Please use this document to assist in developing your statement of the research topic, research question, research problem, and significance. This is just a worksheet to use as a guide. If you have a relevant topic you may skip ahead to the paragraph below Exercise 4 on page 4.

**Topic**

Focus on **leadership, management, or organizations** after all you are in a management and leadership degree program. This should not feel limiting since leadership, management, group and organizational issues relate to any subject.

**Exercise One:** **Topic** exploration and discovery

Answer the following questions and list as many responses as you find comfortable.

**Career Aspirations.** Why the MSA? What are your career interests or plans?

- __________________
- __________________
- __________________

**Personal interests.** Is there something that intrigues you related to your career field? Are there practices, issues, concerns that you find compelling?

- __________________
- __________________
- __________________

**Key Courses.** Are there courses that have interested you in your degree? Are there theories, issues, scholars that piqued your interest?

- __________________
- __________________
- __________________

**Exercise Two:** Place these items on the points of a triangle on a sheet of paper. Try different combinations to see if something clicks for you. See the suggestions below the diagram in Figure 1 and Figure 2. There is a larger version appended to this document, see the appendices.
Figure 1. Exercise Two: Intersection of your interests.

Make a sentence for each of ideas in the three sections above and connect these into groupings by theme or category. Do they suggest something to you?

Figure 2: Exercise Two: Topics suggested by the intersection of your interests.
Narrow the topic groupings into those that interest you more than the others you set aside. Create action sentences related to each grouping using action verbs. For example,

- To conflict, to contribute, to describe, to develop

**Exercise Three: Sorting of Topics by interest level.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics of Greater Interest</th>
<th>Topics of Lesser Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Develop questions related to your topic groupings. Start with the interrogatory questions.

- Who, what, when, where, and most importantly,
- How and why

Keep writing questions as they occur to you. Don’t try to answer them now, stay in the brainstorming flow. Here are some suggested questions from Booth, et al (2008).

- How does the topic fit into the larger developmental context
  - How did this begin
  - What came before
  - Why was this begun
  - How might this change as time progresses
- Where might this logically lead to
  - What is its internal history
  - How has this changed over time
  - Why has this changed over time
- How does this fit or function as a part of a larger system?
  - And why
- What categories already exist in the field of study or the literature of the field?
  - How are they grouped and why
  - How does your topic compare and contrast with other categories
- Ask the opposite questions
  - Positive reframed as a negative
o Negative reframed as a positive
  • Speculate on the what if questions that occur to you
  • What do critics suggest should be the topic of research
  • Then research what is available and what it suggests
  • What is in the literature related to these items?
  • What questions are suggested in the literature?
  • Build on agreement with the literature
  • Build on disagreement with the literature

Exercise Four: Now look at the intersection of these ideas. Do they suggest any broad topics or topic areas?
  o Topic: ________________________________________________
  o Topic: ________________________________________________
  o Topic: ________________________________________________
  o Topic: ________________________________________________

Select the most compelling as your topic
This requires a great amount of reading. Consider your topic in conversation with literature searches in the online databases, Trinity Online Databases. Be sure your ID is updated with the library so you can login remotely.

Make annotated bibliographies as you go. Be certain to keep page numbers for quotes. Use cut and paste to take from the article and place info into your bibliography. Be certain to keep page numbers for quotes. So you can easily quote and cite as you write and so you can find it when questioned regarding its veracity or accuracy! This will assist you in quickly outlining and completing the literature review.

Note: Be sure never to cut and paste into your submitted papers, use paraphrasing and summarizing as much as possible and citing your references always!

Determine the significance of your research
Define your topic by placing it in a statement. For example,
  o I am studying ____________________...
  o I am describing ____________________...
  o I am defining ____________________...
Add an indirect question to extend the thought. For example,
  o Because I want to find out (insert interrogatory word) ____________________...
  o To help/ assist/ prevent my reader to/ from ____________________...
**Problem**

Determine the **problem** to be defined, described, and addressed or resolved. **Tip:** don’t try to solve an overly large problem. The context of this assignment may only allow you to resolve a small section of the overall issue. List your topic question and significance from above.

**Exercise Five.** State your topic, questions, and its significance.

- **Topic:** _______________________________
- **Question:** ____________________________
- **Significance:** _________________________

**Practical versus research problems.** *Practical problems* ask, What should be done? Practical problems are caused by a condition or conditions in the world and have some cost or negative effect. Practical problems are resolved by doing something or influencing others to do something. Resolving a practical problem implies the intention to end or to mediate the problem.

