

COURSE OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS

EE 469 Seminar in Development Economics

Semester 2/2014

About the Instructor

- Name: Phatta Kirduang
- **Research Interests**
 - Health economics
 - Development economics
 - Population studies
- **Recent & Current research**
 - The 2011 Flood and Employment Sector in Thailand
 - Non-Cash Benefits for the Beneficiaries under the Social Security Scheme
 - Preferences for Wage Compensation of Health Professionals under the Ministry of Public Health
 - A Study of Appropriate Social Protection Schemes in Thailand
 - Food Security and Child Health: A Case Study in Peru
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- Office hours: Tues & Thurs, 2-3pm, and by appointment

Students' Background?

- Please introduce yourself:
 - Name & Nickname
 - Any past experience with development field?
 - Do you have any specific research topic(s) in mind?
 - Have you had any experience with any statistical software packages (e.g. SPSS, STATA)?
 - What's your future plan (particularly for 4th-year students)?
 - Others?

Course Introduction

- Course description:
 - Research project development and design
 - Components of a research project
 - Writing reports and reviewing others' work.
- Course objective:
 - Develop skills in conducting, writing, and presenting academic research, as well as critiquing other's work
 - Goal: One GOOD research paper!

Organization of the Course

- Meet every Tuesday and Thursday 12.30 – 2 pm.
- Please check moodle regularly for announcements and readings (**enrollment key: 5384**)
- Lecture & workshop style:
 - Guideline on conducting research, particularly in development economics
 - Introduction to research methodology & basic tools
 - Selected economic models and empirical methods (case studies)
 - Research topics (Guest speakers)
 - Group discussion

Assessment

- Referee Report 20 %
- Presentations and Class Participation 20 %
- Research Paper 60 %
 - Research Proposal 10%
 - Progress Report I 10%
 - Progress Report II 10%
 - Draft Final Report 10%
 - Final Report 20%

Referee Report

- A summary and critique of a journal article.
 - Identify the research question, objective, hypothesis, model or conceptual framework, data and methods, results, and conclusion/implication.
 - Identify the consistency and/or contradiction with other studies in the literature, and suggest the gap or limitation of this paper.
- This article is of your own choosing (or by my suggestion), and it should be used as the main reference.
- Format: No more than 2 page with 1.5-space with 12 font size (Time New Roman).

Research Proposal

- Components of a research proposal:
 1. **Topic** – Should be precise and concise
 2. **Statement of problem** – Why is this topic important? So what? Often ends with research question(s).
 3. **Objective** – What do you want to address in this research?
 4. **Literature review** – What has or has not been done in the past? What's the contribution of your paper?
 5. **Data and methodology**
 - How would you answer the research question?
 - What is the economic concept/model?
 - What data will be used in the analysis (both qualitative and quantitative analysis)?
 - What's the empirical method (if any)?

Research Paper

- Research paper will be assessed based on five components.
 1. **Research Proposal**
 2. **Progress Report I** = Research Proposal (revised) + Descriptive Statistics
 3. **Progress Report II** = Progress Report I (revised) + Preliminary Results
 4. **Draft Final Report** = Progress Report II (revised) + Conclusion & Discussion
 5. **Final Report** = Draft Final Report (revised)

Important Dates

Date	Items to be submitted and presented
February 12	Referee report (main reference paper)
February 26	Research proposal
March 19	Progress report I
April 7	Progress report II
April 23	Draft final report
May 7	Final report (submit only)

Readings

- There's no required text for this class.
- **Recommended books for writing:**
 - McClosky, D.N. 2000. *Economical Writing*.
 - Thompson, W. 2001. *A Guide for the Young Economist: Writing and Speaking Effectively about Economics*.
 - Wisker, G. 2008. *The Postgraduate Research Handbook*.
- **Suggested Textbooks on Development Economics:**
 - Perkin, D. H., Radelet, S., Lindauer, D. L., & Block, S. A. (2013). *Economics of Development*. Seventh Edition. W.W. Norton & Company.
 - Todaro, M., & Smith, S. (2011). *Economic Development*. Eleventh Edition. Prentice Hall.
 - Ray, Debraj. (1998). *Development Economics*. Princeton University Press.
 - [Handbook of Development Economics](#). (There are 5 volumes.)

Useful Websites

- World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>
- International Monetary Fund <http://www.imf.org/>
- Center for Global Development <http://www.cgdev.org/>
- Center for Economic Policy Research <http://www.cepr.net/>
- Peterson Institute for International Economics
<http://www.iie.com/>
- Asian Development Bank www.adb.org
- World Trade Organization www.wto.org
- National Bureau of Economic Research <http://www.nber.org/>

Other Information Sources

- World Development Indicators
(<http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>)
- World Development Reports
- World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- International Financial Statistics <http://elibrary-data.imf.org/finddatareports.aspx?d=33061&e=169393>
- Penn World Tables <http://www.ggdcc.net/pwt>

Some Secondary Data Sources

Thailand

- Thailand National Statistical Office – www.nso.go.th
- Thailand NESDB - www.nesdb.go.th

International

- World Bank's [Living Standards Measurement Study](http://www.worldbank.org/livingstandards)
- Demographic Health Survey (DHS) - www.dhsprogram.com
- Young Lives Survey - <http://www.younglives.org.uk>
- International Census Data - <https://international.ipums.org>

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS

What is Research?

