

INF5220 – 8.nov

Writing

Project Report

The report is due before November 15th (that means before midnight November 14th), and it should be **around 20 pages** (between 15 and 30). Start with the proposal structure, and expand it.

Structure of the Project Report:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Literature review/related research.
- 3) Methods chapter (Important!)
- 4) Empirical chapter(s)
- 5) Interpretation/Discussion
- 6) Conclusion
- 7) Appendix: log of group work, work distribution
- 8) Other appendices, e.g. interview guide.

Structure of (Master) thesis

- Title
- 1-page summary or abstract (English/Norwegian)
- Foreword, acknowledgements
- Table of contents
- Introduction
- Related literature and theoretical focus
- Presentation of the part of the world to be studied (background)
- Method
- Research results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References
- Annexes

The abstract

- A "mini version" of the thesis (1 page):
 - Present the research problem
 - Discuss why the problem is interesting and worth studying
 - Describe your data and methods
 - Present your main findings
 - Discuss their implications in light of other research

1. Introduction

- Should answer the question: "what is this thesis about?"
- Include:
 - Area of research (problem domain, topic)
 - Main motivation (why is your study important)
 - Purpose, including your research questions.
 - What you aim to contribute
 - A brief description of how you attempt to find out (methods)
- In addition, you may describe:
 - Target audience
 - Personal motivation for this work
- End with sketching the structure of the rest of the thesis

1 a) Motivation of your study

- "Motivation" means answering the question: Why is this study important?
- Two parts:
 - **Relevance**: importance of problem area for society
 - **Positioning** in relation to existing knowledge (previous research)

1 b) Motivation of your study

- Why is this study important?
 - Possible replies:
 - 'This is a new phenomenon'
 - 'This is under-researched'
 - 'Previous research is ambiguous'
 - 'We don't know enough about it'
 - But how to establish such propositions?
 - Do a sound literature review
 - Learn strategies from published research papers

1 c) The purpose statement

- Whereas the introduction focus on the problem leading to the study, the purpose statement establishes the direction for the research.
- The purpose statement tells why you want to do the study and what you intend to accomplish. (The central, controlling idea of the study).
- Be clear: "The purpose (intent, objective) of this study is (was, will be)..." Try to make a single sentence or a paragraph: Take the "elevator test".
- Focus on a single phenomenon, concept or idea that you will explore. (Not about 'relationships' between two or more variables, or 'comparisons' between two or more groups)
- Use nondirectional language and neutral words, explain how you use terms: ("A tentative definition at this time for XYZ is...")

From John W. Creswell (2003): Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches, 2nd ed., SAGE publications, London

1 d) Research questions

- Narrow the focus to specific questions to be answered
- Qualitative studies: "Research questions" rather than "objective" (specific goals) or "hypothesis" (predictions that involve variables and statistical tests)
- RQ should guide data gathering
- For example 1 central questions + 3 sub-questions).
- Expect research questions to evolve and change during your work

1 e) Motivation, purpose statement and research questions

- Motivation:
 - Describes the problems or issues that leads to a need for the study (practical and/or literature-based motivation).
- Purpose statement:
 - Describes the intent of the study, the objectives, and the major idea of a study. This idea builds on a need (the problem) and is refined into specific questions, the research questions.
- Research question:
 - The questions that the data collection will attempt to answer

2. Theory chapter

- Literature review
 - Critical review of previous research
- Theoretical framework
 - Presentation/explanation of the selected theoretical frameworks or concepts
- Could be one or two chapters

2 a) Literature review

- Do a literature review
 - identify keywords (varies between databases)
 - skim abstracts and use the relevant new keywords
 - use the available facilities for tracing forward citations
- Are you new to the field?
 - Start with encyclopedia articles, reviews, tutorials.
- Make short summaries of central articles
 - problem area, focus of study, case, conclusion
 - use e.g. EndNote (referencing tool)

2 b) Literature review structure:

- Present a survey of the literature (journals, conferences, book chapters) on the areas that are relevant to your research question. One section per area.
- Silverman, page 295:
 - What do we already know about the topic?
 - What do you have to say critically about what is already known?
 - Has anyone else ever done exactly the same?
 - Has anyone else ever done something that is related?
 - Where does your work fit in with what has gone before?
 - Why is your research worth doing in light of what has already been done?

