

Comparison of Fundamental/Basic and Applied Research Approaches

When you are preparing to conduct a research project, it is important to understand the distinctions of the type of research you are conducting. In the chart below you will find several differences listed for Fundamental/Basic and Applied Research approaches. Fundamental/Basic Research is utilized in the PhD in the Leadership program; Applied Research is utilized in the DMin program. Before examining the ways these approaches diverge, there are a few similarities and one important connection to consider.

Both Fundamental/Basic and Applied Research approaches use the same kinds of quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods. Both types also can use inductive or deductive reasoning in their research approach. Further, both types use triangulation methods to examine and explore data results for reliability. This means that resources that provide information regarding data gathering methods, reasoning approaches, and triangulation will be useful for individuals conducting either type of research.

Another connection between the two is Fundamental/Basic Research often serves as the foundation for Applied Research while Applied Research can help identify additional gaps for Fundamental/Basic Research to explore. Both types of research are important and useful in their own ways.

Difference of	Fundamental/Basic Research	Applied Research
Motivation	Knowledge/Curiosity Driven	Solution Driven
Purpose	Create/expand understanding within an area of concern	Find solutions to specific problems by applying research findings
Uses	Gathering novel information about a concept, phenomenon, or field of study	Determining practical solutions to specific problems
Thinking	Explanatory/analytical in nature	Action descriptive/synthetic in nature
Orientation	Theoretical	Practical

Context	Controlled research environments; concerned with identifying and utilizing dependent and independent variables; limits other factors, as possible	Real-life settings; allows dependent and independent variables to interact; does not limit other factors
Difference of	Fundamental/Basic Research	Applied Research
Scope	Explores identified gap within a broader area of concern	Examines a specific problem within a narrow subject or context
Approach	Determines a gap in the research literature; creates a method to explore information that will fill that gap; examines the data to determine what the new information means within the greater literature	Applies a research derived solution to a specific problem; determines specific ways to gather empirical data; examines empirical data to determine if solution was confirmed or negated
Research Concerns	Research questions/hypotheses help determine parameters of study	Identified needs within specific context help determine research concerns
Validity Concerns	Concerned with both external and internal validity for all methods	Concerned primarily with external validity within the context of the specific problem
Generalizability	May be able to be generalized across the area of concern	Will typically only be applicable to the specific context for the research