simple Random Sample:** A random sample that utilizes a sampling frame and a pure random process to select cases so that each element in the population has an equal chance of being selected.

# Common Types of Sampling

22

- **Systematic Sampling**: A random sample in which every  $k$ th case in the sample frame is selected using a sampling interval
- **Stratified Sampling**: A random sample in which the researcher first identifies a set of **mutually exclusive** and **exhaustive** categories and then selects cases in numbers that are proportional to the size of each category.

# Haphazard and Quota Sampling

23

- **Haphazard Sampling:** A nonrandom sample in which the researcher selects anyone who happens to come across.
- **Quota Sampling:** A nonrandom sample in which the researcher first identifies general categories into which cases will be selected, and then selects cases to reach a predetermined number in each category.

# Purposive and Snowball Sampling

24

- **Purposive Sampling**: A nonrandom sample in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and **difficult-to-reach population**
- **Snowball Sampling**: A nonrandom sample where researcher begins with one case, and then, based on information about interrelationships from that case, identifies other cases, and repeats the process again and again.

# Hidden Populations & Mixed Sampling

25

- **Hidden Populations:** A population of people who engage in clandestine, socially disapproved, or concealed activities and who are difficult to locate and study (e.g., drug dealers, prostitutes, homosexuals, etc.).

# Case Study

26

- A focus on a selected case
- **In-depth** understanding of a case
- Draws heavily on qualitative methods but can be mixed method
- Is one of the most frequently used designs in research

# Focus Group Discussion

27

- Involves unstructured collective interviews on a group of about 12 respondents sitting together
- Researcher facilitates discussion by posing questions to the group
- Notes are taken and later transcribed for coding and eventual analysis

# Mixed Methods Research

28

- A mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques, surveys and interviews, focus group discussions, and so forth, in a single study or series of studies on the same topic.



# **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND TIME**

## **Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Studies**

# Cross-Sectional Research

30

- Study that examines information on many cases at one point in time.
  - ▣ Advantage: it is simple and inexpensive
  - ▣ Disadvantage: it cannot illustrate change

# Longitudinal Research

31

- Examines data across more than one time point
  - ▣ Usually more complex and expensive
  - ▣ Better at showing trends and cause & effect

# Literature Review

**What is it and why do we do it?**

# Literature Review...

33

- Involves reviewing of previous studies in order to:
  - ▣ Better understand the object of study
  - ▣ Refine our research question
  - ▣ Suggest the most successful research method
- What materials do we review?

# Sources of Relevant Literature

34

- Periodicals - Newspapers and magazines
- Scholarly Journals – peer-reviewed research works
- Scholarly Books – Edited Books/Readers
- Original research for Masters and PhD degrees
- Government Documents – reports and hearings
- Policy Reports, conference presentations, etc.

# Locating Relevant Materials

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- Google: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Google Scholar: [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)
- Library shelves
- Library website

# **After Assembling Your Reading, What Next?**



# Evaluate suitability of the articles for citation

37

- After you locate published studies, read and evaluate them
- First, look at the **title** carefully
- A good title is specific and indicates nature of research without describing results

# Evaluate suitability of the articles...

38

- Next, read the **abstract**
- A good abstract summarizes critical information about a study
- Abstract gives the study's **purpose**, tells **methods used**, and highlights **major findings**
- Use the title and abstract to determine initial relevance of the study for your purpose

# What Does a Good Lit Review Look Like?

39

- A good literature review requires **planning** and **clear writing**
- **Wrong way** to write a review is to **list a series** of research reports with a summary of the findings of each
- **Right way** to write a review is to **organize common findings** or arguments together.

# Data Collection

# Data Collection Instruments

41

- Most common data-collection instruments are **interviews** and **surveys** - they both use questionnaires
- How do you create an effective questionnaire?

# Be Clear and Precise

42

- ❑ Bad QN: Tell me what you think about devolved government?
- ❑ Good QN: On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 highest, how much do you think devolution has succeeded?

