



جامعة أبوظبي
Abu Dhabi University

**How to succeed in doing a PhD!!!
A PhD is a Journey of Fun and Discovery**

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15 February 2024

Presentation Content

- Some Context
- The art of doing a PhD
- The Science of doing a PhD: Methodological Issues
- Experiences from some PhD holders
- Final Thoughts

20 YEARS OF SHAPING THE FUTURE

2 **Twenty**

Twenty Years of shaping the future

0 **Zero Complacency**

Unwavering commitment to excellence in education, research and community impact

A **Accreditation**

CAA, WASC, EQUIS, AACSB, ABET, RIBA, APHEA

B **Branches**

Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Dubai

U **Uniqueness**

AACSB and EQUIS Double Accreditation

D **Dynamism**

20 years of shaping the future and still pushing boundaries, Faculty and Staff from **42** Countries, Students from over **100** nationalities, Over **28,000** Alumni, **53** Academic Programs

H **Happy Community**

We invest in our community. One of our initiatives, the 'Investing in Our Community' platform has offered free development opportunities to over **35,000** users in the past two years.

A **Awards**

Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award, 2 Gold Stevie Awards, Best Supporting University for Entrepreneurship, Bizz Arab International Award for 'Inspirational Company of the Year Award'

B **Brilliance**

25 Patents over the last **20 years**, ADU's commitment to innovation, entrepreneurship, and community impact has produced outstanding graduates and groundbreaking research.

I **International**

International Universities Partners: Tokyo, Toronto, Monash, RICE, Arizona State, Reading, Trinity College Dublin

U **Unity in diversity**

ADU ranks **14th** globally for highest proportion of international students and **2nd** regionally (THE Rankings). Over **7500** students from **100** nationalities, Diverse student clubs

N **Nurturing**

Excellent Staff development opportunities, Nurturing innovators through the innovation lab and venture lab, Nurturing students through the student success center, Nurturing alumni through the Alumni Academy

I **Initiatives**

Community Support
Digitization
Financial Aid

V **Vision**

University of Choice in the region, **59th** best university in all of Asia (THE ASIA 2023). **2nd** best university for teaching in the region (THE Young University Rankings). ADU's Business and Economics Subjects Are Ranked **1st** in the Arab Region.

E **Employability**

Number one for graduate employability in the UAE (THE Rankings), Over **80%** employability rate

R **Rankings**

9th in the Arab Region THE Arab Rankings, **101-125** in Business and Economics globally in the THE World Rankings, **QS Rankings**, **5 Stars** Rating, **251-300** Business and Management, **451-500** Engineering, ADU Global MBA program ranked **151-200** Globally and **9th** in the Middle East & Africa

S **Sustainability**

Sustainable Venture Development Lab, Student-led Sustainable Campus Initiative (SCI), Incorporating sustainability topics into the curriculum, ADU's Junior Executive Programme in Sustainability (JEPS). ADU has been ranked amongst the **301-400** in THE Impact Ranking for sustainability

I **Impact through research**

70% of research publications in the last 3 years have been published in Q1 and Q2 journals, over **3000** high-impact Scopus research papers, **2nd** in UAE for research influence/citations and **264** globally, **90%** of all faculty publications are co-authored with international research partners

T **Teaching**

1st in teaching in the UAE, according to Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024. ADU's Business and Economics Subjects Are Ranked **1st** In the UAE

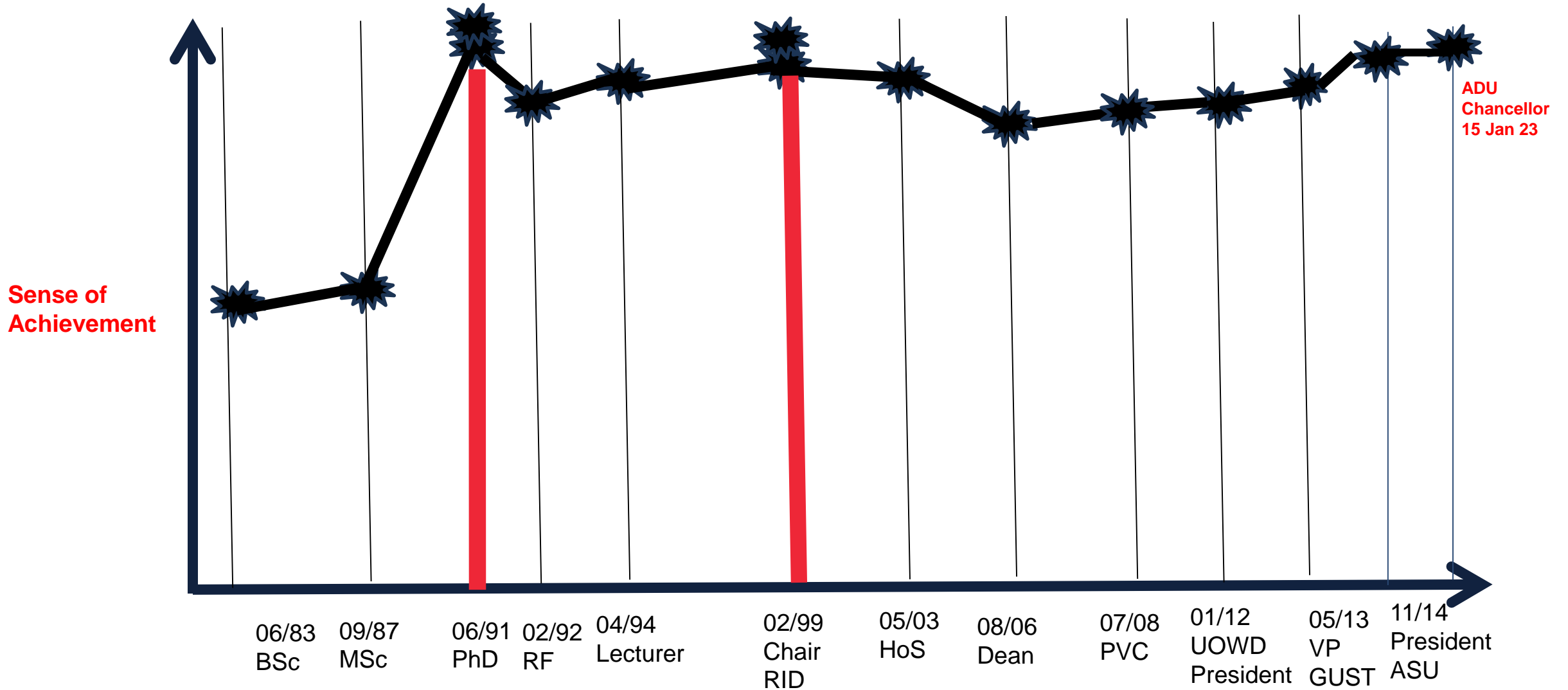
Y **Youth**

Established in 2003 among the world's top 150 universities under 50 years of age (QS Rankings), **13th** globally in the world (for The World's Best Small Universities) **58th** best university in the world (THE Young University Rankings)

Your confidence in me!!!

- Completed PhD in 1991
- External Examiner to more than 60 PhDs and 4 MPhils (worldwide)
- Internal Examiner to 9 PhDs
- Successfully supervised 18 Post Docs, 24 PhDs, 2 MPhils & 1 Mrs
- Generated more than 20 Million Pounds Sterling n Research Funding
- Published 4 research books and more than 100 Papers in top rated refereed journals
- Presented research work in more than 50 countries
- Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation in a previous job

The 4Ps model: Publications, PhDs, Pounds, Presence



This is my life (TMP 14)





Victor Besa / The National



Photo: Ron McCulloch



المغفور له بإذن الله الشيخ زايد بن سلطان آل نهيان
رحمه الله تعالى
SHEIKH ZAYED BIN SULTAN AL NAHYAN

"We must not rely on oil alone as the main source of our national income. We have to diversify the sources of our revenue and construct economic projects that will ensure a free, stable and dignified life for the people."

The late HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder and first President of the UAE

“To be a top performer you have to be passionately committed to what you’re doing and insanely confident about your ability to pull it off”

(John Eliot)

Innovation in PhD completion: the hardy shall succeed (and be happy!)

