

LESSON FIVE

Research Thinking, Program Development and Case Studies

Research Thinking

Introduction

Research is built on a particular way of thinking

- 1) A specific mindset (research mindset)
- 2) Certain thinking processes
- 3) Asking questions

Research Mindset

- 1) Objectivity.
 - a) Detach self from preferences and convictions and consider the evidence.
 - b) Objectivity demands that we look at the other side of the coin.
 - i) Consider negative evidence.
 - ii) Analyze ideas foreign or different.
 - iii) Look at arguments that might upset my position.
 - iv) Demands putting pet ideas on hold while examining all the evidence.
- 2) Focus
 - a) Focus on problem and its solution—cannot begin researching until you have determined your problem and purpose.
 - b) In research there is no space for saying the same thing twice.
 - c) “Say it well, say it once”
 - d) If something does not further your argumentation, will have to leave it aside regardless of the interest.
- 3) Clear suppositions.
 - a) A presupposition is a basic understanding that undergirds our thinking on a give topic.
 - b) Sometimes called “assumptions”—what we take for granted.
 - c) Presuppositions are the givens, the things we do not need to explain.
 - d) Those who do not share our “givens” may not be able to follow our thinking, unless we set out our assumptions.
 - i) To understand someone, we need to know “where she is coming from.”
 - ii) To know what my writing truly means, my readers must know where I am coming from and what my presuppositions are.
 - e) First, I must bring my presuppositions into the open, list them, and decide which ones I must describe for my readers.
- 4) Organization
 - a) Organized thinking puts similar ideas and concepts in the same category.

- b) Example: A paper describing a target would describe various characteristics of these people: socio-cultural, religious, politico-economic.
 - c) Organized thinking places ideas, phrases, and words in a logical order.
 - i) Order should make sense.
 - ii) Could go from small to large; deep to shallow; from important to inconsequential; from old to new.
 - iii) In history, would organize chronologically.
- 5) Intellectual honesty.
- a) Have not business taking what I not ours.
 - b) Must give credit to whom credit is due.
 - c) Plagiarism.
 - i) Don't put your name as the author of a paper when the piece is actually an article in an obscure journal.
 - ii) Don't quote an author in a way to distort the original meaning.
 - iii) Intellectual honesty may require me to admit that I do not know something, or even that someone else has a better answer than mine.
- 6) Humility
- a) When a book or an article exudes arrogance—the know-it-all , better-than-anyone-else attitude—readers will soon lose interest.
 - b) Writing in humble, tentative, willing to learn manner makes room for dialogue, for reaching solutions.
 - c) Conclusions should be stated in language that shows humility, willingness to learn, and to accept other possibilities.

Thinking Processes

Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain of learning, knowing and thinking take place at different levels.

- 1) Analysis and synthesis.
- a) Analysis.
 - i) Taking something apart to see how it works.
 - ii) Examining the evidence piece by piece.
 - iii) Requires description and classification of each aspect of a topic; each piece of a history.
 - iv) Demands considering what each piece is; what it does; how it fits the other pieces.
 - b) Synthesis.
 - i) Begins with two or more ideas or systems.
 - ii) After studying how each one works, you put parts of the old together to form a new one.
 - c) Analysis and synthesis take place in the researcher's mind before put on paper.
 - i) In a paper, analysis usually appears in the body of the paper.
 - ii) Synthesis is more evident in the development of a model or a program, or in the conclusions at the end of the paper.
- 2) Application and evaluation.
- a) Application refers to using information.

- i) Apply exegetical principles to derive a coherent meaning from the text.
 - ii) Church growth procedures applied to a church in order to add new members.
 - iii) Application of information requires thought and insight.
 - iv) Answers the questions: “so what?” “How can this be used?” “What can I do with this information?”
- b) Evaluation uses information to decide whether something is of value.
- i) Is this quotation good?
 - ii) Appropriate?
 - iii) Is there a better one?
 - iv) Does this idea fit well here?
 - v) Are these the best words to use?
 - vi) Have I done a good job?
- 3) Inductive and deductive reasoning.
- a) Inductive.
- i) Process by which people discover and prove general propositions.
 - ii) Start from particulars and formulate conclusions, laws, and principle.
 - iii) Examples:
 - (1) Observe an experiment a limited number of times and come up with a general conclusion.
 - (2) I observe that the sun comes up in the morning from the east; I conclude that the sun always comes up in the East.
 - iv) Inductive reasoning undergirds surveys, polls, and advertising.
 - v) Limited observations is a weakness. Something may be true for the first 100 times, but what about the 101st time?
- b) Deductive.
- i) Start with general and deduce the specific.
 - ii) Model.
 - (1) If a, then b.
 - (2) A
 - (3) Therefore, b
 - iii) In geometry:
 - (1) If three corresponding sides of two triangles are congruent, then the two triangles are congruent.
 - (2) The diagonals of rectangle ABCD are equal (The specific that is deduced from the general principle that these diagonals are corresponding parts of two congruent triangles formed by the diagonals.).
 - iv) Another example.
 - (1) All dogs are animals.
 - (2) Spot is a dog.
 - (3) Therefore, Spot is an animal.
 - v) Merriam Webster’s *Collegiate Dictionary* defines deduction as:
 - (1) “the deriving of a conclusion by reasoning; conclusion about particulars follows necessarily from general or universal premises.
 - (2) A conclusion reached by logical deduction.
 - vi) In philosophy and theology deductive reasoning more common than in scientific research.

