**UNIVERSITY OF M’SILA FIRST YEAR LEVEL**

**LETTERS AND LANGUAGES FACULTY MODULE: Research Methodology**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE DEPARTMENT MODULE LECTURER: FARRAH. S.**

**Lesson one: DEFINITION OF RESEARCH**

When you say that you are undertaking a research study to find answers to a question, you are implying that the process;

1. is being undertaken within a framework of a set of philosophies ( approaches);

2. uses procedures, methods and techniques that have been tested for their validity and reliability;

3. is designed to be unbiased and objective .

***‘Philosophies’***means approaches e.g. qualitative, quantitative and the academic discipline in which you have been trained.

***Validity***means that correct procedures have been applied to find answers to a question. *Reliability* refers to the quality of a measurement procedure that provides repeatability and accuracy.

***Unbiased and objective***means that you have taken each step in an unbiased manner and drawn each conclusion to the best of your ability and without introducing your own vested interest. *(Bias is a deliberate attempt to either conceal or highlight something).*

Adherence to the three criteria mentioned above enables the process to be called ‘research’.

However, the degree to which these criteria are expected to be fulfilled varies from discipline to discipline and so the meaning of ‘research’ differs from one academic discipline to another.

The difference between research and non-research activity is, in the way we find answers: the process must *meet certain requirements to be called research.* We can identify these requirements by examining some definitions of research.

The word research is composed of two syllables, *re* and *search.*

***re***is a prefix meaning again, anew or over again ***search***is a verb meaning to examine closely and carefully, to test and try, or to probe.

Together they form a noun *describing a careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts or principles.*

Research is a *structured enquiry that utilizes acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge that is generally applicable.*

Scientific methods consist of systematic observation, classification and interpretation of data.

Although we engage in such process in our daily life, the difference between our casual day- to-day generalisation and the conclusions usually recognized as scientific method lies in the degree of formality, rigorousness, verifiability and general validity of latter.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF RESEARCH:**

Research is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information to answer questions.

But to qualify as research, the process must have certain characteristics: it must, as far as possible, be controlled, rigorous, systematic, valid and verifiable, empirical and critical.

-**Controlled**- in real life there are many factors that affect an outcome. The concept of control implies that, in exploring causality in relation to two variables (factors), you set up your study in a way that minimizes the effects of other factors affecting the relationship.

This can be achieved to a large extent in the physical sciences (cookery, bakery), as most of the research is done in a laboratory. However, in the social sciences (Hospitality and Tourism) it is extremely difficult as research is carried out on issues related to human beings living in society, where such controls are not possible.

Therefore in Hospitality and Tourism, as you cannot control external factors, you attempt to quantify their impact.

**-Rigorous**-you must be scrupulous in ensuring that the procedures followed to find answers to questions are *relevant, appropriate and justified.* Again, the degree of rigor varies markedly between the physical and social sciences and within the social sciences.

**-Systematic**-this implies that the procedure adopted to undertake an investigation follow a certain logical sequence. The different steps cannot be taken in a haphazard way. Some procedures must follow others.

**-Valid and verifiable**-this concept implies that whatever you conclude on the basis of your findings is correct and can be verified by you and others.

**-Empirical**-this means that any conclusion drawn is based upon hard evidence gathered from information collected from real life experiences or observations.

**-Critical**-critical scrutiny of the procedures used and the methods employed is crucial to a research enquiry. The process of investigation must be foolproof and free from drawbacks. The process adopted and the procedures used must be able to withstand critical scrutiny.

*For a process to be called research, it is imperative that it has the above characteristics.*

**TYPES OF RESEARCH**

Research can be classified from three perspectives:

1. *application* of research study

2. *objectives in undertaking* the research

3. *inquiry mode* employed

**Application:**

From the point of view of application, there are two broad categories of research:

- *pure research* and

- *applied research.*

*Pure research* involves developing and testing theories and hypotheses that are intellectually challenging to the researcher but may or may not have practical application at the present time or in the future. *The knowledge produced through* *pure research is sought in order to add to the existing body of research methods.*

*Applied research* is done to solve specific, practical questions; for policy formulation, administration and understanding of a phenomenon. It can be *exploratory*, but is usually *descriptive*. It is almost always done on the basis of basic research. Applied research can be carried out by ***academic*** or ***industrial*** institutions. Often, an academic institution such as a ***university*** will have a specific applied research program funded by an industrial partner interested in that program.

**Objectives**:

From the viewpoint of objectives, a research can be classified as

-*descriptive ……………….. -correlational*

*-explanatory ……………….. -exploratory*

***Descriptive*** *research* attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provides information about , say, living condition of a community, or describes attitudes towards an issue.

***Correlational*** *research* attempts to discover or establish the existence of a relationship/ interdependence between two or more aspects of a situation.

***Explanatory*** *research* attempts to clarify why and how there is a relationship between two or more aspects of a situation or phenomenon.

***Exploratory*** *research* is undertaken to explore an area where little is known or to investigate the possibilities of undertaking a particular research study (*feasibility study* */ pilot study).*

*In practice most studies are a combination of the first three categories.*