Good Research Project Versus Poor Research Project

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| **Project element** | **Positive** | **Negative** |
| **Abstract** | Despite being brief, an abstract should sell the work.  It is a first impression of the thesis.  It should be concise and both describe and summarise the research.  It should be specific, identify the themes and refer to the conclusions. | It is not an introduction.  It should not contain footnotes and references.  No results are summarised and presented.  The abstract only presents the organisation of the research. |
| **Introduction** | Provides a context and rationale for the work and is interesting. Remember that the introduction tells the story of the paper. It is the ‘hook’.  Sets up a consistent thread based upon an idea that can be followed through the thesis.  Clarifies key terms and context in relation to the research topic/question/ hypotheses.  Briefly refers to the theoretical underpinning of the project.  Could outline the structure for the thesis. | Avoid statements that are broad, value ridden, lack precision and draw conclusions.  The introduction is not appropriate for the selected audience.  Little reference to the key issue and the theoretical nature of the project.  Do not start with philosophy.  Not too short.  Not too long. |
| **Literature review** | A good critical interpretation, evaluation and positioning of relevant areas and topics with up-to-date literature and relevant seminal sources.  Different authors’ views and approaches are compared, contrasted and highlighted.  Gaps in research are identified.  The work is impartial, measured and critical.  Emphasis is upon how the study relates to the literature. | Literature listed but seem to be unrelated to the research topic.  The relevance of the literature is confused with few links between the literature and the nature of the project.  There is very little or no evaluation of the sources.  Recent developments are ignored.  Key elements of the literature have been ignored. |
| **Methodology** | The methodology is rigorous, distinguishes between methodology and methods and identifies a clear research paradigm, which is supported with research assumptions.  The methodology and research tools are justified with evidence to support the justification.  Good attention to ethical considerations underpinning the project.  Cohesive research design linked both to the research question and the literature. | Limited justification of the research methodology and little distinction between methodology and methods.  Failure to use appropriate texts that support the researchers’ understanding of the nature and purpose of methodology.  Little thought into matching the rationale for the research into the underlying methodology assumptions.  Poor method justification and construction.  Little focus upon ethics. |
| **Analysis and discussion** | Very good analysis of data that brings together primary and secondary research to potentially identify some key conclusions.  Analytical written style closely linked to the literature.  Linkages between themes show clear coding of relevant data and text for analysis. | The discussion fails to synthesise the research literature and data.  The findings are unclear and unrelated to the research questions or hypotheses.  Confused or illogical interpretation of data.  Privacy of individuals or organisations is not protected. |
| **Conclusion** | Conclusions are supported and linked to the research question and aims or hypotheses.  The researcher considers the implications of the research, perhaps within a reflective tone, such as if the research was undertaken again.  Identification of the positioning of the research within existing research frameworks. | The research fails to link with the research question, aims or hypotheses in a way that fails to answer the key issues of the research.  Conclusions are limited, and the key issues of the research are not dealt with.  The research finishes without any key findings, ramifications, summary or conclusions. |
| **Referencing** | All of the sources within the text are correctly listed within the references according to the prescribed convention. | Referencing has not been undertaken properly and sources within the text do not appear within the reference list. |
| **Writing style** | Engaging.  Interesting.  Captures interest of the reader.  Writing is at an appropriate level. | Confused and inarticulate.  Fails to engage at an appropriate level.  Grammar and punctuation is poor. |

It is not possible for a working template such as this one to comprehensively deal with all of the issues associated with a piece of educational research. However, it could be a useful starting point for your own reflections and support your planning. Thinking about the issues, consider:

1. How you could use the template above to evaluate your research proposal?
2. What problems or issues related to your approach could the template identify?