

Working with EdD Dissertation Writers

Tom Moriarty

English Department

Director of Writing Across the Curriculum

Bad News

Uh oh...

There is No Writing Pill

- No grammar shot.
- And writers seem to forget much of what they've learned – much of what they might be good at – when faced with new and challenging writing tasks.



Transfer of Writing Skills

- Writers need cues and reminders to activate previous writing skills and apply them to new contexts.
- And every new context requires some new skills, too.
- So no writer will ever come to the dissertation fully prepared and ready to go.

So, What Can We Do?

As dissertation advisers and coaches and committee members.

Talk About the Dissertation as a Unique Genre

- With unique rules and expectations.
- Here is how we talk about the genre in the EDD 591B, Professional Seminar II: Doctoral Studies and Research in Education course.
 - <http://www.sjsu.edu/wac/pages/edd/index.html>

Think of Advising a Dissertation as Coaching

- Students learn how to write in new genres *in process* – while they are doing it.
- Just like a coach, we can't just show film and put them in the game and expect them to succeed.
- But we can – just like a coach – break down the process and engage with our dissertation writers in each part.



Practical Things That Seem to Be Helpful

Which is kinda like good news.

Samples and Examples

- And methods for thinking about them that help writers see the expectations of the genre.
- Resources:
 - The CPED Dissertation in Practice Database
 - <http://www.cpedinitiative.org/default.asp?page=DiPDatabase#.WRKELpthU-g.email>
- An Idea: Collect and share your students' chapters and dissertations.

Clear Expectations for Each Chapter

- Basic generic outlines of what goes into Chapters 1-3 (and how to organize them).
 - Introduction, Literature Review, and Methods
 - Examples from Ferdie Rivera's 591B class.
- Customized outlines of what goes into Chapters 4-5 (and how to organize them).
 - Findings and Analyses and Conclusions chapters will be unique, based on the kind of study conducted.
 - Writers who sketched these chapters out with advisers seemed to make better progress.

Chapter I Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The Unresolved Issue in Education

Describe the context of the problem.

Significance of the Problem

Describe the purpose of the study.

Justify the need to conduct the study.

Explain why it is important to conduct the study.

Statement of the Problem

State your Problem of Practice (POP).

Research Questions

State your research question/s, rationale, and relationship to your POP.

Initial Definitions

Define terms that you will use throughout the study.

Site Selection and Sample

Describe the location of your study and sample participants.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

State the scope and limitation of your study.

Assumptions, Background, and Role of the Researcher in the Study

All research proceeds from a particular set of a priori assumptions, theoretical perspectives, firm opinions, and/or personal experiences related to the research topic. Such biases are not weaknesses in the research. Nevertheless, you should be reflective about you work and foreground the assumptions, perspectives, opinions, experiences, and so on, that shape you study. At a minimum, you need to “pay careful attention to you own and others’ racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world” (Milner, 2007, p.338). These factors inform your choices during the study as well as the interpretation of findings.

**Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology
(for Descriptive-Driven DiP)**

Overview

Start with a brief description of your Problem of Practice and research questions. Briefly describe the instruments you plan to use to collect your data, and explain how such instruments and data you will collect are related to various components of your theoretical framework. Briefly discuss when you collected your data and, if appropriate, provide additional context for the timeline.

Sample

Selection Procedures

Explain how you selected your subjects and solicited their participation (assent and consent). Use pseudonyms as appropriate.

Demographic Characteristics

Provide all necessary background and context of your subjects.

Data Collection

RQ 1: (Copy and paste the actual research question from Chapter 1).

Interviews and Procedures

Explain the content of your interview instruments. If you plan to interview different sets of subjects (e.g., students, teachers, administrators), discuss each one of them.

Surveys and Procedures

Others

RQ 2 (if applicable; copy and paste the actual research question from Chapter 1)

Interviews and Procedures

Journals and Procedures

Others

Data Analysis

RQ 1: Example: Constant Comparative Method (CCM)

Describe how you established your coding scheme and provide examples.

RQ 2: Example: Descriptive Methods (DM)

Describe how you used descriptive methods to organize and summarize survey results.

Rationale for the Methodology that Informs Your Research Design

A discussion and justification of the selected research design presents an opportunity to evaluate the

**Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology
(for Intervention-Driven DiP)**

Overview

Sample

Selection Procedures

Demographic Characteristics

Data Collection

RQ 1 that is descriptive-driven: XXXX

Interviews and Procedures

Surveys and Procedures

Others

RQ 2 that involves your intervention: YYYY

Design, Development, and Implementation of the Intervention

Describe how you designed, developed, and implemented your intervention (e.g., PD for subjects). Provide a logic model and theory of change. Include timeline and sequence of activities.

