Chapter One of Your Thesis

Contents of Chapter One
- Introduction
- Background and Setting
- Identification of Problem
- Purpose Statement
- Objectives or Research Questions
- Assumptions
- Limitations
- Definition of Terms
- Significance of The Study

Introduction Section
- This is the first passage in a dissertation, thesis, or research article.
- The introduction should address the following:
  - Create reader interest in the topic;
  - Establish the problem that leads to the study;
  - Place the study within the larger context of the scholarly literature;
  - Reach out to a specific audience

A quantitative introduction typically is written from the third person point of view.
- This helps create a sense of objectivity.
- In a qualitative study, research may employ a present tense to communicate immediate, or direct action.
- Telling the reader a story, set the stage for a need of your research.

Background & Setting Section
- Where is the research taking place?
- Who is to be affected by your research?
- What is already known? This will begin to lead us to your Review of Literature (Chapter II).

Identification of Problem
- The statement of the research problem should be concise and should identify the key factors (variables) of the research study.
- A constant is a characteristic or condition that is the same for all individuals in a study.
- A variable is a characteristic that takes on different values or conditions for different individuals.
- Independent and dependent variables are descriptors of variables commonly used in educational research.
- The independent variables may be affecting the dependent variables, and in that sense, dependent variables depend on independent variables.
Objectives or Research Question

- Research questions or objectives provide a specific restatement and clarification of the purpose statement.
- In survey projects these restatements typically take the form of research questions and objectives; in experiments they are hypotheses.

Guidelines for writing objectives and research questions

- Develop the hypotheses, questions, or objectives from theory.
- Keep the independent and dependent variables separate and measure them separately.
- When writing this section, select one form—write questions, objectives, or hypotheses—but not a combination.
- If hypotheses are used, consider the alternative forms for writing them and make a choice based on the audience for the research.

Purpose Statement

- The introduction focuses on the problem leading to the study, but it is the purpose statement that establishes the direction for the research.
- The statement captures, in a single sentence or paragraph, the essence of the study.
- The design of a quantitative purpose statement begins with identifying the proposed variables for a study (independent, intervening, dependent), drawing a visual model to identify clearly this sequence (conceptual framework), and specifying the measurement for variables.

- The intent of using variables quantitatively will be either to relate variables (as one typically finds in a survey) or to compare samples or groups (as is commonly found in experiments).
- Major components of a good quantitative purpose statement consist of a brief paragraph that includes the following:
  - Use a word such as purpose, intent, or objective to begin the passage.
  - Identify the theory, model, or conceptual framework to be tested in the study.
  - Mention the specific type of method of inquiry being used in the study.
  - State whether the independent and dependent variables will be related or whether two or more groups (as in independent variables) will be compared in terms of the dependent variable(s).
  - Order the variables in the relationship or comparison sentence from independent to dependent.
A Scripted Purpose Statement

"The purpose of this ___ (experimental? survey?) study is (was? will be?) to test the theory of that ___ (compares? relates?) the ___ (independent variable) to (dependent variable) for (subjects? sample?) at (the research site). The independent variable(s) ___ will be defined generally as ___ (provide a general definition). The dependent variable(s) will be defined generally as (provide a general definition), and the intervening variable(s), (identify the intervening variables) will be statistically controlled in the study."

Assumptions (Delimitations)

- What beliefs you as the researcher bring to the study.
- Use delimitations to address how the study will be narrowed in scope.
- May be about the population of study, the instrument, data gathering method, previous knowledge, etc.

Assumptions

- Examples of assumptions (or delimitations) from student research:
  1. The instrument to be used will elicit reliable responses.
  2. The respondents will fully understand the questions they will be asked.
  3. The respondents will provide honest expressions of their knowledge.
  4. The researcher will present the 4-day in-class and lands curriculum in a consistent manner.

Another Example of Assumptions

In conducting this study the following assumptions were made. It was assumed that:

1. The participants in the study freely provided the researcher with the ratings of importance regarding the professional education competencies.
2. The respondents based their ratings on the importance of the professional education competencies objectively.
Limitations

- Provide limitations to identify potential weaknesses of the study.
- In your thesis, this will be a section in Chapter 1.
- Example of a limitation:
  The purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalizability of findings. This study will not be generalizable to all areas of nursing.

Definition of Terms

- Researchers define terms so that readers can understand the context in which the words are being used or their usual or unrestricted meaning.
  - Define terms that individuals outside the field of study may not understand.
  - Define terms when they first appear so that a reader does not read ahead in the proposal operating with one set of definitions only to find out later that the author is using a different set.

Significance of the Study

- In theses and dissertations, often the author includes a section describing the significance of the study for select audiences.
- The writer creates a clear rationale for the importance of the study.
- In this section, the writer can elaborate on the significance for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.
- The researcher might include:

What to include in your Significance of the Study section

- Reasons why the study adds to the scholarly research and literature in the field.
- Reasons about how the study helps improve practice.
- Reasons why the study will improve policy.