- (1) In scientific research, we want to generalize and make universal declarations and principles based on a limited number of specific observations.
- (2) In theology, we operate from grand and everlasting principles that we want to make specific or applicable to a certain person or situation—example: God is love; He is only capable of loving; therefore, He must love little ole me!

Asking Questions

- 1) Don't accept anything at face value; be critical.
- 2) Questioning is acceptable.
- 3) Research asks hard questions.
 - a) About the source of information.
 - b) The content and meaning of that source.
 - c) Conclusions.
- 4) Some people believe because something is printed, it must be true.
- 5) Questions about the author.
 - a) Who wrote this?
 - b) Is he an expert in his field?
- 6) Who funded this research? (may not be objective, but is self-serving).
- 7) Is what I am reading published in a reputable journal?
- 8) Is the book from a creditable publisher?
- 9) Does the author or publisher have an angle? (trying to sway you to their point of view).
 - a) What does the writer want me to know and believe after reading the piece?
 - b) Is he trying to inform me or convince me?
 - c) What is her intention?

Program Development

Introduction

Steps

- 1) Determine need for program
- 2) Establish theoretical basis
- 3) Set its objectives
- 4) Design the program or curriculum.
- 5) Implement program
- 6) Evaluate results.

Define the Problem

- 1) Questions.
 - a) What is wrong or needs fixing?
 - b) Describe the group that needs help—for whom you're preparing the program.
 - c) What evidence do you have that this program is needed?
- 2) Documenting a need involves descriptive research.

- 3) Describes reality.
- 4) ***Dr. Meadors' Program***
 - a) Divorce rate is getting out of sight.
 - b) Couples tend to wait too long about going to counseling, and the relationship deteriorates almost beyond repair.
 - c) Nature of marriage is changing
 - d) The need for marriage enrichment services has been heightened by sociological changes in our culture (Garland, 1983). The move from traditional to companionship marriage, with its basis in intimacy, equity, and flexible interpersonal interactions, has changed the requirements for effective performance in marriage. As the institution of marriage changed, so have the skills necessary to function effectively within the marital relationship.

Set Goals and Objectives

- 1) Goals.
 - a) Show the final destination.
 - b) Serve as a norm against which to measure performance.
- 2) Objectives.
 - a) Smaller and measurable goals along the way.
 - i) Must be expressed as outcomes.
 - ii) What will participants know, feel, and do because of program?
 - b) Example.
 - i) Young people will evidence knowledge of the doctrines of the church by passing an examination, preparing an outline, or making a presentation.
 - ii) Young people will evidence integration into the life of the church by participating in at least two activities every month.
 - c) ***Dr. Meadors' Marital Enrichment Program.***
 - i) Goal: to improve marital communication and marital adjustment.
 - ii) Objectives:
 - (1) Couples will show a marked improvement in marital communication as measured by the *Marital Communication Inventory*.
 - (2) Couple will show a marked improvement in marital adjustment as measured by the *Marital Adjustment Test*

Objectives of Marriage Enrichment

The main objectives of a marriage enrichment program can include: awareness of each person's own needs and expectations, awareness of the partner's needs and expectations, improved communication, enhanced problem-solving and negotiating skills, and increased overall adjustment, optimism, satisfaction with the marriage (Zimpfer, 1988). Garland (1983) reported that marriage enrichment programs currently being provided to couples are a mixture of attitudinal and skills training experiences, designed to achieve particular goals. These include increasing spouses' satisfaction with their relationship, improving partners' communication with one another, and resolving particular conflictual issues or crises in the relationship (p. 17).

- 3) Review the literature (Use *Effects of Weekend Marital Program*, Dr. Wm. K. Meadors)
 - a) Establish theoretical basis for project.
 - b) Three aspects of literature review.

- i) A theoretical basis for the program.
 - (1) Specific type of participants involved.
 - (2) Emotional needs of this population.
- ii) A study of other, similar programs.
- iii) An examination of the content of the program.

In a study conducted by Worthington, Buston, and Hammonds (1989), two primary components were identified in marriage enrichment programs: information about marital life and discussion (with other couples or with a counselor). Results showed that information had little apparent effect on couples, but discussion in groups improved couples' marriage satisfaction and their sexual and intellectual intimacy throughout the study relative to couples not receiving group discussion. Improvement was thought to be due to the group discussion heightening couples' attention to how they use their time as a couple.

- 4) Design the program.
 - a) Considerations.
 - i) Nature of participants.
 - ii) Material to be presented.
 - iii) Setting in which the learning experience will take place.
 - b) Length and frequency of the meetings, audiovisuals, handouts, presenters.
 - c) Evaluation after the program must be designed.
- 5) Prepare materials and resources.
 - a) Written version will become a part of the research.
 - b) Include in written paper everything needed for replication.
- 6) Implement the program.
- 7) Evaluate the program.