Assessments and Procedures

Interviews and Procedures

Others

Data Analysis

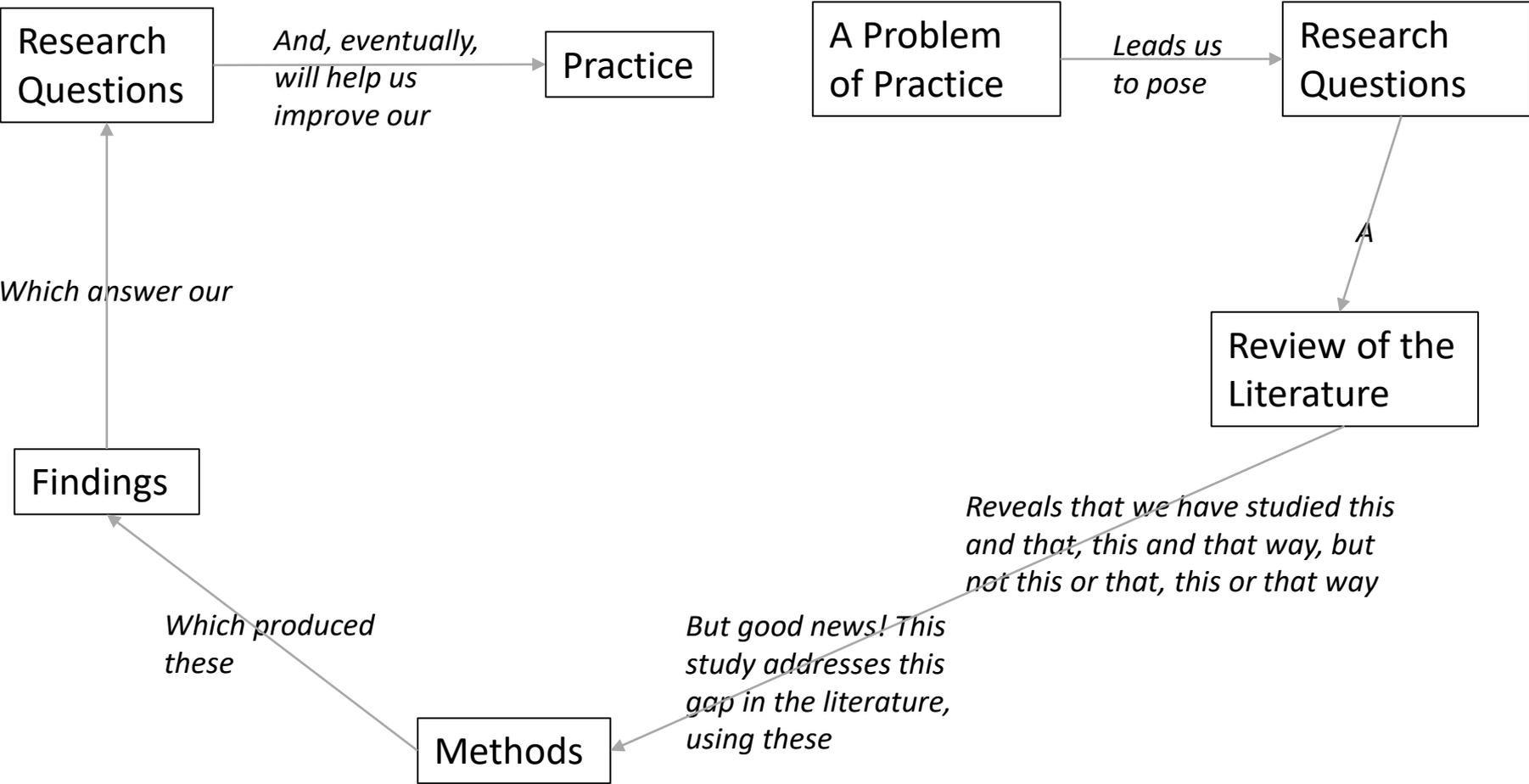
RQ 1

RQ 2: Example: Mixed Methods

Describe how you employed mixed methods to assess the impact of your intervention.

Rationale for the Methodology that Informs Your Research Design

A Sense of How The Whole Dissertation Fits Together



The Chance to Write – And Have Their Writing Responded to – As a Recursive, Iterative Process

- Break the dissertation down into parts (chapters and parts of chapters) and phases (invention, organization, drafting, polishing).
- The most productive writers:
 - Meet with advisers regularly.
 - Regularly share drafts and partial drafts with advisers, peers, and me.
 - Understand that writing a dissertation is a long, iterative, recursive process. It is not linear.
 - Receive feedback designed to help them make progress from where they are now. Not feedback designed to inform them how far they are from acceptable.

So What Should We Do as Dissertation Advisers, Coaches, and Committee Members?

Four things.

Give Writers Good Samples and Examples

- From our own students.
- From the CPED Dissertation in Practice database.

Articulate the Expectations of the Genre

- Let them know what tends to go into each chapter, especially Chapters 4-5.

Coach Our Writers Through the Process

- Engage with our writers early and often. Don't just wait for Chapters 1-3, and then wait again for Chapters 4-5.
- Give content and organization feedback first.
- Save correctness feedback for later drafts.
- Set lofty goals that they will have to achieve eventually to graduate, but work ***with them*** to get there.
 - Give developmental feedback based on where they are at and how they can make progress.



Encourage Our Writers to Make Use of All Our Writing Support Resources

- Meetings with you for content and organization feedback.
- Meetings with me for argument and organization feedback.
- Meetings with Writing Fellows for correctness.
- Writing Group Matchmaking Service
- Regular dinners sharing advice and university expectations.

Thank You!

Questions, comments, discussion?