# Avoid Ambiguity

- Ambiguous question: How many cups of coffee or tea do you drink per a day?
- Solution - Separate the question into two
  - ▣ (1) How many cups of coffee do you drink per day?
  - ▣ (2) How many cups of tea do you drink per day?

# Accommodate all possible responses

- Bad question: What car do you own?
  - ▣ (i) Nissan
  - ▣ (ii) Toyota
  - ▣ (iii) Honda
  
- Solution: Add all possible responses.
  1. Do you own a car (yes/no)
  2. If yes, what make?(Circle all that apply)
    - (i) Nissan
    - (ii) Toyota
    - (iii) Honda
    - (iv) Chevy
    - (v) Other



# Match Question with Answer Options

- Question: Have you had pain in the last week?  
(i) Never (ii) Seldom (iii) Often (iv) Very often
  
- Solution: Reword either question or answer to match.
  - ▣ Have you had pain in the last week? (Yes/No)
  - ▣ How often have you had pain in the last week?  
(i) Never (ii) Seldom (iii) Often (iv) Very Often

# Things to Avoid

46

- Avoid jargon (Discombobulated = twisted, disfigured)
- Emotional language (Do you support introduction of welfare for terminally ill destitute children?)
- Double-barreled questions: (Do you like the taste and the feel of this brand?)
- Leading questions (You don't smoke, do you?)

# Things to Avoid...

47

- Overlapping response categories

Example - Age: 1-10, 10-20, 20-30

# Things to Keep in Mind

48

- ❑ Be sure to **introduce** the study to the respondent
- ❑ Begin with the **simplest and least intrusive** questions
- ❑ **Move steadily** towards the more demanding questions
- ❑ End with the most challenging questions
- ❑ Remember to thank the respondent at the end
- ❑ Think of what you will do with the answer to your Qn

# Types of Questions

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- OPEN-ENDED QUESTION: Research question in which respondents are free to offer any answer they wish.
  - What are your views about devolved government?
  
- CLOSE-ENDED QUESTION: Research question in which respondents must choose from a fixed set of answers
  - On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rank the success of devolution?

# Research Variables

What are they?

# Finally..... Research Variables

51

- **VARIABLE:** A concept that varies, or an empirical measure that can take on multiple values (e.g. gender, religion, occupation)
- **ATTRIBUTES:** Categories of a variable (e.g. male, Islam, nurse)
- **INDEPENDENT VARIABLE:** A cause variable that produces an effect on a dependent variable in a causal hypothesis.
- **DEPENDENT VARIABLE:** The effect variable that is impacted by an independent variable in a causal hypothesis.
- **INTERVENING VARIABLE:** A variable that comes between the independent and dependent variables and shows the link or causal mechanism between them.

**End**

**Thank You**

**[mbubaj@ipfw.edu](mailto:mbubaj@ipfw.edu)**



# Thesis Writing/Defence

By Prof Simon Thuranira  
School of Education and Social Sciences  
Embu University College

16/7/2015

# Thesis writing can be enjoyable!



# Introduction

- ❖ Writing in order to think, rather than thinking in order to write
- ❖ Your topic your companion- choose a topic that interests you
- ❖ Begin and continue working on your thesis 30 minutes or 1 hour every day
- ❖ Attitude change-imagine yourself a scholar!

# Beginning

- ❖ Best way to begin is not sitting in the library and writing chpt 1-approach your thesis through imagination-in your mind.
- ❖ Develop passion, curiosity and questions about your thesis.
- ❖ Are you writing thesis for purpose of the masters-professional growth-as means to an end or an end in itself-but remember it can help one learn producing scholarly work.
- ❖ Discuss with colleagues, advisor, spouses etc.

# Choosing a Topic

- ❖ What do you want from your thesis? Curiosity, passion, & ownership.
- ❖ Writing a thesis is very much like being in a long-term r/ship: there are likely to be some very good times and some perfectly dreaded ones, and it helps if you like what you've chosen.
- ❖ This r/ship requires you to give up a lot of other pieces of your life, work tirelessly and post-phone or differ gratification.