2 c) Positioning

- Three different ways to argue that the study is necessary (based on previous research):
 -
- Synthesized coherence:
 - You bring together works from different areas that you believe point to common ideas. What's new is the combination
- Progressive coherence:
 - You show how the joint work of a community of researchers have developed over time, and now your 'piece' is needed, because either:
 - a) there is too little research, or
 - b) it is not focused enough to answer what you will address
- Non-coherence:
 - You refer to works that study the same phenomenon, but you disagree with their approach/conclusions etc.

2 d) Referencing

- If you take ideas or phrases from a book or journal article you must reference it. Refer to the literature you use in the text, and provide a list in the end (Cornford and Smithson, 1996)
- When do you reference other works?
 - to support your argument: “..as was also the case in other studies of SAP implementation failures (Thompson, 1994; Hansen and Nielsen, 1999).”
 - to exemplify: “..such as the situation described by Fomin et al. (2003), where the management ...”
 - or to argue against authors (disagree)
 - for direct citations, give also page number

Cornford, T. and Smithson, Steve (1996): *Project Research in Information Systems. A Student's Guide*. Macmillan. London.

2 e) Referencing

- Study other writings to learn how to reference
- Different referencing styles (formats).
- Not one standard for UiO Master thesis. Select one and be consistent.

2 f) Referencing

- Referencing scholarly journal papers:
 - Author name(s), year of publication, full title of paper, name of journal, volume, number, page numbers.
- Referencing academic books:
 - Author name(s), year of publication, title of the book, publishing company (name and geographical location)
- Referencing one chapter in an edited book (collection of papers):
 - Author name(s), year of publication, full title of chapter, in: editors name(s), title of the book, publishing company (name and geographical location).

2 g) Referencing

- Three or more authors: all names are not given in the text (et al.), only in the reference list at the end.
- Citing two or more works at the same time (list)
- Referencing other works: popular press, mass media, computer industry magazines,
 - Author/source, title, details on publication date and in which media
 - Don't give these equal weight (automatically)
- Referencing Internet resources:
 - Author/source, title, date of publication (if it is there). Minimum: include the URL and include a statement like "File last accessed on December 1st 2006", (i.e. you should go through all web references just before you submit)

2 h) Theoretical framework

- Describe selected theory or concepts
- Avoid the temptation to explain and illustrate the theoretical concepts with examples from your own empirical work (– save that for later).
- What is theory used for?
 - Grand theories: broad explanations
 - Walsham: "sensitizing device", using theory as a lens or perspective to guide the study
 - Inductive study, aimed at building theory

3. Presentation of the part of the world to be studied

- The background information which is necessary (helpful) in order to understand the area, but which is not the kind of information that you want to focus on in your study.
- Based on own empirical work, or on others' descriptions (research, public documents etc).
- This is not always a separate chapter
 - In the introduction (as a description of problem area)
 - In the methods chapter (in a section about the case)

4. Methods

- Methods chapter shall tell:
 - How did you go about your research?
 - What overall strategy did you adopt and why?
 - What design and techniques did you use?
 - Why these and not others?
 - (Silverman page 305)
- Describe your choice of methods between alternatives.
- The choice should be argued for (justified).
- You should demonstrate that you are aware of the strength and weaknesses of your research strategy, design and methods.

4 a) Description of methods

- Give also a detailed report of the fieldwork that was actually carried out:
- What did you do, how did you do it, why did you do what you did?
 - How did you select case and participants (those you observe or interview)?
 - How did you conduct observations (in what kind of situations, at what times, of what activities etc)?
 - Whom did you interview, on what issues, in what kind of situations or settings (during work hours, in an office, at a cafe)?

4 b) Describe:

- Which data do you have?
- How did you obtain them? (Access, consent etc)
- What claims are you making about the data (e.g. representativeness)
- The methods you have used to gather the data
- Why you have chosen these methods
- How you have analysed your data
- The advantages and limitations of your approach

5. Empirical chapters

- One or several.
- Analysis and discussion can be integrated, or discussion can be provided in a separate chapter.
- The discussion needs to link up to the issues discussed in chapter two. Comparisons with literature – how does your findings fit in? The selected concepts/theories have to be applied (used) in this discussion.

6. Conclusion

- Summary of main problems, findings and conclusions
- A discussion of the relation between:
 - what you have done
 - the original research question
 - previous works/studies
- What are the contributions (practical, theoretical and/or methodological)?
- What are the implications for practice?
- Discuss limitations of the study. Is there anything you would do differently now?
- Suggest possible directions for further research