

### **'Getting Started'**

#### ***How to Research, Chapter 2 'Getting Started' (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2001)***

Before starting Task 4a I really wanted to get a good idea and grounding behind me. On page 15 of Reader 4 we are asked to refer to the above chapter and I thought I would make this my starting point.

Many of the points in the chapter relate to further along in the Inquiry/Research process, however these will obviously be helpful later on in the course and for now there are definitely some helpful tips for starting with those all important research questions.

The idea of the chapter is about taking you from deciding on doing a research project, to having a good idea!

*The minute you've decided to do something, you've started your research project. By reading this you've started.* This quote from the chapter really gave me confidence to continue full steam ahead!

#### **Notes taken:**

They advise you to be selfish when it comes to your topic, you need to focus on what interests you and think about your future professional developments.

*Choosing the topic is probably the single most important decision you have to make in doing research - therefore this process cannot be rushed. Take time to think about every issue, question, query raised - which area inspires you the most??*

You have to be sure that the topic will motivate you to do work first thing in the morning and last thing at night!

Are there any rules and regulations?? = These are outlined in the Module Handbook. At this stage we are simply gaining ideas, but later on in the process we need to be aware of the specific details of the Inquiry.

The readers give us vital information on 'Key Thinkers' which will be necessary when undertaking the research project.

Look at other examples of research projects - what methods do they use? What scale is the project? etc..

'Goldilocks' - choosing a topic of the right size. Not too big, not too small, but just right :)

Think about the time restriction and length of the inquiry - be realistic when choosing your topic and make sure a comprehensive inquiry can be completed within the time/length restrictions.

You will need emotional and personal support - this comes from friends and family members. Someone to make you a cup of tea after a hard and perhaps unsuccessful day of research :(

Be sure to choose a topic where 'access' is not limited - make sure there are plenty and varied research

sources available to you.

Think about the methods you will use to collect and analyse the data - what methods will you enjoy using? If you enjoy the method you are using then you are more likely to be motivated to do it!

How to choose?

- If you are stuck talk to friends, colleagues, employers, professional peers.
- look at previous research in your area of interest.
- think of possible titles for a research project that may interest you.
- start from a quote that engages you.
- follow your hunches
- produce a spider diagram of issues, interests and questions and find their interconnections. Share your diagram with others to get their thoughts and opinions (This is basically task 4a in the Handbook)

Remember, be prepared to change direction, change can be positive and is sometimes required within a project of this kind.

Once you have come up with a few ideas you will need to FOCUS and REFINE - you will do this by doing background research, talk with fellow professionals, think of methods you will use in your research. FOCUS to make sure it relates specifically to your needs!

Identify your research questions - loosely at first and then more precisely. These need to be questions that you really want to know the answer to - this is TASK 4A

Keep breaking down the questions further and further so they become questions that can realistically be used for a 'Professional Inquiry' on this scale.

Concept/Issue/Context:

Concept - general idea/'umbrella' term

issue - broad questions/subject of continuing debate and study

Context - background of existing research/knowledge and understanding that informs new and ongoing research projects.

\*\*\*Think about the concepts, issues and contexts relating to your research project.

*A balanced research project should consist of a detailed study set within, and linked to, an understanding of the broader context of the subject field.'*

20% should look at the contextual issues - therefore the wider picture.

This is referred to as the 'doughnut' model of research.

'Informal Plotting' - try out some of the methods for your research. Try some interview, questionnaires etc.. You will get a good feel for whether these methods will work. If you do this early enough you will

have time to alter your strategy if necessary.

Think carefully about your mentor and what you need from them and what they will need from you:

- Students will need their mentors to be friendly, open and supportive. They will need to have a good knowledge of your research area and also be interested in it.
- Mentors will need their students to be independent, honest with them and will need them to take on board the advice they offer. (Phillips and Pugh, 2005)

\*\*As ever it is important to keep a journal/research diary. This will help you to record your progress, feelings, thoughts and insecurities.

As we know from Module 1 this will help you to reflect and learn on the process :)

The above are just some brief notes that I made on the chapter. Many of which will be helpful throughout the process and a few are definitely focused on how to get your feet off the ground, i.e. how to get started.

#### Mini Summary on 'Getting Started'

- Be selfish - think about how it will benefit you
- Create a set of questions by producing a spider diagram of thoughts, issues, questions etc. and discuss this with fellow professionals and peers.
- The questions will be broad and loosely set in the first instance - keep breaking them down further to come up with a realistic set of questions that can be inquired within our restrictions.
- Think about concept/issues/context
- Aim to focus and refine
- Think about research methods - try to find ones you will enjoy and more likely be successful at.
- Look at other examples of research projects - what ideas can you take from here?
- Gain a network of support - SIG, personal support, emotional support, Mentor :)