Hugh Kearns, Maria Gardiner, and Kelly Marshall

Higher Education Research & Development Volume 27, 2008 - Issue 1

Abstract: what is it that makes a PhD such a difficult process, and prevents candidates from completing on time? In this paper, we propose that self-sabotaging behaviours, including overcommitting, procrastination and perfectionism, have a role to play. At Flinders University, we have developed a program in which we work with PhD students to help to reduce these behaviours and give them the strategies and attitudes they need to successfully (and happily!) complete their thesis. The program utilises cognitive-behavioural coaching, an evidence-based strategy that we claim leads to significant and long-term behavioural change. An evaluation of the program indicates that it is very successful, improving students' ability to manage their time, set specific times for writing, and show work to their supervisor regularly, and that these behaviours were associated with lower levels of stress and improved ability to complete.

Good PhDs

Reflections

- Robust Methodology
- Clear aim, objectives, hypothesis, research Questions
- Good data collection and analysis methods
- Comprehensive literature review, Critical Analysis
- Well presented, Interesting findings
- Strong Validation, Good reflections
- Good use of appendices
- Confidence, Other researchers will use as a reference
- Work already published

(Amanda and Ghassan)

Good PhDs

- Original findings
- Appropriate structure of chapters (flow)
- Writing style (exciting)
- Evidence based
- Well scoped (focus)
- Intellectuality and creativity are evident
- Strong theoretical underpinnings
- Researching a phenomena
- Refereed journal papers as references
- Contribution to knowledge clearly described

Weak PhDs

- Weak methodology
- Ambiguity in defining the aim, objectives, research questions
- Weak data collection and analysis methods
- Superficial literature review
- Superficial analysis
- Badly presented (spelling)
- Findings are not clearly reported
- No validation
- No reflections
- Bad use of appendices
- Bad Performance at viva

Weak PhDs

- Arrogance and ignorance
- Other researchers will not use as a reference
- No publications before viva
- Predicted findings
- No structure (flow)
- No excitement in the writing style
- Opinion based (unsupported statements)
- No scope, all over the place
- No intellectuality or creativity
- Weak theoretical underpinnings
- Reporting on a piece of software
- Conference papers and reports
- Contribution to knowledge is not sufficiently addressed

Art

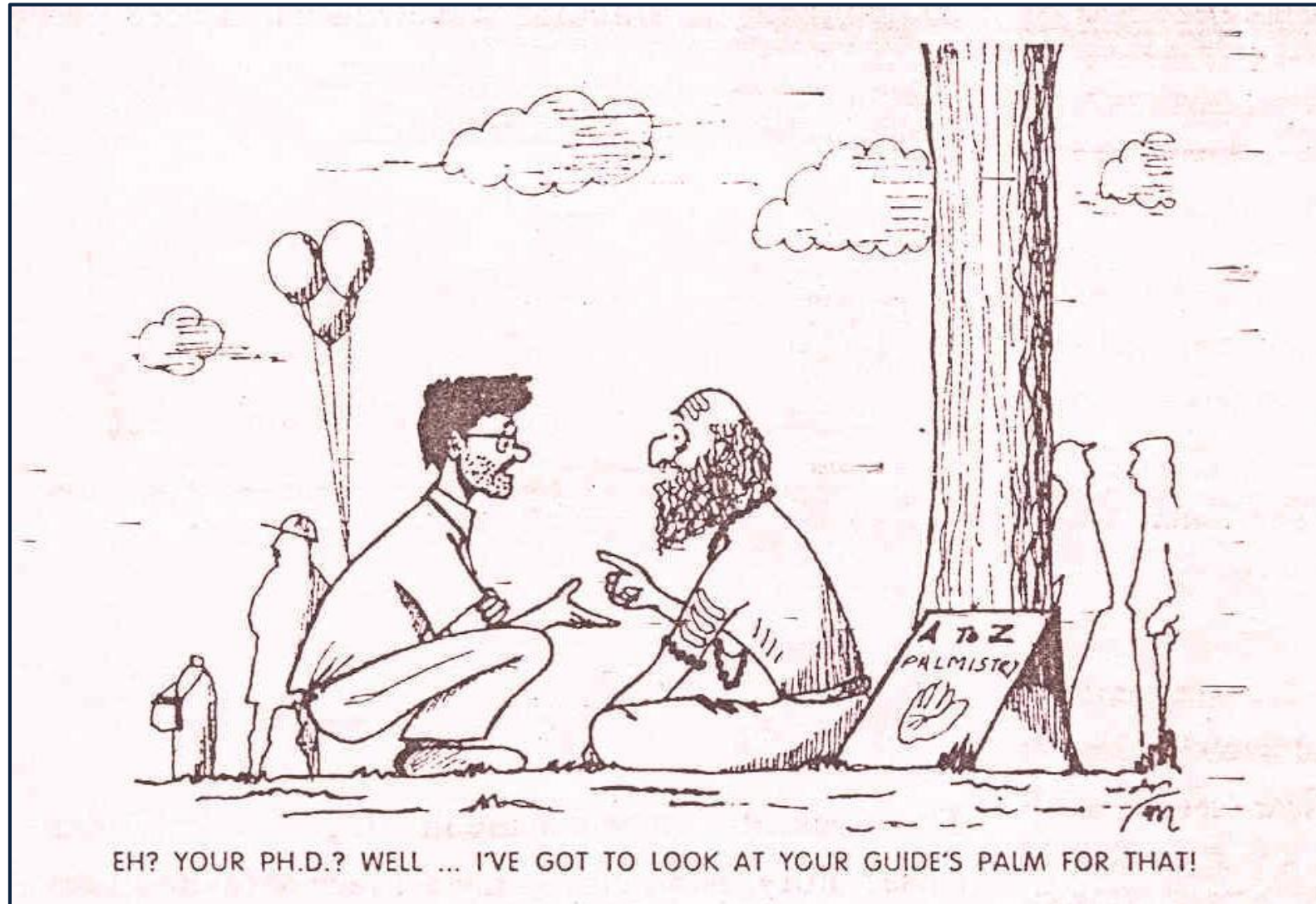


- **Passion**
- **Creativity**
- **Writing Style**
- **Story Telling**
- **Presentation**

