

## INTRODUCING THE C.O.S.T.A. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH COACHING MODEL – A COMPLEMENTARY APPROACH TO SUPERVISION

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### 1 Abstract

Postgraduate research is a massive stumbling block to students who had never had an opportunity of exposure to research methods. A study conducted by the researcher (Costa, 2018) revealed challenges in postgraduate supervision—one of these challenges was lack of exposure to research language by students. Qualitative research and its complexities due to a variety of approaches including rigour determination pose a plethora of challenges to novice researchers. This document presents C.O.S.T.A model as a tool suitable for use by academics and students, with a panoramic view of steps to be taken first to understand foundational concepts and the language of research and secondly to make informed choices on the research methods and design strategy options available for the prospective researcher. Conclusions drawn on the reliability of the model are based on empirical evidence of application of the model observed over a period of 12 months, with some students testifying to have passed their research projects satisfactorily at their respective leading universities in South Africa. Secondary research also provides voluminous sources of success of similar research supervision programmes both in South Africa and abroad.

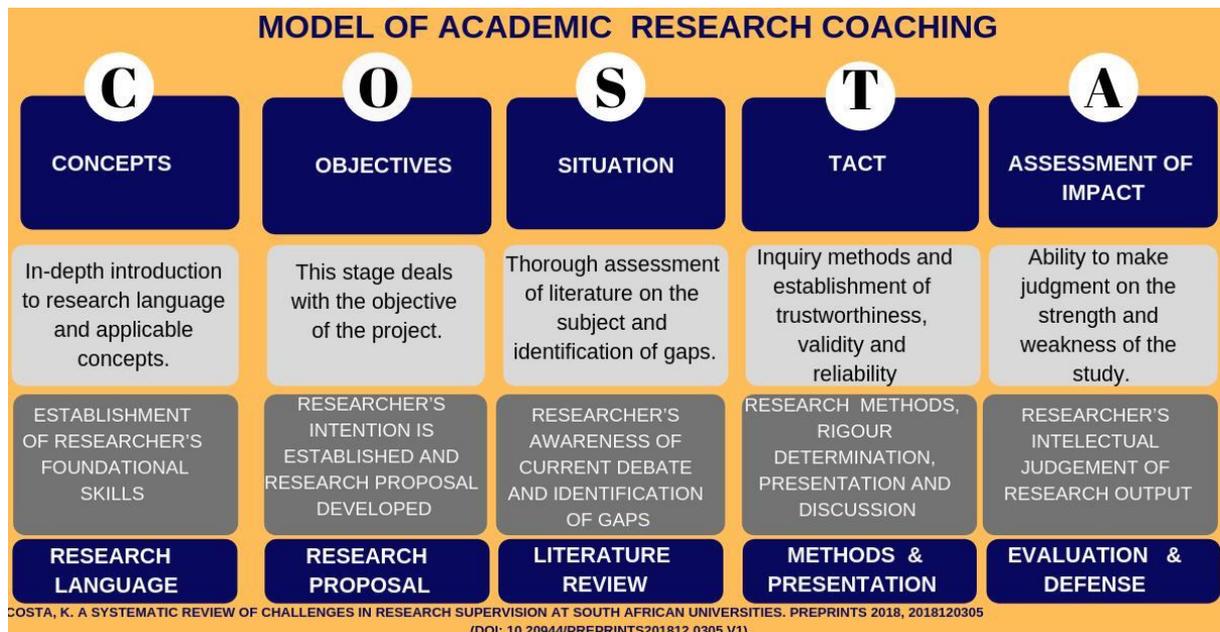


Figure 1: Coaching Postgraduate Research Coaching Model

Table 1: Costa Postgraduate Research Coaching Model (CPRCM)

STEP		DESCRIPTOR	APPLICATION	SIGNIFICANCE
STEP 1	C	CONNECTION	Connection between the supervisor and the student is critical. The suggested method is the GROW model to determine the preparedness and willingness of the student.	ESTABLISHMENT OF RESEARCHER'S FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS
		CONCEPTS	In-depth introduction to research language and applicable concepts. This cannot be done in one week, it should be a minimum of full three months programme.	
STEP 2	O	OBJECTIVES	This deals with the objective of the project.  The student should be able to articulate the following: Introduction, Background, Study Objectives, Assumptions/hypothesis, The Study Significance, Study limitations, Delimitations and Research Question.	RESEARCHER'S INTENTION (Research Proposal)
STEP 3	S	SITUATION	Thorough assessment of literature on the subject and identification of gaps.  Formulation of a Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework and knowledge of the difference between the two.  Application of Blooms' complex thinking skills (critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation).	RESEARCHER'S AWARENESS OF CURRENT DEBATE
STEP 4	T	TACT	<i>Credibility:</i> In addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented.  <i>Transferability:</i> Investigators provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting.  <i>Dependability:</i> Researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study.  <i>Confirmability :</i> Researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions.	METHODOLOGY UNDER SCRUTINY (Trustworthiness in Qualitative Studies Validity & Reliability in Quantitative Studies)
STEP 5	A	ASSEMENT	Ability to make judgment on the strength and weakness of the study.  Provision of a cogent argument in support of study objectives and its benefits to targeted audience.  Implications and recommendations.	RESEARCHER'S INTELLECTUAL JUDGEMENT OF RESEARCH OUTPUT



## 2 Processes of C.O.S.T.A. Postgraduate Research Coaching Model

The C.O.S.T.A. Model is a step by step approach to research supervision at the postgraduate level. It is made up of five incremental and sequential cardinal points:

1. This is a *Pre-Proposal* stage. It emphasizes a starting point on foundational dynamics of Research Language
2. Once the novice researcher is confident with concepts, constructs and language dynamics of research, then their *Objective/Intention* is established in the form of Research Proposal.
3. At this stage (*Step*) now the novice researcher is introduced to Critical Writing, Critical Analysis and Synthesis - making *Cogent Arguments* and *Defense of Logic*. It should be noted that this stage was also touched in the Pre-Proposal stage.
4. This is a *Methods Stage*. This stage (*Step*) focuses on the *TACT/TACU* employed to draw conclusions. If the methods were flawed, the results cannot be accurate. The researcher applies both *Theory* and *Praxis* learned in Stage (*Step*) One to support their "modus operandi" and articulates the "believability" of their *Findings* (Qualitative Studies) or Results (Quantitative Studies). "Believability" is established through rigour determination of Trustworthiness (in Qualitative studies) and Reliability and Validity (in Quantitative studies).
5. This stage (*Step*) is about Value Proposition of the study. This would have already been established in Chapter One under the section of "Significance of the study." But at this stage, we argue that research output should not necessarily focus on meeting the partial requirements or full requirements of the postgraduate study, it should make an impact as originally intended. That is why we encourage students to defend their Thesis/Dissertation at the end of the research. The idea is to create alignment with SAQA (*South African Qualifications Authority*) Competency Assessment Tools at both level 9 and 10. See the *C.O.S.T.A. Model of Research Supervision*.

## References

- Costa, K. (2018). A systematic review of challenges in research supervision at South African. *Preprints*, 33-39.