*Research problems* ask, What should be thought? Research problems are from the need to understand something well (implies a higher order than Bloom’s simple conception of understanding). Understanding is developed by answering a research question. Many people and organizations attempt to solve practical problems without research! Human intuition and our ability to easily abstract solutions lead to success. The more complex the issue the more likely a solution cannot be easily defined. Thus, research is necessary!

- **Practical problem** motivates *research questions*
- **Research question** defines the *research problem*
- **Research problem** leads to *research answer*
- **Research answer** resolves the *practical problem*

**Exercise Six.** State your practical problem, research question, research problem, and research answer.

- **Practical problem:** _______________________________
- **Research question:** _______________________________
- **Research problem:** _______________________________
- **Research answer:** _______________________________

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**Construct of a practical problem.** A problem is a situation or a condition and, the consequences (cost or negative effect) of that situation or condition. Think of this as the condition and the consequence. Or the situation and the effect.

Construct of a research problem. The research problem represents a condition, which is a state of not knowing or not understanding. The consequence of a research problem is something else we do not know or do not understand and is more significant than the condition.

Develop your research problem by considering the construction of a series of sequential questions. The first question reveals the practical problem. The second question reveals the deeper research problem. Such as,

- Question 1 helps you answer Question 2

**Construction of the research problem to significance statement.** Try to develop your own series of questions.

- Step 1: If we cannot answer the question of the condition
- Step 2: We cannot answer the question of the consequence
- Step 3: Which leaves a more important question unanswered

**Exercise Seven.** Develop a link between your problem and the significance it holds.

- Step 1. Question of the condition: ______________________________________
- Step 2. Question of the consequence: _____________________________________
- Step 3. Question of importance: __________________________________________

**Exercise Seven A.** Further develop a link between your problem and the significance it holds.

- Potential practical: Significance If my audience wants to ______________________
- Research question: Would they be able to if they learned ______________________

**Construction of the research problem to significance statement with the practical application.** Continuing our train of thought and its logical progression.

- Step 1: If we cannot answer the question of the condition
- Step 2: We cannot answer the question of the consequence
- Step 3: Which leaves a more important question unanswered
- **Step 4: what might be done if these questions are answered**

**Exercise Eight.**

- Step 1. Question of the condition: __________________________________________
- Step 2. Question of the consequence: _______________________________________

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Worksheet – Topic – Question – Problem – Significance

- Step 3. Question of importance: ____________________________________________
- Step 4. Question of what might be done: _____________________________________

Develop your final statement of the research topic, research question, research problem, and the research significance.

- **Topic statement** – *what you are doing*
- **Research question** – *why you are doing it*
- **Potential practical significance** – *what help will it be*
- **Potential practical application** – *what might your audience do if these questions are answered*

**Exercise Nine.**

- Topic statement: __________________________________________________________
- Research question: ________________________________________________________
- Potential practical significance: _____________________________________________
- Potential practical application: _____________________________________________

Turn this into your final statements of the Topic, Question, Problem, and Significance.

**Where to go for topic assistance?**

**Who to ask?** Instructor of a related course, Faculty advisor, Research librarians,

**Where to seek?** In the literature, trade journals, scholarly journals, and self-reflection on the literature and informal discussions. Consider the sources and their level or reliability based on their level of closeness to the source:

- Primary – from the author of the research
- Secondary – as quoted/cited in
- Tertiary – synthesis of secondary sources

In your literature searches look for a **Meta Analysis.** Ask the Research librarians; search the library catalogue, online databases of e journals and books (which are linked to the Moodle page and your Syllabus). **Hey, they are free!** Search other libraries, especially in the consortium! We are part of the consortium, and varying levels of their resources are at your disposal. Read there. Use the inter library loans. **It is free!**

Don’t be afraid to email or contact experts in the field and ask about their scholarly work, just be ready to represent Trinity well. Read interviews, book reviews. Search the literature reviews of other’s work, read the bibliographies at the end of textbook chapters.

Read Professional or trade list servs, blog posts, reference works (general or specialized), watch documentaries, and films.

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Write often

Keep a journal for ideas and inspirations. Continuously add to and edit your annotated bibliography. It is practice turning what you read into your own words. This will make the whole writing process easier! You become a source for your own paper!

References


Appendices

Appendix A: Intersection of Your Interests

Career Aspirations
- __________
- __________
- __________

Key Course
- __________
- __________
- __________

Personal Interest
- __________
- __________
- __________
- __________
Appendix B: Topics Suggested by the Intersection of Your Interests

Topics suggested by the intersection of interests

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________

Career Aspirations

• ____________________________
• ____________________________
• ____________________________

Key Course

• ____________________________
• ____________________________
• ____________________________

Personal Interest

• ____________________________
• ____________________________
• ____________________________
• ____________________________