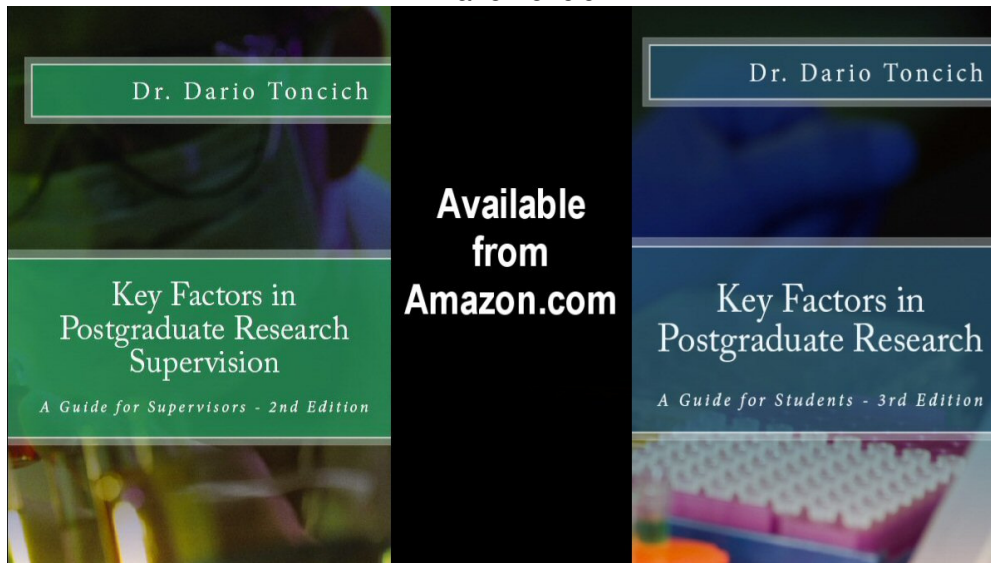


10 Fundamental Thesis Preparation Tips

Dr. Dario Toncich



Tip Number 3 – The Humble/Impartial Observer

A research thesis is not a document to be written from the perspective of an expert consultant – it is written in the context of an apprenticeship for research. The style of thesis writing needs to present the research student as a humble/impartial observer of the phenomena being investigated, and a person who has gained knowledge from the work of learned peers.

Postgraduate research is not intended to be about paradigm-shifting outcomes. The research investigation is a mechanism by which a graduate student learns the rigor of research and, in so doing, makes a small contribution towards the extension of knowledge.

The sequence is:

- Learned peers publish research
- Learned peers identify shortcomings/gaps in their research
- Learned peers identify possible future areas of research
- The research student investigates the current state of knowledge in research, the shortcomings and possible forward pathways – as identified by learned peers
- The research student creates a forward pathway based on the findings of others and then conducts his/her graduate research program
- The findings are benchmarked against earlier work by learned peers.

It is not the research student's role to inject personal assessments/opinions of other learned peers' research but to balance the range of different views being put forward by those peers and select – without personal bias – a forward approach. At all times, the research student needs to remain the humble/impartial observer.

Impartiality will often necessitate juxtaposing the worst interpretation of the research student's own research against the best possible interpretation of that of peers – to eliminate personal bias. The humble/impartial observer also needs to be self-critical and identify shortcomings in his/her research at every opportunity.

Critically, a research thesis is NOT an infomercial or a brochure for the research student's work – it is an accurate and balanced assessment of a research program conducted by a novice researcher – and should be written in that context.