

7th African Research Scholar Academy Presenter Session Plan Form

Thank you for contributing to the Academy! Please complete the form below to help us ensure a dynamic, engaging, and well-structured learning experience for participants.

1. Presenter Name(s):

Shirin Motala – Chair and co-presenter
Lindi Malumbazo
Lesego Monyai

2. Session Title:

Defining Your Research Problem: The Method of Problems vs the Method of Topics

3. Date and Time of Session:

27 July 2026. 11:15-12:30

4. Content Overview

4.1. Learning Objectives (3 bullet points)

- Understand what motivates research and why defining the research problem is critical to research problem articulation.
- Distinguish between a *research topic*, a *research problem* and a *research question*
- Learn how to formulate your research problem and how to generate the research question you want to explore.
- Test the research question against recognised quality criteria
- Explore the relevance of a Global South perspective in formulating research problem(s)

4.2. Tentative Structure / Flow of the Session:

(e.g., 10 mins intro, 20 mins activity, 15 mins discussion, etc.)

[5 mins]	Introduction • Welcome, Introduction to the Team, Purpose of the session, Overview of the session plan and repository materials	Shirin Motala [Facilitator and Co-presenter]
[10 mins]	Q & A / Chat • What is this activity “Research”? • What motivates you to conduct research? (Aside from securing a qualification)	Lindiwe Malumbazo
[5 mins]	Menti exercise What are you interested in researching?	Lesego Monyai
[10 mins]	Quiz Framing the Distinction between:	Lindiwe Malumbazo

	• Research Problem • Research question? • Research topic	
[5 mins]	How do we identify a research problem?	Lesego Monyai
[15 mins]	From Research Problem to Research Question Types of Research Questions	Shirin Motala
[5 mins]	Testing the Question- Quality Gate (FINER and PICOT)	Lindiwe Malumbazo
[10 mins]	Ethical Use of AI in defining your research problem and research question	Lesego Monyai and Lindiwe Malumbazo
[5 mins]	Relevance of the Global South in the research problem	Shirin Motala
[5 mins]	Thank you and closure	Shirin Motala [Chair and Co-presenter]

5. Engagement and Interaction

5.1 Planned Interactive Element(s)

Tick one or more or describe your own, please reach out if you would like more information on interactive tools- Qua

- ☒ Poll or quiz (menti, Kahoot, slido)
- ☐ Group discussion in breakout rooms
- ☒ Hands-on demo (e.g., live coding, annotation)
- ☐ Jamboard, Padlet, or whiteboard exercise
- ☐ Other: _____

5.2. How will you check if learning is taking place during the session?

(e.g., mini quiz, short reflection, live Q&A, feedback tool, etc.)

Short reflections, live Q&A

6. Incorporation of AI

The Academy theme this year is "African Research Voices in the Age of Artificial Intelligence." Please indicate how you will incorporate a discussion of AI in your session. This may include a brief introduction, example, demonstration, or reflection of how AI tools are shaping research. How do you plan to introduce, discuss, or demonstrate AI tools in your session?

Demonstration on how AI can be a valuable partner in defining the research problem through literature searches and literature synthesis.

Additional Materials

6.1 Pre-reading or Additional Resources:

Please list any articles, slides, videos, or tools participants should review before the session. Please send these to us by 20 July 2026.

Eidlin, F. (2011). The Method of Problems versus the Method of Topics. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 44(4), 758–761. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41319964>

Farrugia, P., Petrisor, B.A., Farrokhyar, F., & Bhandari, M. (2010). Practical tips for surgical research: Research questions, hypotheses and objectives. *Canadian Journal of Surgery*, 53(4), 278–281.

Keikelame, M.J. & Swartz, L. (2019). Decolonising Research Methodologies: Lessons from a Qualitative Research Project, Cape Town, South Africa. *Global Health Action*, 12(1): 1561175. DOI: 10.1080/16549716.2018.1561175

Lipowski, E. E. (2008). Developing great research questions. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 65(17), 1667-1670. find the link for this paper

Pardede, P. (2018). "Identifying and Formulating the Research Problem." *Research in ELT*

<https://libguides.kean.edu/c.php?g=1252755&p=9181538> – Developing Research Questions

<https://conjointly.com/kb/problem-formulation/> - Problem Formulation

<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/introduction/researchproblem> - Defining the Research Problem

6.2. Software or Special Requirements:

Please list any software that participants will require, e.g., STATA, Atlas.ti, Mendeley – and whether a free version is available

Access to any free AI Research Tools