# Choosing a Topic Cont..

- ❖ Your advisor can also help you choose a topic.
- ❖ He/she can help you clarify and interrogate your ideas.
- ❖ Choose your topic based on your area of specialization.
- ❖ Course work is a source of a topic-which particular courses, assignments, projects, presentation held your interests, or what interests you in other peoples' work.

# Choosing an Advisor

- ❖ This is one of the most important decisions you (we) make in the thesis writing.
- ❖ Ideally, your advisor would be a mentor, expert, coach, editor, counselor, guide, teacher, and someone to encourage you and not to discourage.
- ❖ The advisor can help or hinder thesis writing, but can't make it happen.
- ❖ For PhD in some countries, candidates have committees.
- ❖ You have to use your advisor well. Don't write a thesis that belong to the advisor-don't be railroaded.

# Choosing advisor cont..

- ❖ Establish clear guidelines with advisor e.g. what time to call, regular meetings and timelines.
- ❖ Be realistic about what your responsibilities are and don't expect him/her to think for you or work for you.
- ❖ Don't through tantrums; remember your advisor is there to help you improve your work and not to rubber stamp it. Let your advisor tell you the truth the way he sees it.
- ❖ Stay in-charge of your own writing; remember you are the owner. Speak up but politely and firmly.



# Doing Research & Thesis Writing

- ❖ How you do research varies depending on field and topic.
- ❖ Know the gate-keepers in the field.
- ❖ As you collect data make notes.
- ❖ All the researchers have to transform the results/data from the field into written form.
- ❖ Research requires that you engage your mind in the material you collect; interrogate it, ask it questions and act upon it.
- ❖ Read other peoples' thesis to get ideas, but avoid the temptation to copy.
- ❖ You begin writing by making a mess, then you start to clean it up.
- ❖ Avoid assigning yourself more than you can accomplish.

# Doing Research & Thesis Writing

- ❖ The best way to get into a good writing rhythm is to ***write every day***. Create a writing addiction.
- ❖ Avoid lifting other peoples' work-plagiarism is serious academic crime.
- ❖ Have deadlines.
- ❖ There are always interruptions-external-work stations, pregnancies & internal-ambivalence, static, writing scared.
- ❖ In dealing with interruptions, try not to panic-see help from the support group and close people.
- ❖ Keep a hard copy of every version of your thesis.
- ❖ Learn computers.

# Thesis Support Group

- ❖ Choose your support group carefully e.g. people you trust, classmates, hardworking.
- ❖ SG offers good company-you are in the same boat, supportive atmosphere, reliable people who can encourage, empathize, criticize, cheer you, push you, readers, edit for you and maybe you can reciprocate.
- ❖ Avoid doing the same work or copying and pasting.
- ❖ SG should be focused and have a group leader.

# Thesis writing is a lonely process.



# SG-Happy moments





# Thesis Defence

- ❖ Avoid hitting the wall; 'so near yet so far'
- ❖ Thesis defence-investigate what to expect during the defence. Ask your advisor, other students or lecturers.
- ❖ Defences are not mere formalities..someone can fail.
- ❖ Defence is also a test for the advisor.
- ❖ If you advisor has been serious reading your thesis, then its likely that you will pass.
- ❖ Its rare for the thesis to be accepted without revisions.
- ❖ Sometimes you feel like not parting with your topic-you've been buddies.
- ❖ Welcome to a very often boring, old, odd company of highly educated women & men!
- ❖ CELEBRATE! Allow yourself to indulge in the pleasure of a major accomplishment.

# The Best Thesis is a Done Thesis



# Conclusion

- ❖ Don't hire someone to write for you. You will feel guilty for the rest of your life.
- ❖ Writing requires dedication and seriousness.
- ❖ You can have your thesis published as a book or article.
- ❖ Ask questions and consult.
- ❖ Read widely.
- ❖ Don't stop there-go for the PhD!





