Dissertation research questions

A number of potential dissertation questions have been constructed below. Some of these, or very similar questions, have been used by students in recent years. Remember that that the function of a research question is to:

* clarify the area of concern, help to organise the project and give it coherence
* identify the sort of information that needs to be collected and provide a framework for writing up the project
* guide the researcher on how to collect information and keep them focused and re-focused
* provide a framework for developing and writing up the project
* enable the reader to make judgements about the project.

Task

Look at the research questions below. Are any of the research questions below easier than the others? Mark the questions, with 12 as the highest mark and 1 as the weakest. In looking at these, consider what makes a strong research question. For example, are some too broad while others are too narrow?

Good research questions are:

* easy to understand and clear
* specific and relate to potential ways for collecting data
* interesting and worthwhile, worthy of researching
* constructed in a way that enables data collection and methodology processes to be perceived.

1. To what extent do the reading differences in children within a Y2 classroom depend upon their birth date?
2. How can the process of counselling within a school environment contribute to supporting the emotional development of teenagers?
3. How does speaking English as an additional language have an impact upon an early years child?
4. Are media images of size zero models a common influencing and contributory factor amongst anorexic teens?
5. How can a practitioner effectively use a multi-interactive learning environment to facilitate the development of a child aged 12–14 with an autistic disorder?
6. To what extent does the way in which children socially construct their world create gender stereotyping that affects the way they choose activities within a preschool setting?
7. Can the pedagogies that teachers use in supporting the emotional development of children aged 4–5 result in their development of resilience skills?
8. To what extent can SENCOs identify and provide appropriate opportunities to meet the individual learning needs for children with dyslexia in a large academy school?
9. To what extent can outdoor play be used to scaffold learning of PSHE for primary-aged children?
10. How do mainstream primary schools provide an inclusive curriculum that caters for children with a mild but recognised ASD?
11. How and why can music therapy help develop communication, emotional and behavioural skills with autistic children?
12. To what extent does exposure to violence in the media socially construct adolescent boys’ attitudes towards anti-social behaviour?

Activity

Choose one of the research questions above and then create a mind map identifying the areas that might require investigation such as possible topics for a literature review and potential research methods. Discuss whether the research question that you have chosen is feasible.

Activity

Work with friends to construct a series of preliminary research questions and then attempt to test them using the format in the matrix below:

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| **Research question** | **Potential data sources** | **Strengths** | **Weakness** | **Justification**  **of question** | **Ethical**  **issues** |
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As you formulate your research questions, think about how:

* interesting your question is. Can answering this question motivate and sustain your interest throughout your research project?
* creative and original your question is. Even if the question relates closely to literature, what is the unique perspective provided through the use of your question?
* the question relates to the university or college assessment criteria for your research project
* clear your question is and whether it is capable of substantive educational research.