

# “The Discourse of Questioning at Thesis Proposal Defense: Exploration of Ideas, Ideological Positioning or Show of Power?”



*Dora F. Edu-Buandoh*

University of Cape Coast, Ghana

The discourse of thesis proposal defense is geared towards the transitioning of a novice academic into the world of academics, where presenting research findings or defending research claims is a key part of the discursive practices. The required structure of the thesis proposal defense varies from institution to institution but the core parts of the genre are the presentation, the engagement and the judgment or pronouncement section. This presentation studies the genre as is practiced in Ghanaian Universities with a focus on the engagement section. The questioning that forms the core of the engagement section has been critically examined to find out if the purpose is to explore the ideas to be researched, to project ideologies of faculty or to mark power as expert to novice. Questions as elicitation strategies have ideological implications and it is important for both student and faculty or panel members to acknowledge what is at play: exploration of ideas, ideology or power. I illustrate the phenomenon using a sample discourse of PhD thesis defense from the Humanities in the University of Cape Coast and drawing from Fairclough's (1995) model for analyzing text as discourse and social practices.

**WHEN:** Tuesday April 24, 13.15—15.00

**WHERE:** Humanistiska teatern, Engelska parken