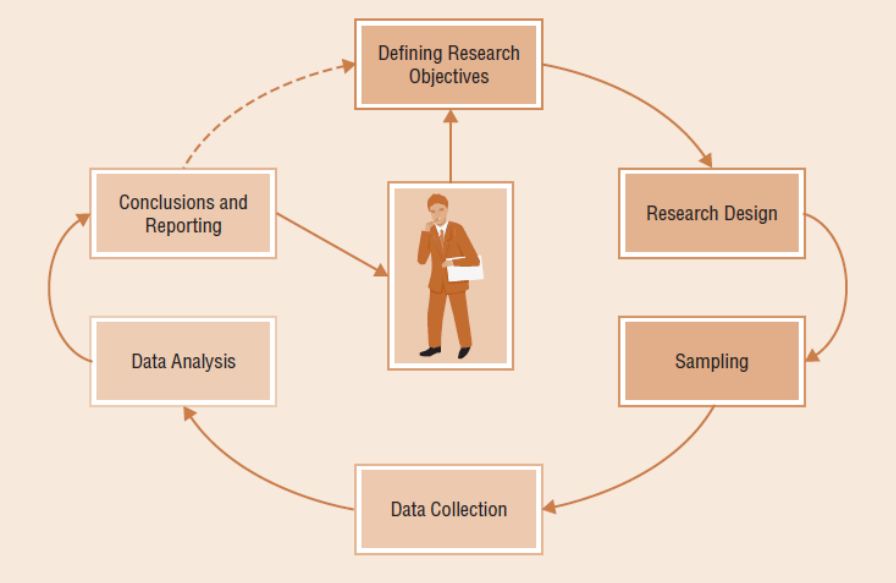
Article on Business Research Methods – Dr. Sue Greener

and The Business Research Process – An Overview (Chapter 4)

Clear objective (1.4)
- Why collect information?
- not for its own sake

Stages of the Research process



Identify the research question/ objective

1. The researcher affects the results of the research
    a. Need to be objective, but …….
    b. Can the researcher influence the results of a research
    c. Because they are people not machines – mindset, personal values etc.
    d. Look for biasness in business research to minimize the problem
2. Qualitative vs. Quantitative research
3. Deductive vs. Inductive testing of Theory
    a. Deductive: based on a theory come up with reasoning, by testing based on a hypothesis which is tested. More a quantitative approach
    b. Inductive: based on organizations business problems and economic issues, and through investigation of various research methods come up with a theory. More qualitative approach to theory

Critical review of Literature

- Primary literature sources: more of a private nature
- Secondary literature sources: available on the public domain
- Tertiary literature sources: gateways to secondary sources – dictionaries, encyclopedias, catalogues, web-based portals etc.

What does 'Critical analysis' mean?

Descriptive writing	Critical analytical writing
States what happened	Identifies the significance
States what something is like	Evaluates strengths and weaknesses
Gives the story so far	Weighs one piece of information against another
States the order in which things happened	Makes reasoned judgements
Says how to do something	Argues a case according to the evidence
Explains what a theory says	Shows why something is relevant or suitable
Explains how something works	Indicates why something will work (best)
Notes the method used	Identifies whether something is appropriate or suitable
Says when something occurred	Identifies why the timing is of importance
States the different components	Weighs up the importance of component parts
States options	Gives reasons for selecting each option
Lists details	Evaluates the relative significance of details
Lists in any order	Structures information in order of importance
States links between items	Shows the relevance of links between pieces of information
Gives information	Draws conclusions

If you have difficulty thinking critically about something you are reading, you may wish to try applying the following set of questions, developed by Professor Tom Bourner (2003).

1. What explicit assumptions are being made? Can they be challenged?
2. What implicit/taken-for-granted assumptions are being made? Can they be challenged?
3. How logical is the reasoning?
4. How sound is the evidence for the assertion(s)?
5. Whose interests and what interests are served by the assertions?
6. What values underpin the reasoning?
7. What are implications of the conclusions?
8. What meaning is conveyed by the terminology employed and the language used?
9. What alternative conclusions can be drawn from the evidence?
10. What is being privileged and what is off-the-agenda in this discourse?
11. What is the context of this discourse? From what different perspectives can the discourse be viewed?
12. How generalisable are the conclusions?

Research Design (Pg. 33)

Research – concerned with the emergence of theory
Concepts and Notions – develop through the application of ideas, observation of evidence and evaluation of results

Final objective of research is to add something of value to the body of theoretical knowledge

Epistemology – to what extent can we know something is 'true'
Ontology – what kinds of things exist. A set of concepts - such as things, events, and relations - that are specified in some way in order to create an agreed-upon vocabulary for exchanging information.

Reliability and Validity of the Business Research

Reliability

- research should be auditable: transparent and clear to a reader
- participant error, participant bias, observer error and observer bias

Validity

- face validity: non researcher or layman has faith that it is a valid method of researching the question
- construct validity: method must measure what you think it measures eg: questionnaire surveys sent by post
- internal validity: measures causality, does factor X cause factor Y
    - INDEPENDENT VS. DEPENDENT VARIABLE
    - Does the independent variable account for the complete change of the dependent variable, or are their other factors causing the change

Choice of Research Strategy or Design

Ethical issues in business

Stakeholder analysis

- Identify who are the stakeholders: research participants, managers etc.
- Design a risk assessment model for each stakeholder, identifying the type of risk and potential impact (High, Medium and Low) and the probability of it happening (unlikely, possible, probable)

Practitioner researcher or Internal reseracher

- Potential unidentified effects on the research if a part of the organization that is being researched

Sampling

Sample size – Absolute sample size: bigger the sample size more is it a representative of the population, and less the sampling error.
Relative size – is not important

Non-response to be considered

Variation in population – highly varied populations would need larger sample sizes

Data Collection – Quantitative research

How the research design is affected by data collection and analysis

Types of data for data analysis (Pg. 56)

1. Interval variables
    a. Weight in Kg. – in fixed figures
2. Ordinal variables
    a. Which groups of weight do you belong: 50-60kg, 60-70kg
3. Nominal variables
    a. Alternative choice in MCQ questions: Excellent, Good, Average, Poor
4. Dichotomous variables
    a. Yes/ No answers Male/ Female answers

Choosing appropriate ways to present data

- Through charts, tables and descriptive statistics

Using Secondary data (Pg 73)

Disadvantages of using secondary data – Pg. 77-78

- Difference of purpose
- Aggregation and Presentation of data
- Measurement of validity – refer to epistemology
- Data coverage
    - Does it cover the exact population. Any unwanted inclusions/ exclusions

Data Collection – Qualitative research (Pg. 79)

Quantitative vs. Qualitative data analysis

Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Numbers	Words
Point of view of researcher	Points of view of participants
Researcher distant	Researcher close
Theory testing	Theory emergent
Static	Process
Structured	Unstructured
Generalisation	Contextual understanding
Hard reliable data	Rich deep data
Macro	Micro
Behaviour	Meaning
Artificial settings	Natural settings

Writing your report (Pg. 103)

Academic Reports (pg. 106)

- Refer item 12.3.2 in terms of structure and also 12.3.8 in particular
- Avoid bullet points unless giving examples not requiring further explanation, or when summarizing

Your Oral presentation