Science

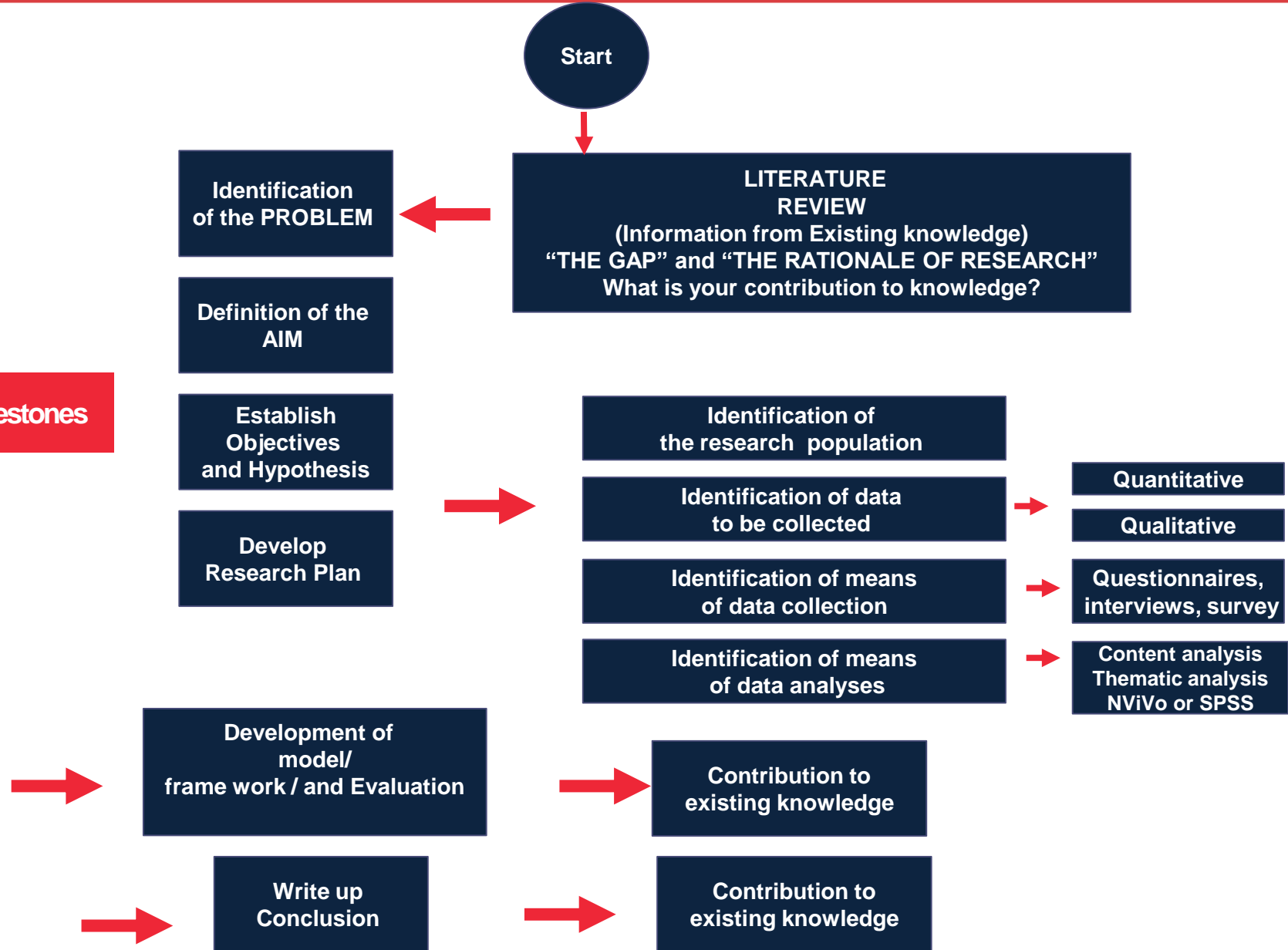


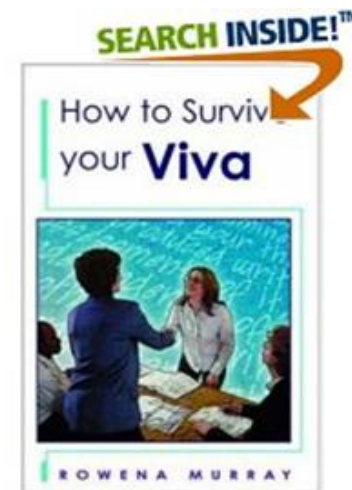
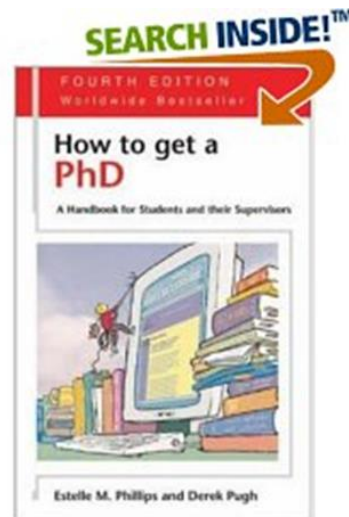
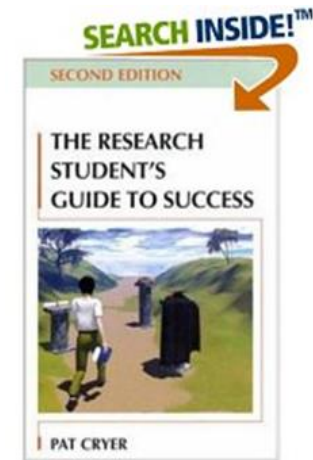
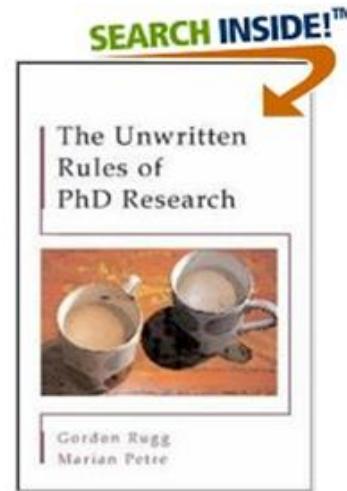
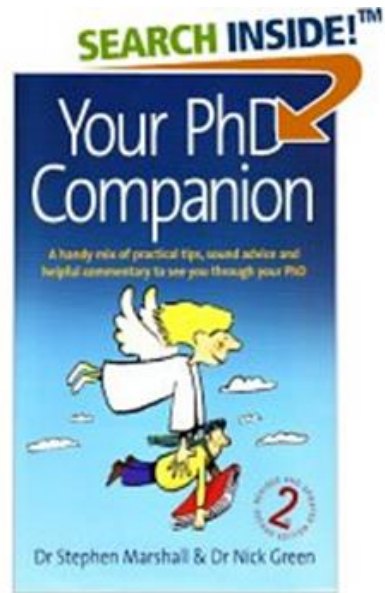
- **Evidence**
- **Solid Methodologies**
- **Originality**
- **Rigour**
- **Validation**

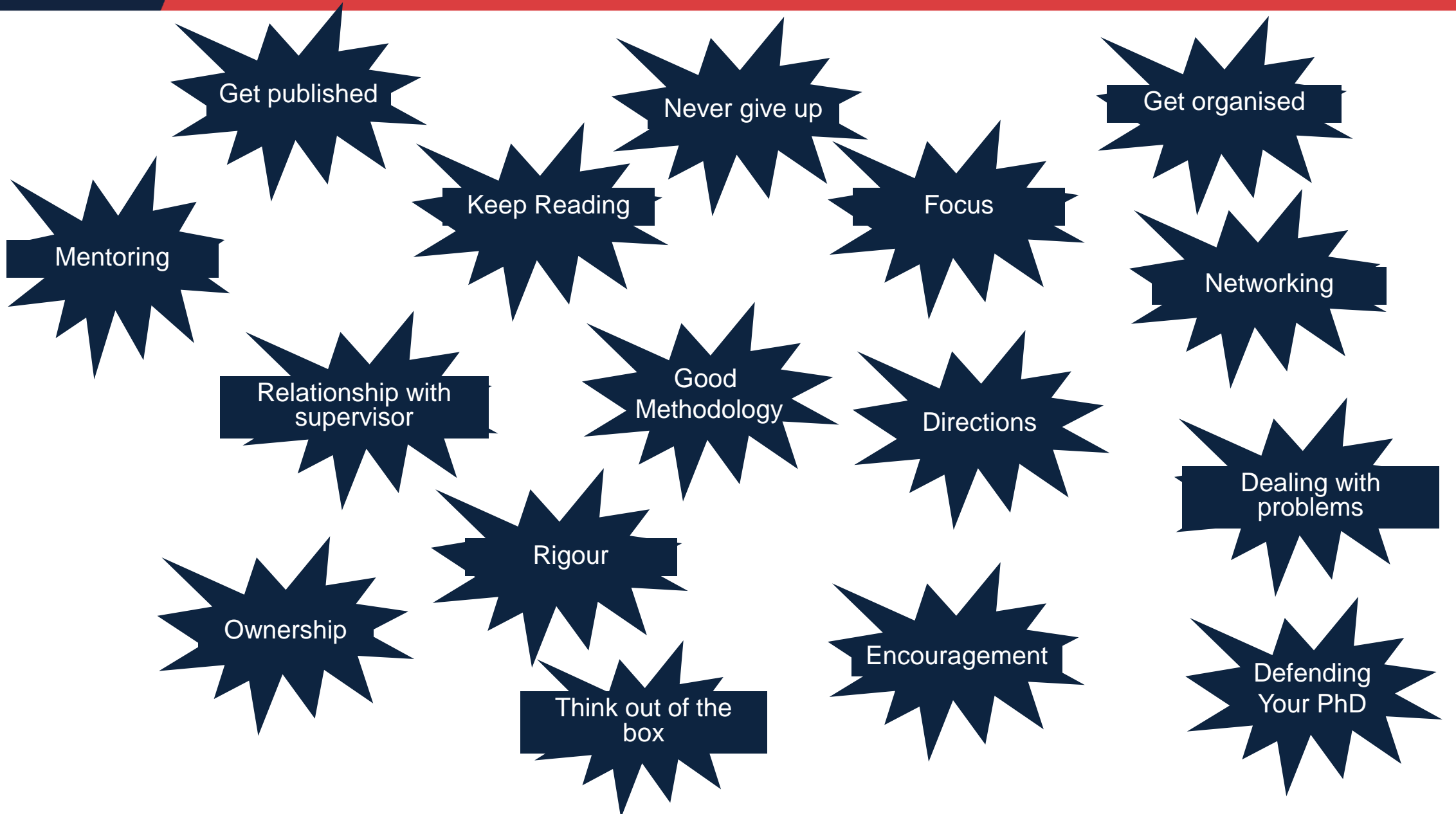


PhDs: a different world

Research Process and Milestones









Why are you doing a PhD?

