

LESSON SIX

Theses and Dissertations

Review of the Literature

- 1) Appears in first or second chapter of dissertation (sometimes in proposal)
 - a) Reports what has already been written in books and journals, about the topic under research.
 - i) Provides background for the painting.
 - ii) Paints backdrop against which the research will be done.
 - b) A salute to the past.
 - i) Before you invent a new typewriter, look at all existing typewriters.
 - ii) No reinventing of the wheel.
- 2) Summary of the status of research is not a series of book reviews or critiques.
 - a) It synthesizes information from many sources about the issue, its background, and previous attempts to resolve the problem.
 - b) Looks at studies that have used a similar methodology to solve a different problem.
- 3) The style of writing is descriptive.
- 4) How long should the review of the literature be?
 - a) No certain number of items.
 - b) No precise answer.
 - c) Full picture should be given.
 - d) As many items as are needed to show familiarity with the topic of the research should be blended into the review of the literature.
 - e) Assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively, the amount of research already done on the topic will determine the scope and breadth of the review.
 - i) If little research on a topic, every item available needs to be included.
 - ii) If much has been written, the reviewer may take a selective approach.
 - iii) If review is selective, rather than comprehensive, a clear rationale for the selection and omission of materials must be given.
 - (1) May choose to limit the authors by nationality, gender, or approach.
 - (2) Sometimes just one aspect of a problem is reviewed.
- 5) Review of literature should be organized.
 - a) If few studies, could list chronological or alphabetical.
 - b) Most reviews of literature should be organized topically with headings and even subheadings.
- 6) In a writing on Christian freedom, review was divided into three parts: Protestant, Catholic, and Seventh-Day Adventists.
 - a) Protestant authors.
 - i) Authors who perceive Christian freedom as freedom from law.
 - (1) Freedom from the moral law.
 - (2) Freedom from the ceremonial law.
 - ii) Authors who understand Christian freedom as freedom from condemnation.
 - b) Roman Catholic authors.

- c) Seventh-day Adventist authors.
- 7) Review may be exhaustive or representative.
 - a) First, every item described.
 - b) Second, only specific items are described (should accurately represent the others).
- 8) Must design rationale for excluding some materials and including others; and for organizing the review.
- 9) Different types of theses and dissertations, the review of literature includes different materials.
 - a) Descriptive research—review includes:
 - i) Information on other research done on the same topic.
 - ii) On studies using the same methodology.
 - iii) Theory that undergirds the research.
 - b) Product development—
 - i) Includes literature on the group for whom the program is to be developed.
 - ii) Similar programs already developed.
 - iii) On the method of development.

Theses

- 1) When thesis is required.
 - a) Master of Arts in Religion degree often requires a thesis.
 - b) The Master of Theology degree always does.
- 2) A thesis is generally a long and complex research paper.
- 3) M.A. thesis expected to be about 80 pages in length.
 - a) Usually a bibliographical research paper.
 - b) May allow descriptive research, program development, or a church-growth study.
- 4) M.Th. thesis will normally be from 100-150 pages long.
- 5) A thesis is expected to contribute something new to the fund of general knowledge.
 - a) Cannot be a mere rehash of old materials.
 - b) Should select a problem that is amenable to treatment within the available time and resources, and within the allotted pages.
- 6) Thesis divided into three main segments:
 - a) Proposal.
 - b) Writing.
 - c) Defense.

Proposal

- 1) May be seven or eight pages.
- 2) What goes into the proposal eventually goes into the thesis.
- 3) By time proposal is presented and accepted, you will have completed a large part of the reading and research.
- 4) Parts of proposal.
 - a) Title page.
 - b) Table of contents.
 - c) Whole of proposal is dedicated to an explanation of what the thesis will contain.