ALL THE BEST

*THANK YOU ALL FOR  
ATTENDING AND  
GOD BLESS!*

# **Writing Skills and Presentations**

**Dr. B. M. Mwangi**

**Senior Lecturer,  
Aquatic Ecology,  
Department of Biological Sciences**

# Professional writing

- Good Proposals are professionally written
- Professional writing is about action
- Its about change
- Its about getting results
- Making something happen
- Its not about “informing” or “sharing”
- Professional writing skills are acquired through practice (do it yourself principle)

# Review of proposals

- Reviewers of research proposals, whether they are faculty, funding sponsors, or peer reviewers,
  - want a clear idea of what the researcher plans to do,
  - how and when various tasks are to be accomplished.
  - Whether the researcher is capable of successfully following the proposed plan of action.

# What do reviewers look at in proposals?

1. Is the title of the proposal appropriate and clear?
2. Have the procedures been presented in enough detail to enable a reader to duplicate them?
3. Do you find any content repeated or duplicated?  
A common fault is repetition in the text of data in tables or figures.

# Key aspects that reviewers check for

1. Significance of the proposed research
2. Specific objectives to be achieved
3. Variables to be measured
4. Researchability
5. Feasibility in terms of time available, budget, subject availability, Facilities, and equipment, researcher experience)
6. Ethical considerations

# Approaches to professional writing

- You are the expert
- You have the first-hand knowledge to the situation
- You know more than the reader
- You are the one who has collected and analyzed the data
- Your understanding of the situation matters

# Responsibilities of the proposal writer

1. **Investigate the situation** using a range of tools and points of view.
2. **Analyze** – understand the causes of the problem to be solved.
3. **Describe and explain** – help your donor/examiner/supervisor to see the situation the way you see it.
4. **Develop a plan of action** – set objectives, devise strategy, schedule activities, develop a monitoring and evaluation mechanism and management plan.



# Rule of thumb in proposal writing

Persuade your reader that:

- ☐ There is a problem
- ☐ The problem is worth solving
- ☐ It can be solved
- ☐ You can do it

Problem statement is the most critical part of the proposal.

Most people look at this before anything else.

# Proposal format - Title Page

- **Title** (not more than 20 words).
- **Authors**-full name followed by the highest qualification in brackets (e.g. B.Sc., BED, and M.Sc).
- **Registration number** below the name.
- **Signature and date** below registration number.
- Department name below the signature line.
- A statement below department about the degree being fulfilled (e.g. **“A research proposal submitted for the degree of Master in Science in the School of Pure and Applied Sciences of Embu University College)**
- **Supervisors (at least two)** beginning with the main university supervisor, listed by title, signature and date. Below each supervisor

# Abstract

- Abstract is a brief overview of the proposal
- Should not exceed 500 words for proposals submitted to SPAS.
- The abstract should contain
  - Background to the study (2-3 sentences)
  - Problem statement/aim of the study
  - Study objectives
  - Summary of methods
  - Data analysis
  - Study significance

# Acronyms/abbreviations

- Explain meaning of abbreviations (e.g. AIDS, WHO, HIV), and acronyms (such as child, adolescents etc.)
- Don't abbreviate everything, apply only to internationally accepted abbreviations

# Introduction

- **Background** - In this section, you need to show how your intended research builds on what has already been done in the area.
- **Problem statement** -The problem should be stated in such a way that its importance is apparent to the reviewer
- **Research questions**
- **Research hypothesis**
- **Research objectives**
- **Justification (or significance) of the problem**

# Review of literature

- This involves identifying and searching for information on a topic and developing a comprehensive picture of the state of knowledge on that topic.
- The breadth and depth of the literature review will depend on your knowledge, the level of study and purpose

# Methods

Should be thorough covering the following.