- Is it for the title?
 - Do you like research/academia?
 - Better future prospect
 - To support your teaching
 - To get some promotion
 - Out of curiosity
 - Funded project
 - To please your family
 - Forced to do it
- What is your strategy?
 - (Need to have an overall picture)

The art of doing a PhD

My PhD in a paragraph

My PhD covers an interesting topic, it has a clear rationale for doing the research in the form of a research problem and a well defined focus. It is supported by strong theoretical underpinnings through a critical and comprehensive literature review and a robust research methodology. The research aim, objectives, questions/hypotheses are well articulated and the research sample is representative. The data collection, analysis and validation phases are comprehensive and appropriate. My PhD is original and it makes a serious contribution to knowledge and it has already been published in top rated refereed journals and conferences. It is written in an exciting, creative, flowing and convincing style and the conclusions clearly meet the research objectives. The recommendations for further research and to practice are also well articulated. I am proud of my PhD, not just because of the product (thesis and title), but also because of the process (I am now a trained researcher). My PhD opened many doors for me, it gave me confidence and strengthened my analytical skills, it has also helped me to find a good job.

The Science of doing a PhD

Methodological Issues

Good Methodology

We all bring (often implicit?!) assumptions and path dependencies to our research!

- What knowledge is – ontology
- How we know it – epistemology
- What values go into it – axiology
- How we write about it – rhetoric
- The process of studying it – methodology

(Sexton 2002)

Dimensions of research philosophy: Bringing it all together! (Sexton, 2002)

Realism

A commonly experienced external reality with predetermined nature and structure

Idealism

An unknowable reality perceived in different ways by individuals

Ontology

Positivism

A search for general laws and cause-effect relationships by rational means

Interpretivism

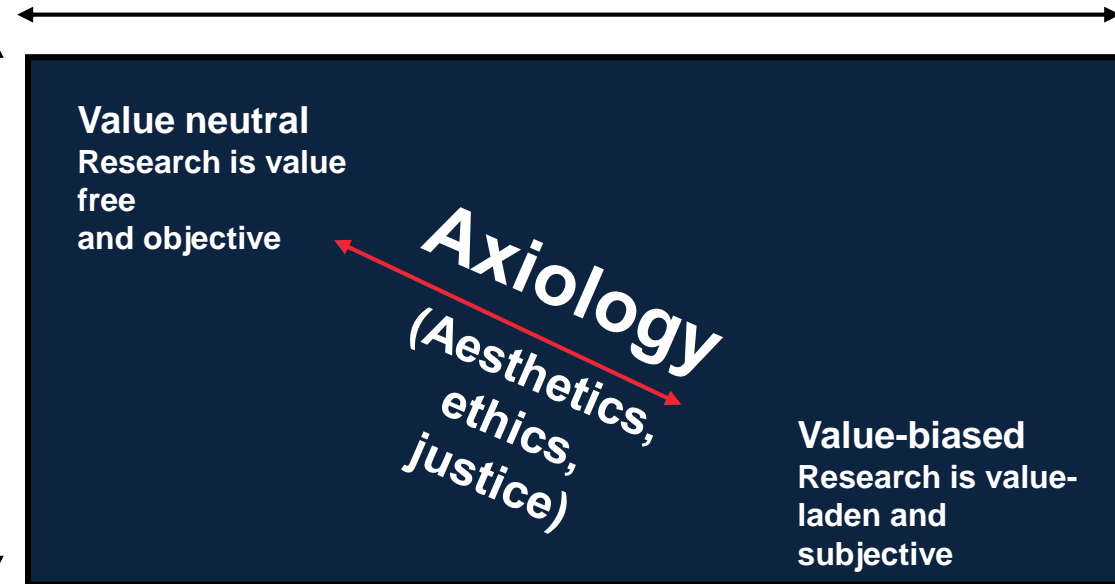
A search for explanations of human action by understanding the way in which the world is understood by individuals

Epistemology

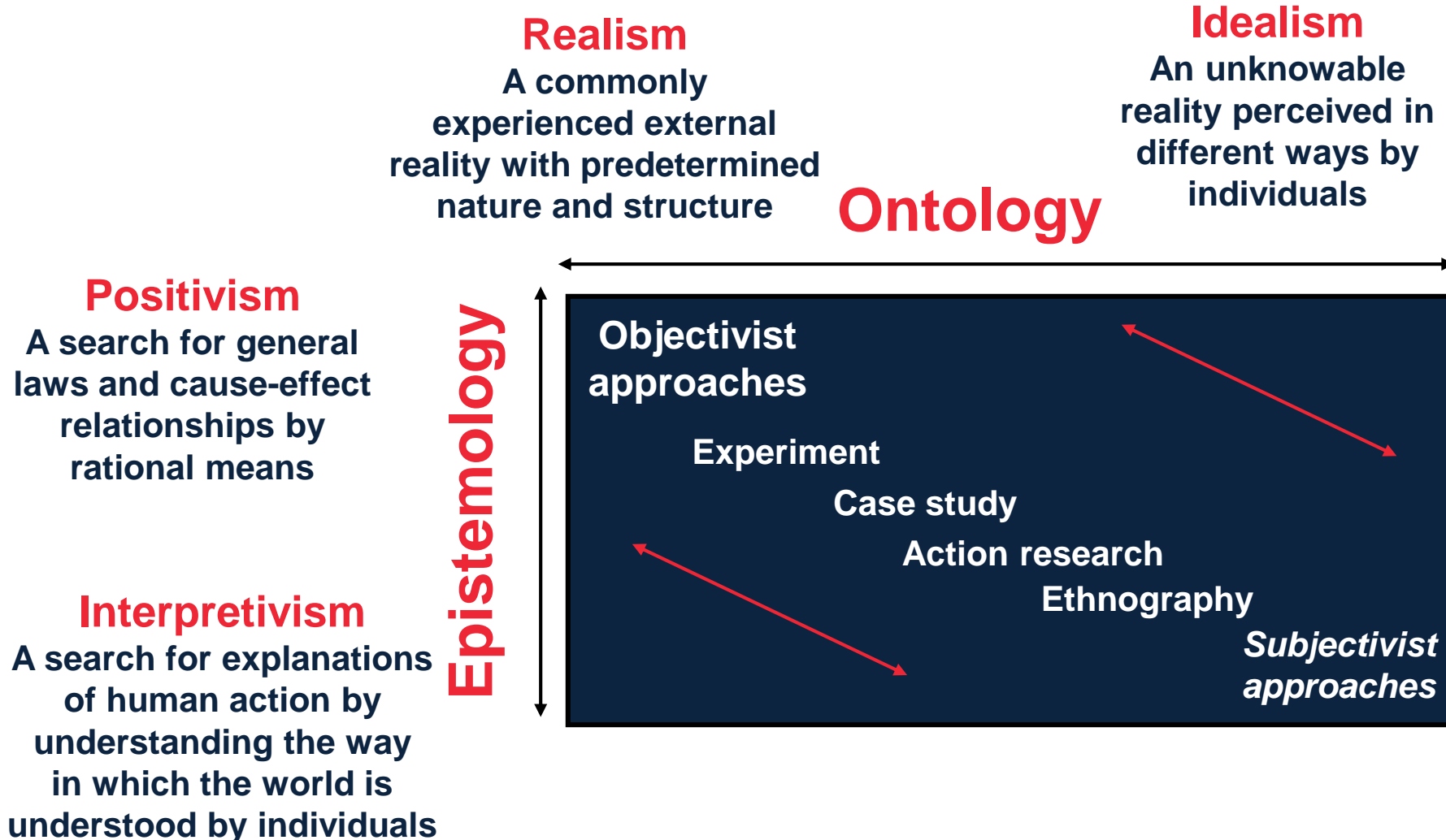
Value neutral
Research is value free and objective

Axiology
(Aesthetics, ethics, justice)

