Research Methods for Business and Management

Session 6-Research Methodology

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Last Session

• Assumptions of Main Paradigms
  – Epistemology
  – Ontological

• Research Paradigms or Philosophies
  – Positivistic
  – Phenomenological
  – Pragmatism

• Research Approaches
  – Quantitative
  – Qualitative
This Session

• Purpose of Research Methodology
• Research Methodologies
  – Case Study
  – Action Research
  – Survey
The Research ‘Onion’

Types of Research Methodology/Strategy

POSITIVISTIC

• CROSS SECTIONAL STUDIES
• EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES
• LONGITUDINAL STUDIES
• SURVEYS

PHENOMENOLOGICAL

• ACTION RESEARCH
• CASE STUDIES
• ETHNOGRAPHY
• GROUNDED THEORY
• HERMENEUTICS
• PARTICIPATIVE ENQUIRY

Source: Collis and Hussey (2003, pg.60)
Purpose of Research Methodology

• This is where you outline the **primary data** and **secondary data** needed for your research

• It is the **core research element** of your project not the literature review

• That is, how you get your data and process it to answer your research question

• This means specifying :
  – what data you need,
  – where or who you will get the data from (your sample frame and sample)
• Practical details on **HOW** you will collect the data, deciding what statistical or other processes you can use on the data

• Deciding how to present the raw and processed data and

• Finally checking that the collected data makes sense with what you intend to do

• In summary think of your research design as a kind of function or transformation that takes your primary data and turns it into your desired project outcome, i.e. the answer to your RQ and objectives
What does it mean?

• So your Research Methodology will specify the strategy that you will apply:
  – in collecting the primary data
  – Transforming that data i.e. processing
  – Presenting and interpreting the results

• The Research Methodology you specify will have a tremendous effect on your research outcome

• One can understand why, if you collect the wrong data, using the wrong method then you will get the wrong result.

• Thus you will not be able to provide any relevant or workable answer for your Research Question

• You must also remember that the Research Paradigm you select underpins the Methodology chosen
Formulating a Scheme for Answering your Research Question

- The scheme must arise out of the base problem and its cause
- This scheme will provide an **Idea for action**
- Try to think through whether your basic idea for action is about trying to:
  - explore and evaluate,
  - describe and evaluate,
  - understand and evaluate
Simple Example Scenario:

• Suppose that were trying to evaluate the effectiveness of recent implementation of Training

• So the basic problem is that it is not known if the training programme was effective

• Clearly a lot of money is spent on training so it might be really useful to know if it was effective

• What is needed is an idea of HOW to look for the results of the training

• So the first step is to get an idea for action
Example Cont’d
Idea settled on:

- So we can look:
  - For changes in working practices
  - We can look at productivity levels
  - Check for error rates,
- It might be worthwhile to have a control group, i.e. one that did not undergo the training
- This is the basic idea
- In practice you might try several ideas before you are happy with one
- If you accept the idea you can NOW ask what data is needed
- Without the idea for action it would be just guessing what the data might be required
Time Horizon for your Research

• Saunders et al (2009) articulates that time taken to research the phenomena is independent of which research methodology you have chosen or choice of research technique/method

• There are two possible options:
  – Cross Sectional Studies
  – Longitudinal Studies
Cross Sectional Studies

• These are designed to obtain information on variables in different context, but at the same time
• Normally, different organizations or groups of people are selected and a study conducted to ascertain how factors differ
• So it means, collecting data on more than one case at a single point of time. Bryman (2007, p.44)
• For example, if you are investigating labour turnover
• You will need to select a sample of work groups where you know that labour turnover is different
• You can then conduct statistical test to find out whether there is any correlation between variables
• Cross sectional studies are conducted when there are constraints of time or resources
• The data is collected once, over a short period of time before it is analyzed and interpreted
• Thus cross sectional studies take a snapshot of an ongoing situation
Longitudinal Studies

• It is a study over time, of a variable or group of subjects
• The aim is to research the dynamics of the problem
• This is done by investigating the same situation or people several times or continuously, over the period in which the problem runs its course
• Repeated observations are taken with the view to revealing the relative stability of the phenomena
• This will allow the researcher to examine change processes.