- *“Systematic investigation towards increasing the sum of knowledge”*

(Chambers 20th Century Dictionary)

- *“An endeavour to discover new or collate old facts etc. by the scientific study of a subject or by a course of critical investigation.”*

(The Concise Oxford Dictionary)

- *“Research is about **asking** and beginning to answer questions, **seeking knowledge** and **understanding** the world and its processes, and **testing** assumptions and belief.”*

(Wisker, 2008)

Research Process

Type A

- Problem/experience/observation
- Does this happen in a scientific hypothesis? It is expected that if this happens, then this will happen, ...
- Investigation and experimentation to test the hypothesis

Type B

- ▶ Asking a research question-how and why things happen and work?
- ▶ Constructing knowledge and believing that knowledge is constructed rather than trying to prove it.
- ▶ Come up with theories
- ▶ Development of research design, methods and methodology to answer the question

Research Planning

- Research topic (issue)
- Research problem (statement of the problem)
- Research questions/Hypothesis
- Literature review
- Theoretical/conceptual framework
- Data and methods

1. Research Topic

- Criteria for selecting a topic:
 - Does the topic really interest you?
 - Is there a theory base for research?
 - Is the study achievable in reasonable time? **
 - Is the problem a significant one? (i.e. So what?)

1. Research Topic

- Getting research ideas:
 - Current events, identify what you don't know
 - Suggestion for research from past theses, look at conclusions and recommendations
 - Apply new theory with new data
 - Different approaches to testing of important results
 - Different context or time-frame to applications of the theory (before and after policy)
 - Finding the frontiers, not yet exhaustively explored

1. Research Topic

- Some potential sources:
 - Go to seminars** (you are encouraged to attend the faculty's seminar.)
 - Read working papers or econ resources on internet
 - Trying to explain things to your friends
 - Criticize authorities, finding gaps or contradiction
 - Explore any connection between two concepts or ideas
 - Explore factors affecting situation or impacts
 - Note that it takes time to develop ideas into research questions, need to take logs of your reading, thinking

1. Research Topic

- Examples:
 - Link between sibling size and child welfare (drawn in from the one-child policy in China, like to work for a causal relationship)
 - Link between resources and student achievement (drawn from the poor educational quality and big budget for education, unsettled debate in literature)
 - Borrowing constraint and return to education (link between determinant of school choice, credit access, and determinant of returns)
 - Effect of child care subsidies on employment of mothers

Research Topic: Example

Area of Interest : **Development economics**

Sub-Area of Interest: **Education**

Stream of Research: **Impact of Technology on
Children's Learning Abilities**

(Thesis) Research as One Specific Topic:
**Impact of 'One Tablet Per Child Program'
on Children's Learning Abilities**

2. Research Questions

- Key stages in developing research questions:
 1. **State the research problem or issue** : Nature of problem, why is it important, how research will contribute to its solution
 2. **State the research question or hypothesis**: Asking relationship between variables, phenomena, events, and definitions of terms
- ‘Operationalizing’ a concept
- Identifying gaps and boundaries/ frontiers

Necessity of Defining the Problem

- Problem clearly stated is a problem half solved.
- An unambiguously defined problem helps indiscriminating relevant data from irrelevant ones.
- Poorly defined problem creates hurdles in the way of research.
- To summarize, a **well defined problem** helps in selecting **appropriate techniques**, collecting appropriate data and determining **what relationships to be studied**.
- Question: What could be a research problem for the proposed research topic on 'one tablet per child program'?

Techniques in Defining a Problem

- Defining a problem involves the task of laying down **boundaries** within which it is to be studied.
- The usual approach of defining a problem is that researcher himself put a question.
- However, the following points are wise to consider
 - State the problem in general way
 - Understand the nature of the problem
 - Survey the available literature
 - Develop ideas through discussion
 - Rephrase the research problem into a working proposition

Example: Impact of 'One Tablet Per Child' Program

- Previous work: children's education, computers as educational supplies
- Concepts: use of technology in children's learning
- Theories: human capital (Becker)
- Research questions: How does 'One Tablet Per Child' Program affect children's testing scores?
- Hypothesis: 'One Tablet Per Child' Program increases children's reading score.

Is it a good topic/question?

- Exciting to you?
- Answer is not too obvious or yes/no answer.
- Theory sound?
- Doable for you?
- Add some value/new knowledge?
 - Is it new? (check with professor or recent survey (literature or working papers, Econlit or social science citation index))
 - Is the problem a significant one? – i.e. So what? Why should I care? Is it real-world related, economic significance, new technique, new outcome (not possible before, adding new variable with good theoretical motivation, results robust and convincing, see the world differently)

Start Looking for Topics

Think about a research topic and research questions:

1. Start with an area of research and a real interest
2. What is the current state of research and discussion in this field/area? What are key debates and issues?
3. Why is it of current interest?
4. Think about a hypothesis you will be testing, or a question you will be asking.

Today's Homework

- Start thinking about a research topic and research questions.
- Select a few papers related to your areas of interest. You may start by using google scholar, econlit, and other sources, but try to focus on academic journal articles. (see details in the following slide for tips on reading).

Reflections on your reading

- When reading, you may ask:
 - What are they?
 - Why does it work that way (where did the author draw ideas)?, why not the other way ?
 - Why do they think of this issue?
 - You know the logic now, can you repeat their ways? Or can you think of another way to explain them?
 - Is it related to other work in the field?
 - What would be the next step to build upon this work?
 - On what assumptions the solution hangs to?
 - In which conditions can we make some generalization?

When reading, you may ask:

- What are their implications on ...?
- What are their limitations?
- When some factor changes, is it consistent?
- Are they contradict with the old belief or reasoning?
- What did you think of the paper? Was the argument convincing and reasonable?
- Is there anything you would have liked to see that they did not present?
- Did you find anything extraneous or unnecessary?
- How does this paper contribute to the existing literature?
- Can you think of other questions that could be answered in a similar way?