Value-biased
Research is value-laden and subjective

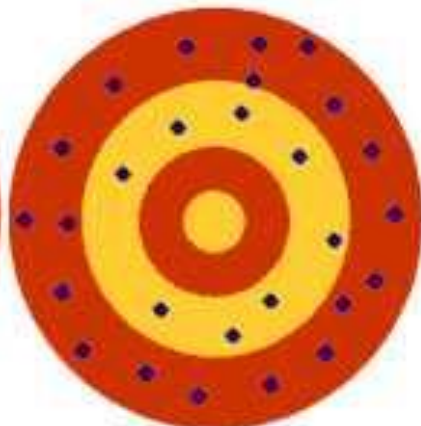


Locating some common methods





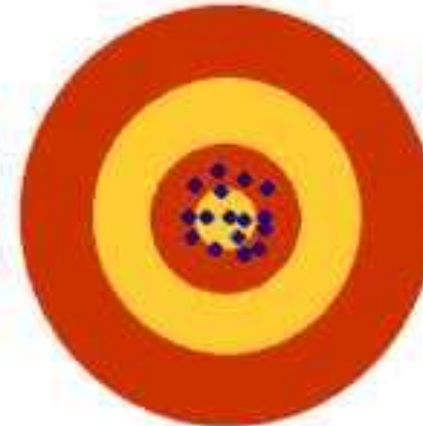
Reliable, not Valid



Valid, not Reliable



**Neither Valid,
nor Reliable**

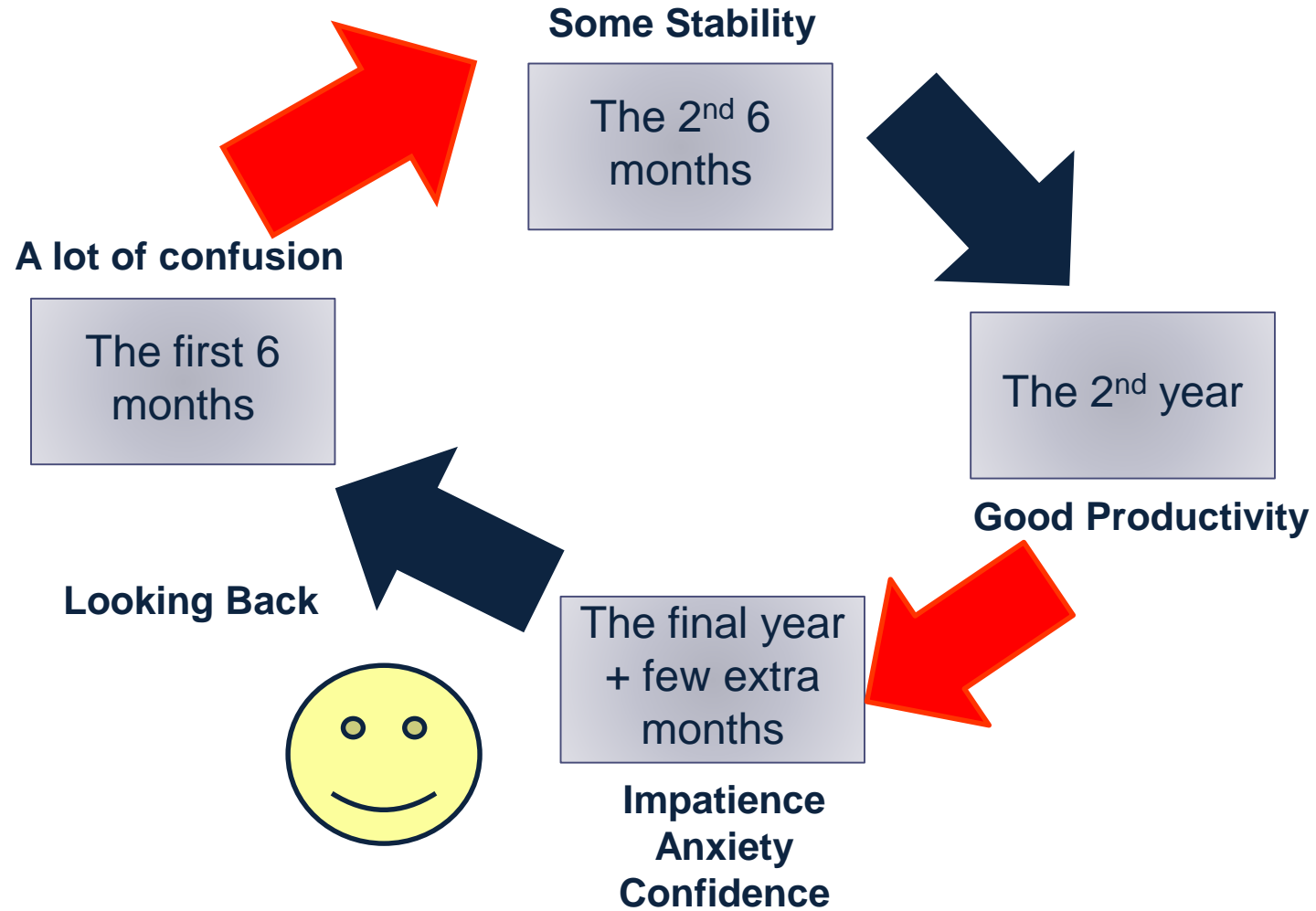


**Both Valid,
and Reliable**

http://www.documentingexcellence.com/stat_tool/reliabilityvalidity.htm

Peter Klassen

Personal experiences from some PhD holders



My Own Experience

Prof. Bingunath Ingirige's PhD Experience



“A PhD is 80% thinking and 20% doing” (May 2000)

What challenges?

- being self motivated, positive attitude
- setting your own deadlines
- being ruthless with yourself
- continuous discussions with peers and maintain their interest in your work
- get the supervisor interested in your work
- access to companies

Sometimes I felt

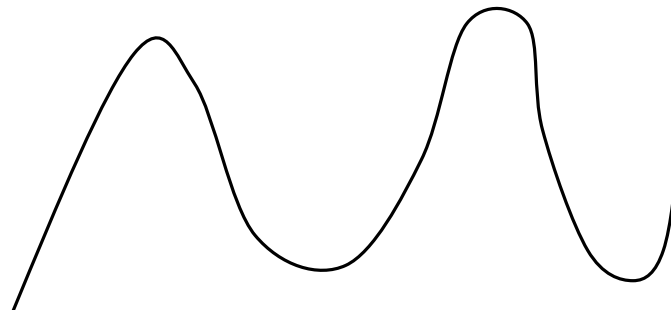
Doing really well



I am going nowhere



and my level of interest, enthusiasm, and motivation

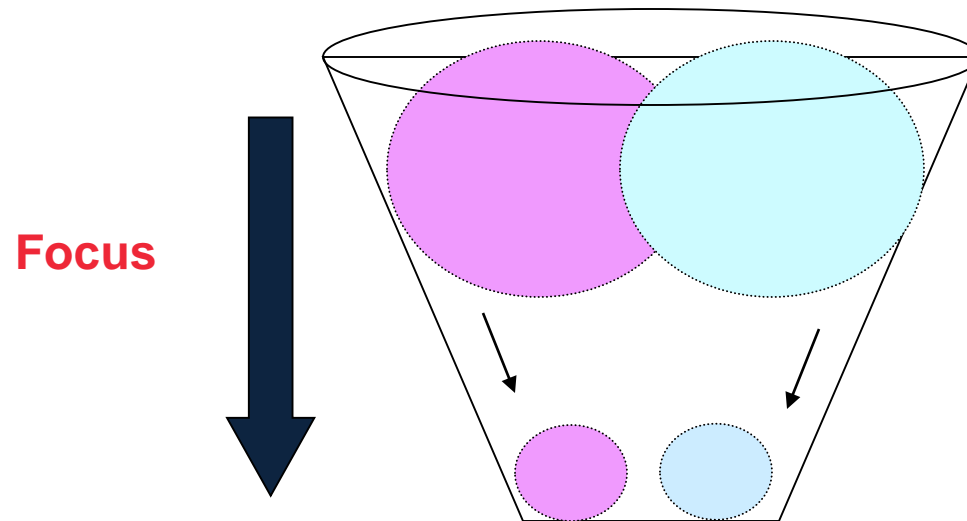


PhD requires a significant shift in your thinking!!!

Get the PhD thinking going!!!

Linking and Narrowing Down – The funnel

What values do you bring with you ??



- Why ?
- Why not ?
- How ?
- What ?
- So What ?

Overheard.....

“Sometimes I feel, why I started it in the first place”

Can't do it any more. Please give me the doctorate!!!





But, look at the bright side....
Generally speaking success rate is very high

Snow White and the Seven Ph.D. Students

At first you're *Bashful*
and *Dopey*.



Two years later you're sick (*Sneezy*),
tired (*Sleepy*), and irritable (*Grumpy*).

Finally, everyone calls you
Doc, and then you're *Happy*.



Prof Richard Haigh's
PhD experience



YOUR THESIS COMMITTEE

Also known as: an impossibly difficult group to get together in one room but who nevertheless hold your future in their hands depending on their ability to reach a civilized consensus.

JORGE CHAM © 2012



Your Professor

Simultaneously your biggest ally and your worst enemy. Will be the first to suggest you do more work.



The Guru

Only here for the free cookies. Don't forget to bring cookies.



The Adversary

Has bitter rivalry with your Professor and will argue the exact opposite view. Work this to your advantage.