Organizing and Writing the Report

- 1) First chapter—introduction.
 - a) Background.
 - b) Statement of the problem.
 - c) Purpose of paper.
 - d) Methodology (or overview of the paper).
 - e) Definition of terms.
 - f) Limitations and delimitations.
 - g) Need and objectives.
- 2) Second chapter—review of literature.
 - a) Report only those items most closely related to the topic.
- 3) Third chapter—Description of group for whom program was designed.
- 4) Fourth chapter—development of program.
 - a) Outline of events for the program is given.
 - b) Reference is made to the items to be presented in the appendixes.
- 5) Chapter five—summary and conclusions.
 - a) Suggestions for future implementation of such a program or for further research.
- 6) Appendixes (appendices).

- a) A variety of materials.
 - i) Correspondence.
 - ii) Invitations.
 - iii) Publicity.
 - iv) Content of presentations. Illustrations; handouts.
 - v) Evaluation questionnaires.
 - b) Should be complete, well organized, and carefully labeled.
- 7) Bibliography

Program development is very useful in pastoral work for preparing workshops, special weeks, weekend programs, and lessons series.

The Case Study as Research

The Case Study in the Social Sciences

- 1) Involves an intensive study of the background, current status, and environmental interaction of a given social unit—an individual, group, institution, or community.
- 2) Usually examines a large number of variables in one person or small group in contrast to a survey that examines a small number of variables in a large group.
- 3) Purposes for case study.
 - a) Useful as background information in planning for investigations.
 - b) Bring to light variables that need further study.
 - c) Provide hypotheses that guide additional research.
 - d) Provide useful anecdotes to illustrate generalized statistical findings.
- 4) May not be representative of the total population.
 - a) Do not lend themselves to generalization.
 - b) Often vulnerable to subjectivity.
 - i) Dramatic or highly emotional cases.
 - ii) Personal involvement of researcher.

The Case Study in Pastoral Research.

- 1) Activities of one group or one incident.
- 2) Analyzes the background of the incident, all of the factors that contribute to the interplay and interaction, and what actually happens.
- 3) Brings into study a biblical-theological point of view.
- 4) Begins with a narration and ends in a theological understanding of how such an event should be handled.

Definition of terms.

- 1) Case—an objective description of a pastoral situation or relationship about which theological reflection will be done.

- 2) Case study—the process of pastoral-theological reflection about a given case.
 - a) Analyzes, reflects, theologizes, and prescribes action.
 - b) Word “study” suggests method, effort, and discipline in reflection.
- 3) Case-study method.
 - a) A way of doing pastoral-theological reflection.
 - b) Starts from the case and proceeds through critical analysis of the data, to a constructive interpretation of the pastoral-theological issues implied in the case.
 - c) Culminates in guidelines for action.

Purpose of the Case-Study Method

- 1) Learn from a situation.
- 2) Enhance awareness of the individuals involved, of the situation, of the message of Scripture, of the pastor’s own religious tradition.
- 3) Applies God’s Word to everyday life.
- 4) Re-living and re-thinking a case brings theology out of experience.

Parts of a Case Study

- 1) Observation.
 - a) Everything said and done must be noted.
 - b) Words, activities, and gestures of the people involved are written into the case.
 - c) What a person said should be recorded.
 - d) Body language (raised eyebrow, a frown) recorded for further analysis.
 - e) Observable facts and activities are written into the case; they will form the basis of the study.
- 2) Analysis.
 - a) Once the case has been written out, the next step is to carefully analyze the events, interactions, and reactions of the person or persons involved in the case.
 - b) Views expressed about issues or conflicts.
 - c) Task of analysis is to understand, not to make judgments regarding the rightness or wrongness of anyone’s actions.
 - d) Analysis and understanding achieved through critical thinking and perceptiveness.
 - e) Key questions:
 - i) What kind of dynamics affect the way people think and feel, about themselves, about others, about life?
 - ii) What kind of views, feelings, relationships, interactions, reactions, expectations, and priorities seem to motivate the persons involved?
 - iii) What kind of power plays, external influences, likes or dislikes, self-understandings, or misunderstandings seem to color the case?
 - f) Analysis is a description of the factors that make people think and act the way they do.
 - g) Research analysis done in the areas of local history, sociology, psychology, religion, values, and more.
- 3) Interpretation.
 - a) Vertical dimension—involves interpreting the case in the light of theology.
 - b) What do the Bible, theology, and the church’s tradition and doctrine say about the case?

- c) Interpretation must be based on Scripture and informed by the study of the Christian faith and tradition.
- 4) Action.
 - a) Here one evaluates any action already taken and outlines appropriate future pastoral strategies for responding to the case.
 - b) Strategy should include:
 - i) What one proposes to do.
 - ii) Rationale for choosing that strategy (must be realistic and appropriate to the local situation).
 - c) Key questions:
 - i) Which action is most appropriate and creative in the light of Scriptures, Christian faith, and tradition?
 - ii) Why is this course of action best?

Writing the Case Study