- The research design?
- The sampling plan, instrumentation, specific procedures and analytic strategies.
- Data collection methods

# References

- All books and articles cited in your proposal must be listed alphabetically according to the author's name, the same way they are cited in the text.
- Additional lines after the first, should be indented at least three spaces from the margin of the first line



# Point to remember

Whenever you write, you are writing for action

Hence, the following aspects are critical as they contribute to the results

- **how you organize your writing,**
- **how clear your ideas are,**
- **The language you use,**
- **Your style,**
- **And correctness of your writing**

# Common problems with proposal writing

1. Lack of clear objectives
2. Poorly-organized and difficult to follow
3. Lack of conciseness
4. Lack of clarity
5. Poor use of language
6. Poor style
7. Poor spelling, grammar and punctuation

# 1. Lack of clear objectives

Proposal must be 100% clear

- Avoid providing too much information, most of which will most likely be irrelevant and unnecessary – makes reading extremely boring
- Have a clear progression of ideas
- Let there be clear distinction between major and minor ideas
- Avoid to be seen as confused, with no clear purpose in mind
- Let your objectives be SMART

## 2. Poorly-organized and difficult to follow

### a) Write effective paragraphs

- A paragraph should only expound on one idea. If you have two important things to say, write two paragraphs.
- A paragraph should not be deeper than your page width.
- Paragraphs must connect with one another
- All paragraphs must start with their conclusion
- The supporting data/explanations should come after the main point.

# Rule of Thumb

- Conclusions come BEFORE evidence.
- Use the **inverted pyramid format**
- First sentence of each paragraph sums up or concludes from the data.
- Then follow in decreasing order of importance or go from general to specific
- The first sentence is called the TOPIC SENTENCE

## b) Writing effective topic sentences

### Examples

- There are various causes for under-employment in urban areas.
- The non-formal education programme has had the following results.
- There are three main reasons for the high rate of HIV infection in the county.
- Mediation has led to three important results.

# Task

Read the following passages and write an appropriate topic sentence

Mpeketoni District can be reached by driving 14 hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle from the capital city of Kenya. **The winding road passes through dense forests and is prone to banditry attacks.** Many parts of the district can only be reached on foot. **Daily life in Mpeketoni is a challenge for the people, most of whom are farmers.** Access to education and social services is lower in Mpeketoni than in other parts of Kenya.

# Suggested solution

- The text has two ideas, which is against the rules of paragraphing
- ..... and
- .....



# Two ideas in the text

1. Location, which we conclude is remote; and
2. The other describes the status of social services

## Possible topic sentence

Mpeketoni is one of the most remote and undeserved parts of Kenya. Mpeketoni District can be reached by driving 14 hours in a four-wheel drive vehicle from the capital city of Kenya.

The winding road passes through dense forests and is prone to banditry attacks.

Many parts of the district can only be reached on foot. Daily life in Mpeketoni is a challenge for the people, most of whom are farmers. Access to education and social services is lower in Mpeketoni than in other parts of Kenya.

### 3. Lack of conciseness

- To be concise, avoid too much irrelevant information
- Avoid unnecessary details
- Proposal should not be too long (masters= 15 pages less references and appendices; PhD = 21 pages)
- If too long, then it takes too long to say anything and important ideas are lost
- Avoid causing fatigue to the reader.

## 4. Lack of clarity

- Avoid long sentences – sentences should be short (average 15 words) so as not strain the reader.
- Use shorter, more **familiar words** wherever possible (avoid words such as flabbergasting, debilitating)
- Avoid writing to show off your vocabulary pushing your reader to look for a dictionary

## 4. Lack of clarity cont.....

- Do not use too much linkers such as together with; as well as, etc. as this makes our sentences less clear and reduce our readers ability to follow our message
- Long words and long sentences destroy your readers concentration

# How to reduce long sentences

## 1. Reduce unnecessary words

### Example 1

- The meeting between community leaders and project staff **afforded** us **an opportunity** to share perspectives on progress.

# Edited

- The meeting between community leaders and project staff allowed us to share perspectives on progress.

## Example 2

- As a consequence of the awareness raising activities in the district, the number of girls enrolled at primary level has almost doubled.