The Strawman/woman

Nice guy. No opinions.



The Assistant Professor

Still doesn't believe just a few months ago they were on the other side just like you. Pretends to be an adult.

NONE OF THEM WILL ACTUALLY READ YOUR ENTIRE THESIS.

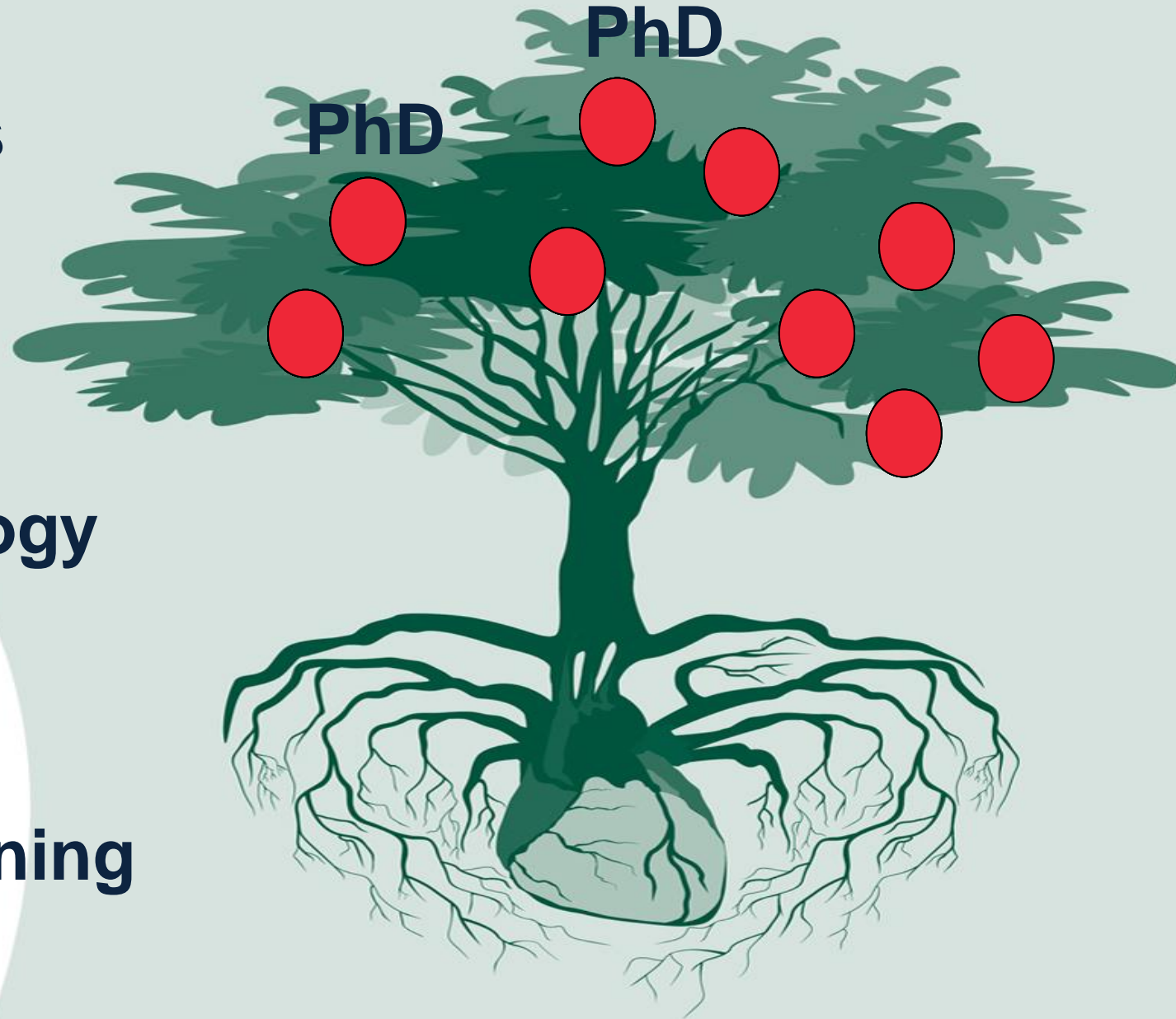
Outcomes



Methodology



**Underpinning
Theory**



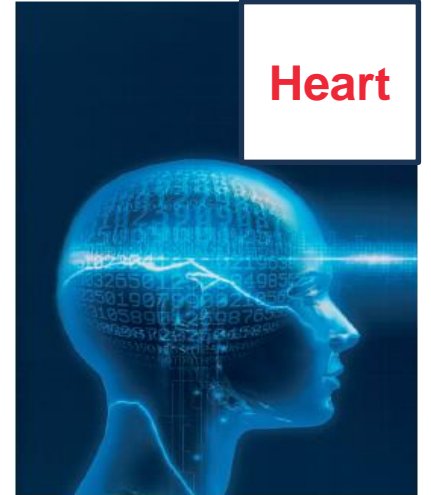
Mind



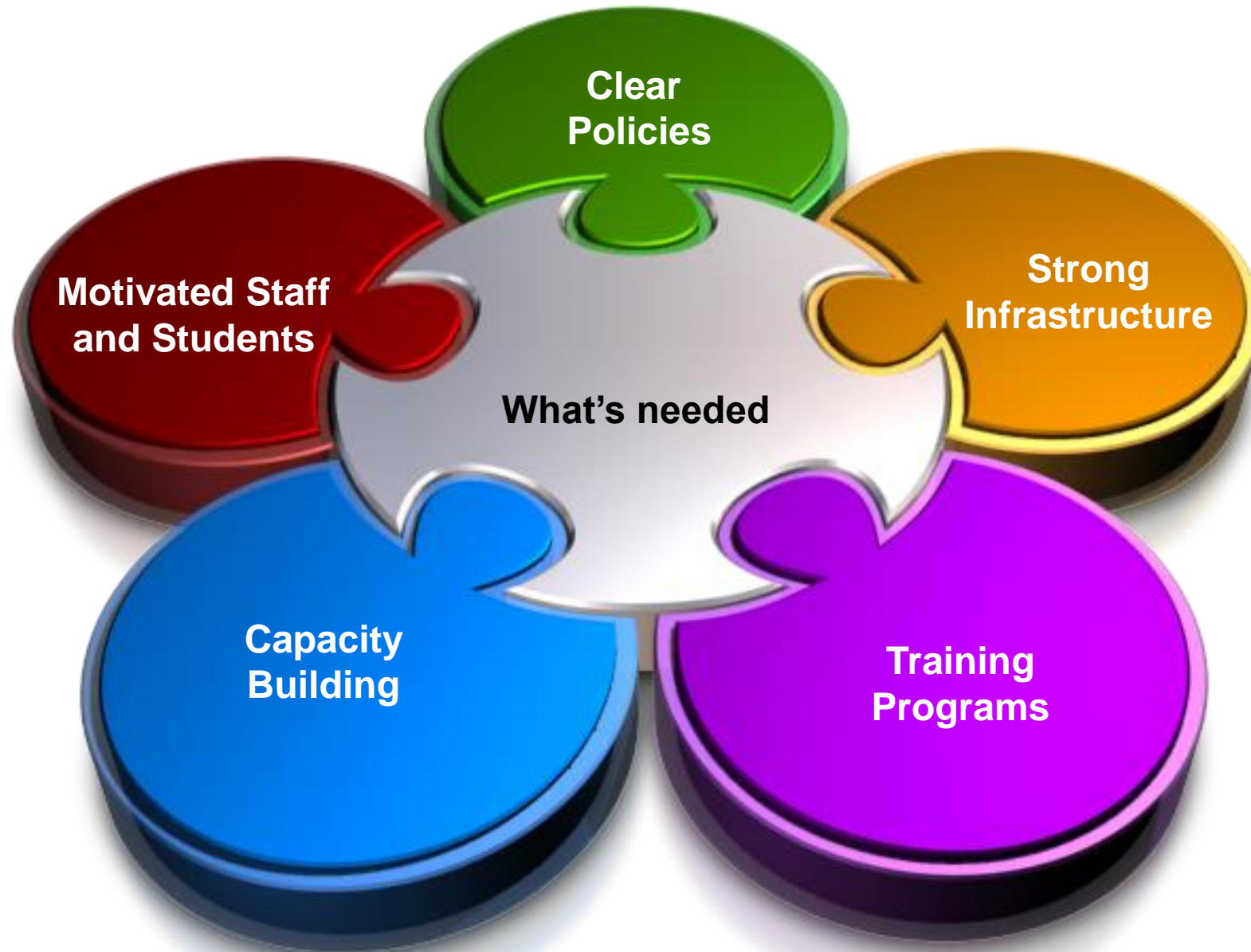
“Research with Passion is the True Ingredient to Success”

- Passion for reading around the subject
- Passion for learning
- Passion for applying concepts
- Passion for analysing
- Passion for publishing
- Passion for writing
- Passion for being critical

Heart



“To be a top performer you have to be passionately committed to what you’re doing and insanely confident about your ability to pull it off”



Getting published – Why refereed Journals?

