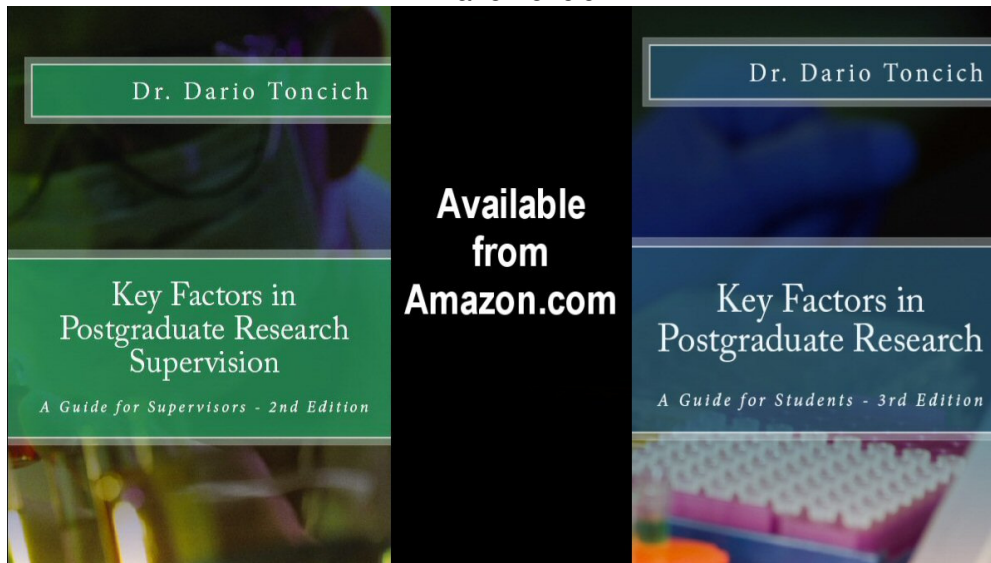


10 Fundamental Thesis Preparation Tips

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Tip Number 4 – Know the Reader/Examiner

A thesis is not a document which is written for the benefit of a general audience. It is a document written for a small subset of scholars from a particular field of research. It is not possible to write a thesis which is all things to all people. The thesis author needs to understand his/her audience.

Graduate researchers generally do not know the individuals who will examine their theses. However, before commencing their writing, they need to understand the attributes of the people who will examine their theses.

Specifically, for each field of research there are generally various schools of thought on possible methodologies and approaches, the validity of techniques and outcomes, and so on. Sometimes there are personal and professional antipathies between the various learned scholars engaged in each different school of thought. These should become apparent from a review of literature.

The research student's role is not to denigrate or promote any particular school of thought in the field of interest but to present the range of opinions in a complete and impartial manner. Where possible, the benefits and shortcomings of any particular school of thought should be highlighted – in a professional way, generally based upon hard data or references from other learned peers – certainly not based on personal opinions.

The research student, having elected to pursue an approach based upon one particular school of thought, needs to consider thesis writing in the context of how a reader from another, opposing school of thought might react to reading it. Would they be offended? Would they become defensive? Might they become malicious in their approach to reading the thesis? None of these issues need to arise if the research student has developed a mature, fair and impartial approach to documenting his/her chosen directions and if the outcomes of the research are presented in systematic, unbiased manner.

An arrogant, dogmatic, sarcastic, or unprincipled, closed-minded approach to thesis writing could well offend a reader and, even if the results of the research are valid in their own right, may lead to an unsatisfactory hearing from the examiner.