

VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Keynote Address: Research Support

Reflecting on research, innovation and sustainability [25 JULY 2014]

If we want to be smartly intellectual, then we would turn to a description of the word **research** and answer that it consists of imaginative work that we do on a systematic basis in order to increase our barn house of knowledge. Moreover, we could then add that we use research to (1) confirm details that already exist; (2) launch new specifics; (3) endorse the results of previous work; (4) solve new or existing problems; (5) support propositions; or (6) cultivate new theories.

A modern look at the word **research**

A broad definition of research is given by Martyn Shuttleworth - "In the broadest sense of the word, the definition of research includes any gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge."

Another definition of research is given by Creswell who states that - "Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue". It consists of three steps: pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer to the question.

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines research in more detail as "a studious inquiry or examination; especially : investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws".

When used first?

Aristotle, who lived back in 384-322 BC, was one of the early figures in the development of the scientific method. Yet the earliest recorded use of the term **research** was in 1577 – the 16th Century.

What do I make of the word **research**?

Research can either be a crocodile hiding somewhere in your office, out to get you – or it can be the reminder that there ARE ideas out there that need to be discovered. In my case, when I joined the academic field in 2001, the support could have been much stronger to guide me through the dark and unknown maze of what-to-do and

what-not-to do; of what-works-best and what-does-not-work-at-all. As soon as you start smiling about the word, the positivity will affect your efforts and the task at hand will become less daunting.

INNOVATION

Innovation is generally known to mean finding a better way of doing something, applying smarter solutions to existing problems in order to meet new requirements, or existing market needs. We can therefore outline the term *innovation* as something novel or unique; something new, that "breaks into" society or the market.

While something novel is often described as an innovation, in economics, management science and other fields of practice and analysis, innovation is generally considered a process that brings together various novel ideas in a way that they have an impact on society. Moreover, it differs from the word *invention* in that innovation refers to the use of a better and, as a result, novel idea or method, whereas invention refers more directly to the creation of the idea or method itself.

When used first?

15th century

Any words related to *innovation*?

Synonyms: brainchild, coinage, concoction, contrivance, creation and wrinkle.

Related words: contraption, device, gadget, gizmo, novelty; design, product, work; dream, fantasy, picture, vision; conception, imagining and origination.

What do I make of the word *innovation*?

It would be terrific to be able to sit back honestly and tell myself that I have become part of making something better at public schools. Thus, although I am old, I shall not give up that dream!!

SUSTAINABILITY

Although this word has only 14 letters in it, in the first place *sustainability* refers to being able to use something without it being completely used up or destroyed. Secondly it could mean to involve methods that do not completely use up or destroy resources and thirdly the word could indicate that something is able to last or continue for a long, long time.

When used first?

First known use of the term **sustainable** was approximately in 1727 – 18th Century.

Any words related to *sustainable*?

Synonyms: defensible, defensible, justifiable, maintainable, supportable and tenable.

What do I make of the word *sustainable*?

Since I am not within the field of geography, economics or geophysics, pardon me for not commenting on how we can support our country's natural resources. The word **sustainability** reminds me to plan smarter: I need to line up post graduate students for Masters and Doctoral studies; I must feed my article pie-line so that as soon as one is approved by reviewers for publication, the next one is already into a review process of a journal and waiting to be sent out to reviewers....and all of these plans are aimed at supporting the sustainability of my university in obtaining the all-important subsidy funding....

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24 July 2014