- Not commercial: no fees
- Status
- More weight
- More rigour
- Researchers refer to

- Academic Career
- Establish a name
- Reputation
- Support your PhD viva
- Knowledge dissemination
- Lead to collaboration

How to choose a Journal?

- Start with a conference paper
- Study carefully a sample of journal papers, this will give you some insights into the expectations and standards for a paper
- Decide on a journal
- Quality: Journal ranking
- Speed of publication
- Relevance of subject
- Ask staff colleagues for help
- Visit the web and library, plenty of information
- Join mailing lists
- Ask the editor of the journal
- Draft an outline of your paper and discuss with supervisor
- Produce the first draft
- Pass paper to your supervisor for comments
- Improve paper
- Submit paper

Drafting your paper

- Abstract: Concise, to the point, research methodology, main contribution
- Introduction: subject matter, introducing the paper
- Literature review: comprehensive & critical, refereed papers
- Research methodology: very clear, rigorous
- Main findings: statistics, etc
- Testing and validation:
- Conclusions and further work
- References: Harvard, etc
- Follow guidelines strictly
- Respond to corrections (include a covering letter that identify the corrections)
- Never give up
- If rejected, improve and send it somewhere else
- Good Luck

Some key questions

- Readability - Does it communicate the right message? Is it clear? Is there a logical progression without unnecessary duplication?
- Originality - Why was it written? What's new?
- Credibility - Are the conclusions valid? Is the methodology robust? Can it be replicated? Is it honest – don't hide any limitations of the research? You'll be found out.
- Applicability - How do findings apply to the world of practice? Does it pinpoint the way forward for future research?
- Internationality - Does it take an international, global perspective?

(D Amaratunga)

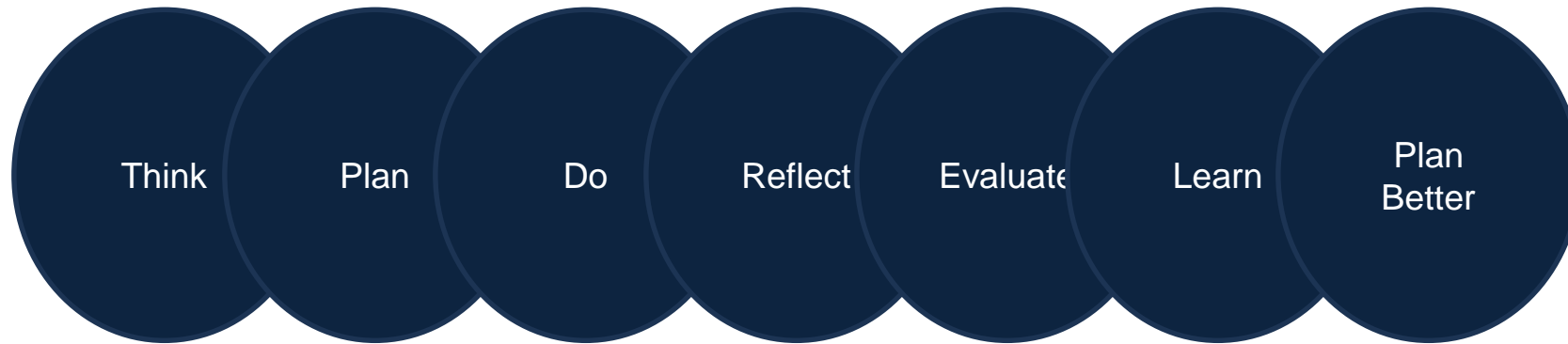
A successful PhD - some hints

- Never submit a PhD without the approval of your supervisor
- Never exceed the number of words specified by the University (Ideal PhD: 200 pages). Read the University regulations.
- The introductory and conclusions chapters are the most important- take great care to manage expectations and understand the limitations
- The Research Methodology chapter should be clearly written and justified:
 - Qualitative or quantitative
 - Single case study or multiple case studies
 - Data collection
 - Statistical analysis
 - Research Process Map
- Research findings should be rigorous and statistically proven if possible
- The literature review should be comprehensive (Critique and not reporting)
- Proof reading is important:
 - Minor typographical errors
 - Clear abstract
 - Numbering
 - Acknowledgements
 - Referencing

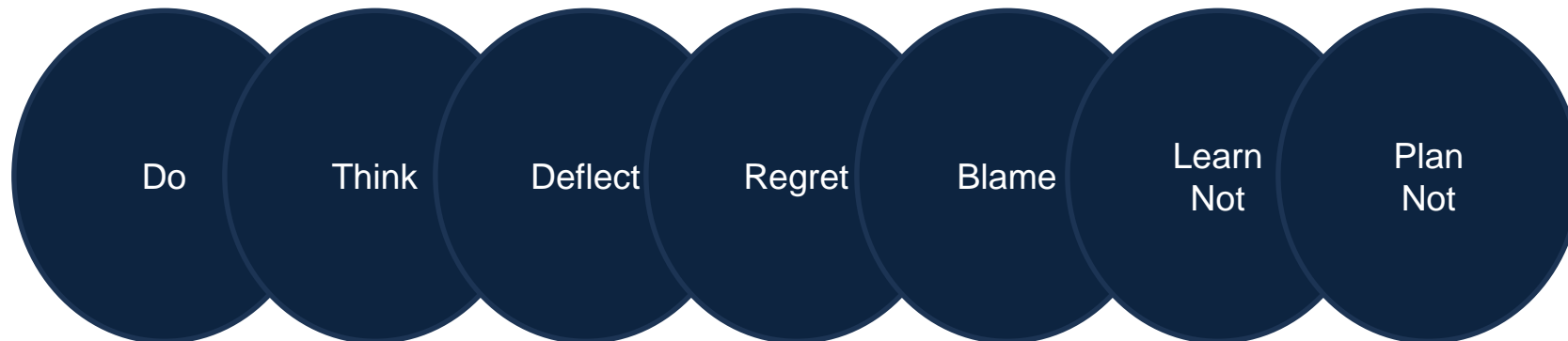
More hints – the Viva

- Remember that the PhD viva is a formal examination, but in most cases it is operated like a discussion
- Make sure that you arrange a mock viva before the real thing
- Read about your examiners' work
- Be confident, not arrogant and show passion towards your research
- Listen to the question you have been asked
- Agree with the examiners if you can't support your argument -don't waffle
- Bring a list of corrections to the viva
- Mark up your copy of the thesis in order to find your way easily during the viva
- Don't read the PhD the night before the viva, try to relax
- Typical questions:
 - Tell me about the story of your PhD, what is your main contribution?
 - Why did you choose the topic or this research method?
 - Give me the names of two experts in this area (well known researchers)
 - How did you validate your work?
 - Would you do this research the same way again?
 - Do you have any questions which you would have expected me to ask?