- Edited

Because of (or Due to) awareness raising activities in the district, the number of girls enrolled at primary level has almost doubled



# Task- Edit the following sentences

1. It is compulsory to follow the application guidelines carefully.

Answer: You must follow the application guidelines carefully.

2. Despite the fact that there was a delay in starting the project, all activities were carried out on time.

Answer: Although there was a delay in starting the project, all activities were carried out on time.

## Task 3

3. Frequent disputes over land **in conjunction with** lack of any trained mediators have contributed to social unrest.

Answer: Frequent disputes over land and lack of any trained mediators have contributed to social unrest.

## II. Get Rid of meaningless phrases

Some phrases commonly used in writing are nothing but hot air.

**Example:** I would like to take this early opportunity to thank you for your continued support in my project activities.

**Edited:** Thank you for your continued support.

Not necessary to go round. After all you are saying a positive thing.

# Task – Strike out the unneeded phrases

1. As far as we are concerned, there is no need for any major changes at this point.

Answer: There is no need for any major changes at this point.

2. I am of the opinion that Forest User Groups have made an enormous contribution to raising the living standards of the poorest members of the community.

Answer: Forest User Groups have made an enormous contribution to raising the living standards of the poorest members of the community.

## Task contin.....

3. I would like to say that there is a strong need for more transparency at community level on how decisions are reached centrally.

Answer: There is a strong need for more transparency at community level on how decisions are reached centrally.

## 5. Poor use of language

- Choose words appropriate to your reader
- Use simple, modern and brief words wherever possible
- Use English NOT mother tongue
- Avoid creating acronyms as this makes reading hard work e.g. Embu Agricultural Show (EAS), Embu County Government (ECG)
- Only use acronyms of large organizations such as FAO, WHO, etc.

## 6. Poor style

- Aim at being persuasive and interesting
- Avoid using too much tentative words such as “could have been due to, might, believe, etc.
- Such words indicate lack of confidence
- In science, research is objective and you should not use phrases such as “As I have said, I observed, I think ... and so on.
- Instead use phrases such as “results showed that ..., Results suggests that ....

## 7. Poor spelling, grammar and punctuation

- **Writing shows who you are.**
  - Accuracy is very important
  - It gives the right impression
  - Avoid common errors by spell-checks and attentiveness
  - Take particular care of nouns – don't write embu university, ku, nairobi university, etc.



- Keeping it simple, brief, and clear should help you avoid most common errors
- When you read a proposal or thesis full of errors, the conclusion you draw is that this is not a serious person however good the idea is.

# Proposal presentation- Preparations

- Make sure you know exactly how long you will have to present, and prepare accordingly.
- If you are given 15 minutes to present, target about 15 slides (each slide per minute)
- Focus on the important aspects of your presentation

# Preparations cont....

- Before coming to present, practice over and over again and time yourself.
- Slides should be clear (select fonts carefully)
- Avoid crowding tables and figures
- Slides 8-10 lines, well spread out

