

Chapter 4

Research Candidate Perspective

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers the perspective of the doctoral candidate undertaking independent research toward the doctoral dissertation, using the research process model and phases of Figure 1 (in Chapter 2), as a basis. The reader could use his/ her own process model, as appropriate. Responsibilities and aspects of doctoral program administration from the candidate's perspective are also addressed. Also identified are factors influencing collaboration between the candidate, supervisor and dissertation committee. The need for a supportive study environment and mature technology infrastructure is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

For research candidates to find themselves at the research stage of a doctoral program is a liberating experience, in that the course attendance requirement with so many assignments and projects is a thing of the past. But it is also a challenge since the known structure and presence of fellow students and friends are not there anymore (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). The responsibility now falls on the candidate to launch into a research project that will be deserving of a doctoral degree. It is worthwhile to review comments by other doctoral students, such as general advice by Guterl (2016), and

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suggestions by Aalbers (2017), prompted by their own experiences in doing their doctorates.

There have been some key changes in preparing for a career in recent years that impact decisions to undertake tertiary education. According to Universum's Annual Talent Survey, done among undergraduate students in the United States in 2016 (Universum Team, 2016), there has been a significant shift in percentage of students that use social media to communicate with (potential) employers, from 25% in 2011 to 66% in 2016. The survey found that there are 7 distinct career types determined from data on career preferences, goals and personality. The research by Universum also found that 15% of North American students prefer going straight from high school to employment in the workforce. The rationale seems to be the interest, expressed by 60% of potential and existing employees, in employment in companies offering education to those without degrees. The reasons behind this may be multifold but the financial aspect is surely one seen in the context of negative economic events of the last 10 years.

Candidates who are practitioner-scholars and doing trans-disciplinary doctoral research, are frequently sponsored by their companies, each with specific outcome criteria including in-progress reviews during the research project. There also may be confidentiality issues concerning stakeholders and role players external to a company requiring negotiation of non-disclosure of specifics of the domain of discourse.

Graybill & Shandas (2010) have written that

Doctoral students being initiated into inter-disciplinary research and training must understand and meet a number of expectations that are not necessarily integrated across intellectual communities, subject matter, or mode of conducting research (e.g. qualitative versus quantitative approaches, empirical versus theoretical foci, etc.).

4.1 RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESEARCH PROCESS

Doctoral studies and accompanying research require a measure of maturity which is supposed to be acquired during preceding tertiary studies. Experience shows that maturity and ability of doctoral candidates to conduct such an investigation varies considerably. At a minimum, the candidate should become informed about the registration and administrative aspects of the doctoral program, and take responsibility to keep to the requirements. Most

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