The Right Way

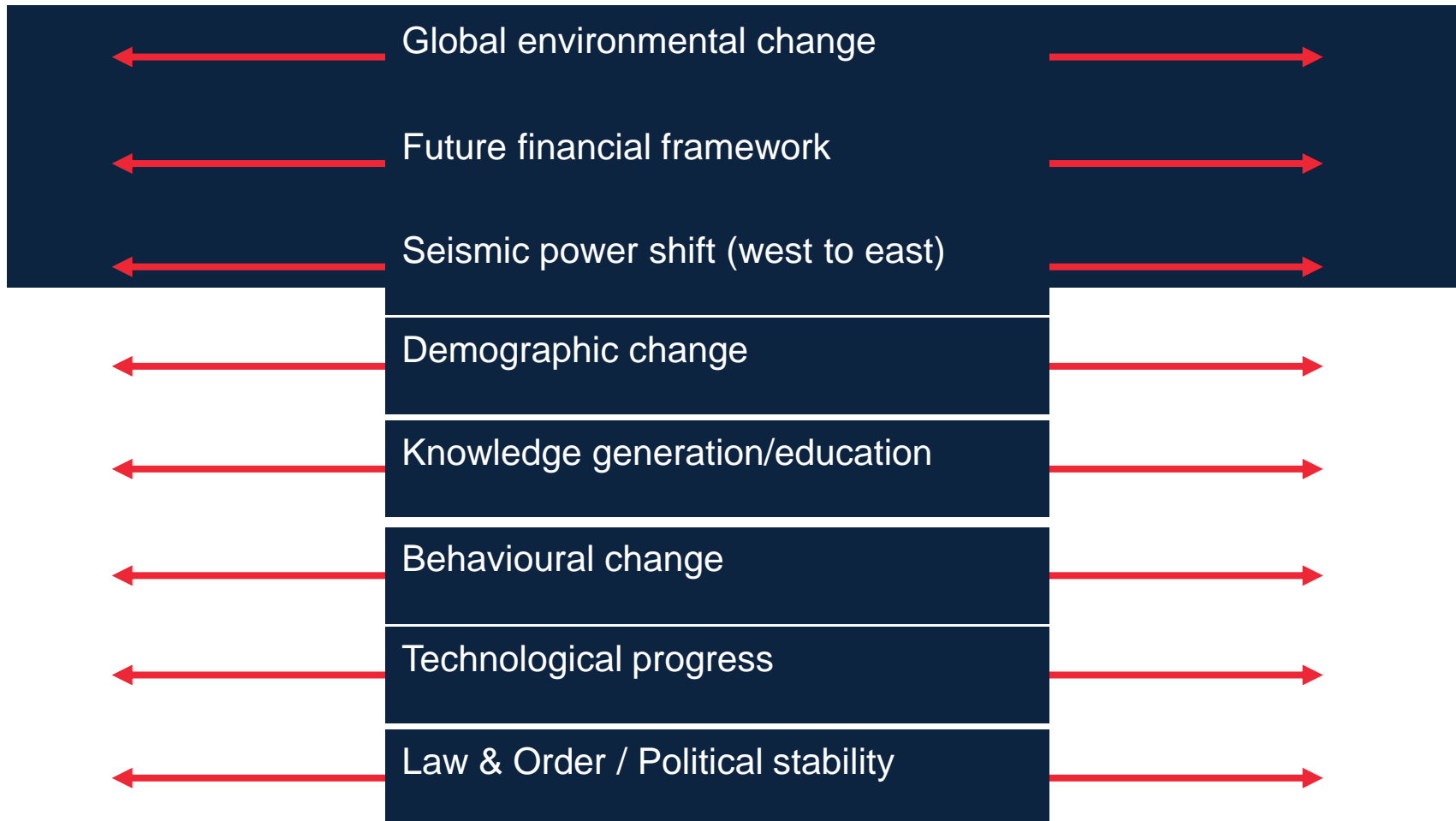


The Wrong Way

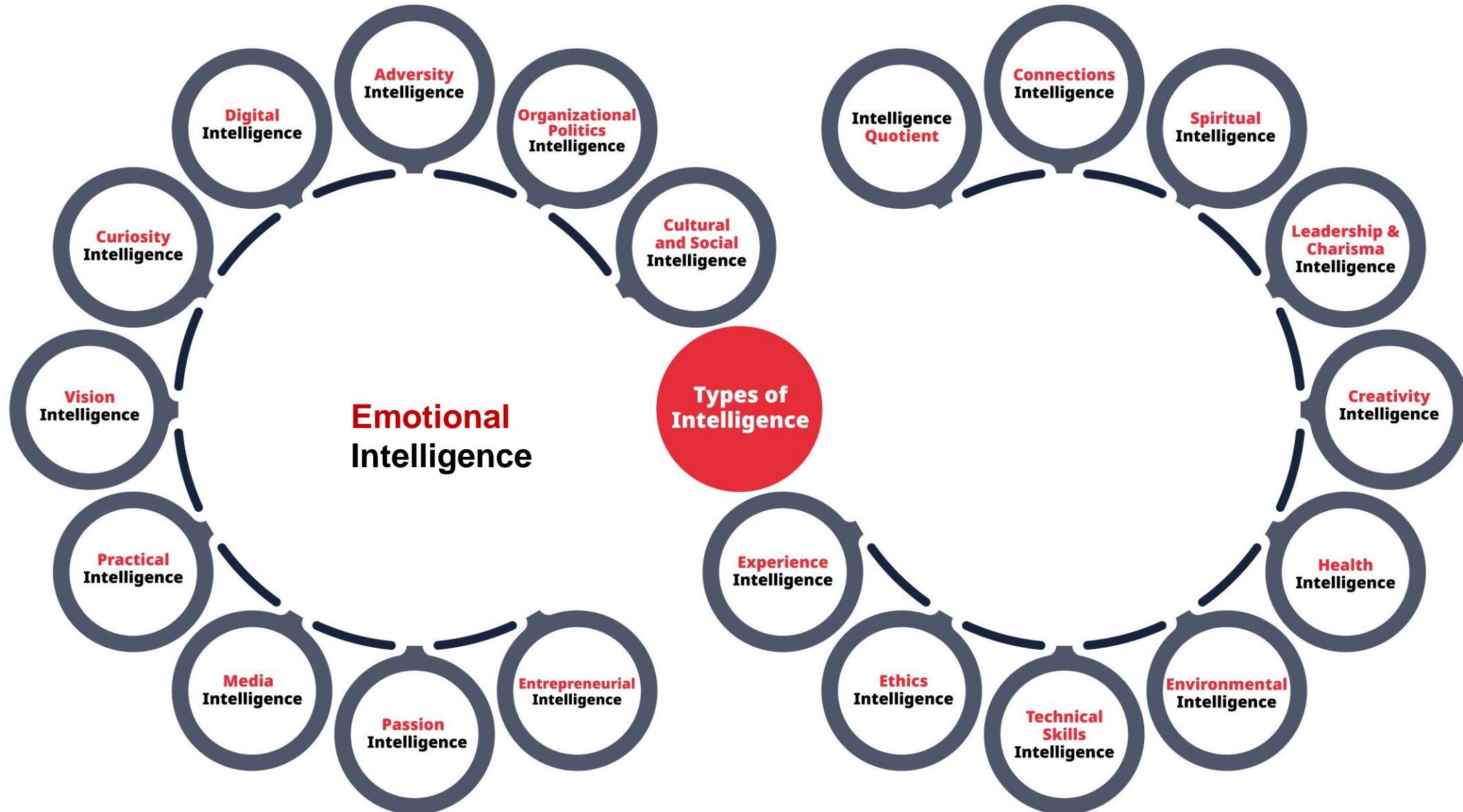


Failing to plan is planning to fail

Main Themes Shaping Future



21 Dimensions



Happiness is a state of mind.



The Do and Don't in doing a PhD

The “Do” in doing a PhD

- Define a PoA (plan of action) from day one!
- Find a topic that you are really interested in
- Work with your fellow PhD students
- Work closely with your supervisor to get full support
- Undertake a thorough and critical review of the literature
- Select the right research methods
- Present papers at conferences and publish in high quality refereed journals so as to improve your writing skills and obtain early critical comments from external reviewers and peers
- Take over – PhD ownership is important
- Write and keep on writing, it cements your thoughts
- Reward yourself when significant milestones are achieved
- Be confident (not arrogant)
- Check through Turnitin for plagiarism
- Be rigorous

The “Don’t” in doing a PhD

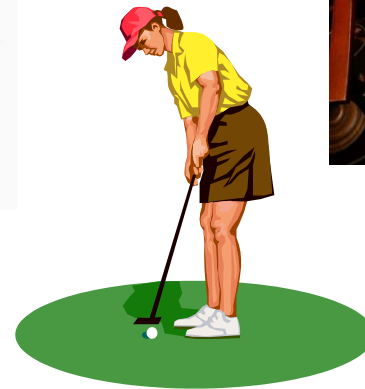
- Prolong your PhD
- Take long breaks (it is difficult to start again)
- Depend 100% on your supervisor
- Be forced down a specific theme/methodology
- Think the supervisor knows everything
- Have poor time management
- Lose focus or direction
- Underestimate the writing up period
- Ignore the importance of meeting your supervisor on a regular basis
- Take criticism negatively, but as a challenge!

Final Thoughts

- Doing a PhD is in part art and in part science
- Keeping notes of meetings with your supervisors
- Meet at least once a week with your supervisor at the beginning of the PhD/DBA supervision process
- Solid understanding of methodological issues
- Learning on the job
- Be motivated to publish
- Mutual benefits



!!!!Enjoy it!!!!



Spot the PhD



Thank you for listening
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