- d) Proposal should begin with a background for the study and the statement of the problem.
 - e) Should present the purpose and objectives of the research, as well as its significance.
 - f) Delimitations should be explained.
 - g) Define terms that may not be clear to your readers.
 - h) State your presuppositions.
 - i) Explain the method you are using.
- 5) If study is historical or bibliographical, a description of the methodology is fairly short.
 - a) Describe the kinds of sources you will use.
 - b) How you will go about your search for information.
 - c) How one part of the research will relate to another.
 - 6) The proposal of descriptive research demands additional information.
 - a) The instrument or questionnaire forms part of the proposal.
 - b) Description of the way in which it will be applied.
 - c) Information on the population to be surveyed.
 - d) Sampling techniques.
 - e) Data to be obtained.
 - f) The statistical treatment of the data must be provided.
 - 7) Proposals for other kinds of research have their own introductions.
 - a) An introduction to an exegetical thesis will state the problem in the text.
 - b) It will also take into account how others have tried to solve the problem.
 - c) Will clearly delineate the method to be used.
 - 8) The introduction section in a case-study proposal will give the case, together with its background, the topics that will be examined to explain the dynamics of the case, both sociological/psychological/cultural and theological.
 - 9) In product development thesis, the steps to be taken must accompany the statement of the problem and the other basics noted in the first paragraph of this section.
 - 10) Last part of proposal is working bibliography that lists all items already considered.
 - 11) Judgment of proposal.
 - a) Accepted as is.
 - b) Accepted subject to certain changes.
 - c) Rejected.
 - 12) Proposal serves as a guide to your writing.
 - a) A contract made between the two sides.
 - b) Once the proposal has been approved, thesis research and writing begin in earnest.

Thesis Writing

- 1) After proposal has been accepted, you will continue reading, researching, and taking notes.
- 2) Only after these activities are complete that you begin to write.
- 3) Thesis typing is a major enterprise.
- 4) Quality of English required demands special attention to editing.
- 5) Should be given to examiners at least one week to four weeks before defense date.
- 6) Preliminary parts of the thesis include:
 - a) An abstract of the thesis.
 - i) A brief summary of the problem studies, the findings of the research, and the conclusions reached.

- ii) Normal length is from 150 to 350 words, depending on the degree and the school.
 - b) The approval sheet.
 - c) Acknowledgments are a personal note of gratitude to whomever thanks are due.
 - d) Wisdom suggests moderation and reserve in the expressions of thanks.
- 7) Order of preliminary pages.
- a) Blank page.
 - b) Abstract title page.
 - c) Abstract.
 - d) Thesis title page.
 - e) Blank page.
 - f) Approval sheet.
 - g) Dedication.
 - h) Table of contents.
 - i) List of illustrations (or figures).
 - j) List of tables.
 - k) List of abbreviations.
 - l) Acknowledgments.
- 8) Vita—gives student’s personal information, as well as academic and professional history— follows the bibliography.

Oral Defense.

- 1) Usually deals with the thesis and matters related to it.
- 2) Usually given the chance to make a brief presentation of your research.
- 3) Use visuals to impress the examiners: overhead projections, PowerPoint computer graphics to add luster to the presentation.
- 4) Changes in the thesis may be requested.

Dissertations

- 1) Main difference between thesis and dissertation: scope and length of the required work.
- 2) Dissertation a research project that investigates a complex or difficult problem in the area of the candidate’s major emphasis.
- 3) Could be between 200-500 pages.
- 4) Main stages of dissertation.
 - a) Proposal.
 - i) Could be first three chapters of dissertation.
 - (1) Introduction.
 - (2) Review of literature.
 - (3) The methodology.
 - (4) (Bibliography also required).
 - ii) Short proposal.
 - (1) Research proposal.
 - (a) Background of the problem.
 - (b) Statement of the problem

- (c) Purpose of the research.
- (d) Justification for the research.
- (e) Viability of the research.
- (f) Scope/delimitations.
- (g) Methodology.
- (2) Outline of the proposed dissertation.
- (3) Tentative Bibliography.
- b) Should have topic approved before presentation of proposal.

Research and Writing

Defense

- 1) Presentation summarizing the research done.
 - a) Touch the high points.
 - b) Use technology if it can make the presentation clearer and more enjoyable.
- 2) Asking and answering questions takes up the better part of the defense.
 - a) Want to know how well you know the topic.
 - b) Refer to pages in your dissertation.
 - c) Do not argue with the examiners or contradict them.