# Focus on important areas only

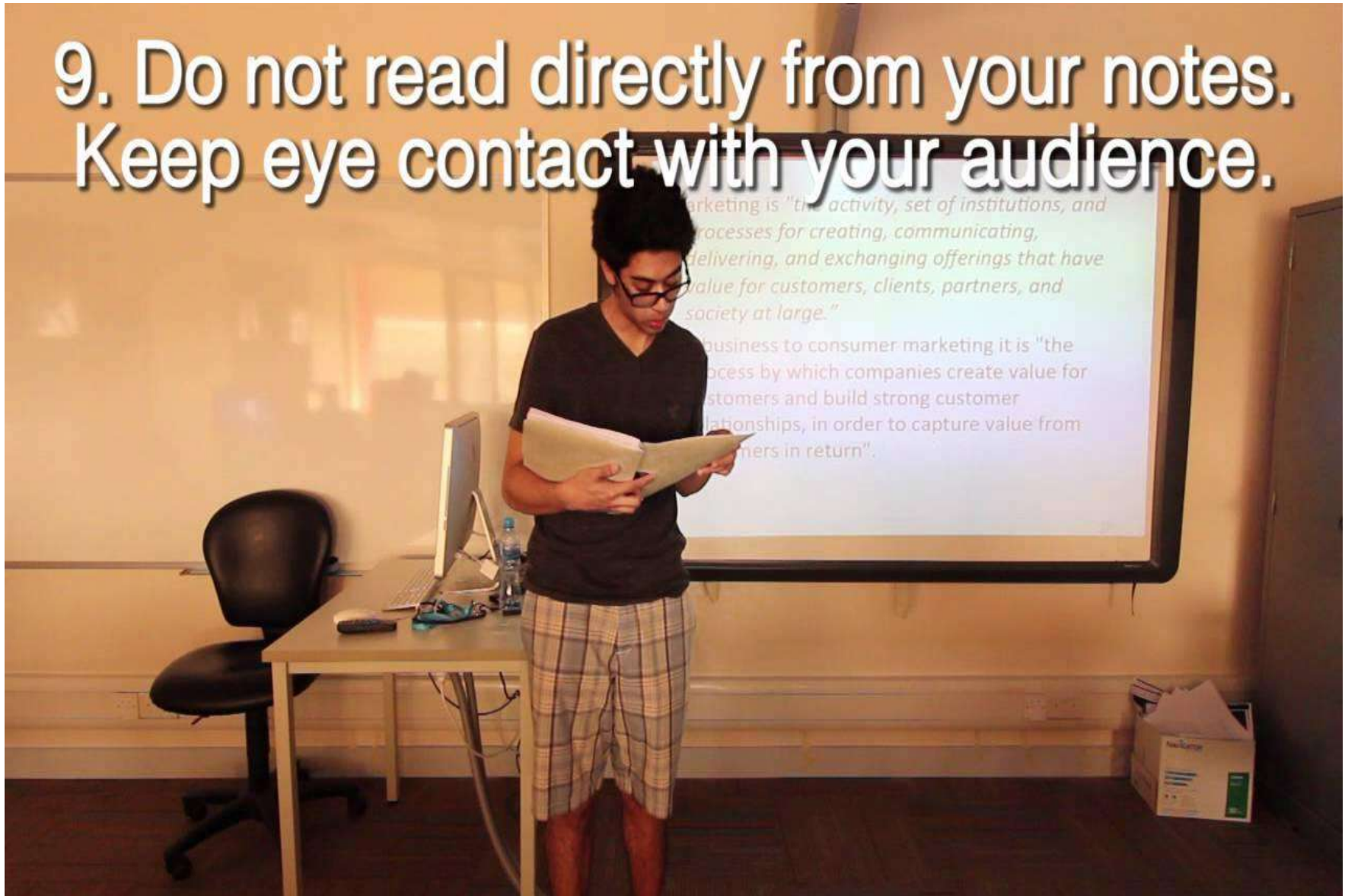
- Background information
- Problem statement
- Research questions
- Hypothesis
- General objective
- Specific objectives
- **Conceptual framework (optional depending on subject)**
- **Methodology (Very important)**
- **Results and discussion**
- **Conclusions**
- **Recommendations**

# When presenting

- Avoiding presenting facing away from the audience – you loose them



# 9. Do not read directly from your notes. Keep eye contact with your audience.



# Slides should not be too crowded





Keep contact with your viewers when presenting





# Title slide

- Slide should have the topic, your name and those of the supervisors
- Do not read everything including your supervisors names. Let the audience read for themselves.
- Just open by saying “ My investigations were on ....
- Or my proposal is on the topic ... and then quickly move on to the second slide

# Background slide

- You should be very brief
- Just present the key background to the study with 2 or 3 references
- Quickly jump to the next slide of research questions followed by hypothesis and research objectives.
- Do not include literature review in your presentation.

# When presenting

- When presenting, do not strive to show with your technical expertise or command of English. You will lose your audience.
- Use plain language as far as possible
- Use photos, figures and tables whenever possible instead of descriptions

WHAT MATTERS MOST  
IS HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF.



*Thank you*