• Therefore, it would be likely to suggest probable explanations from an examination of the process of change and pattern which emerge.
Surveys Methodology

• Typically indicated when the research question starts with ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘how’ many’ and ‘how much
• It is therefore used for exploratory and descriptive research
• This strategy provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions
• This leads to general inferences about a population from a sample of the population
• The results will be very dependant on having a big enough and unbiased representative sample
• You will have to use statistical techniques to demonstrate the likelihood that the sample would be characteristic of the population
• You will have to specify the characteristics of the population and the sampling procedure and calculate the sample size
• This is important because you would be making a set of generalized statements from your findings
• You will have to name the survey instruments used to collect data
• Critical to this strategy is the use of statistical processes to analyze the data collected
• Usually you can make use of readily available software tools such as SPSS or even MS Excel
• Indicative of a survey, is that the data you collect and analyze will be independent i.e. you have done it, not others
• Surveys can be done using Cross Sectional or Longitudinal studies
  – i.e. data collected at one point or
  – Data collected over time
• Data collection protocol or techniques can be wide ranging
  – Questionnaires
  – Interviews
  – Observations
  – Structured Record Reviews
Action Research

• Typically indicated as useful when the research question starts with ‘how’
• It is an approach which assumes the social world is constantly changing and the researcher and the research itself are part of this change
• It is usual to conduct action research within a single organization
• The research is concerned about the resolution of a business issue
• There is a desire by the researcher to explain something and use that explanation to improve practice
• That is, bringing about change in a partly controlled environment (your organization or workplace)
• This requires the researcher to partner, collaborate and get involved with the client organization or practitioners
• Therefore, the researcher is part of the organization where the research and change process is taking place

• **Be careful** some action research may not be very far from a consultancy project or journalism

• We do not want journalism at this level!

• Stay away from political issues, social issues that you can just write 2000 words on, to solve a trivial problem
• It is critical that the results of action research have implications beyond the direct subject i.e. your organization

• In other words, the outcome of your research must be capable of being applied to other organizations or perhaps the industry as a whole or even other industries
Case Studies

- Typically useful when research question starts with ‘Why’, ‘What’ and ‘How’
- Case studies are commonly used to illustrate or understand a problem or indicate good practice
- Therefore, Case Studies are often used in Explanatory and Exploratory research
- It is an extensive examination of a single instance of a phenomenon of interest
• It focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting, i.e. the context
• Case study research must be constructed to the context in which management behaviour takes place
• For most case studies there is usually be a longitudinal element
  – that is the cases will run over a fixed time period
  – and you will periodically visit each case to collect the data
• Case Study research can produce both quantitative and qualitative data
Organizing your Case

• **How many cases** – be practical because there are time limits

• **Case Criteria** - add as many criteria as you think necessary to pin down what will constitute a valid context but don’t have so many that you will never find a case that fits

• **Data collection Protocol** – combination of observation, interview, document analysis. You will have to have a protocol to say when a valid sample size is attained
How many Cases or Types?

• **Single Case**- in this approach the researcher explores a single unit of analysis, i.e.
  - A company
  - A group of workers
  - An event
  - A process

• Single Case can be:
  - **Unique**: implying that the setting and context are extremely rare and there may no be another chance to study this problem area again
  - **Critical**: implies an important theory that you want to test or a problem you want to solve and a particular case fits that profile
• Multiple Cases-
  – it means exploring more than one unit of analysis
  – these may be desired over single case, in particular when you want to postulate a theoretical generalization between different units of analysis
Main Stages of Case Study Research

1. **Selecting your Case**- a representative case or a set of cases

2. **Preliminary Investigations**- the process of becoming familiar with the context, however keep your mind free of any bias

3. **The Data Stage**- determine how, where and when to collect data. Best to combine methods, known as **Triangulation**
4. The Analysis Stage-
   - The analysis can be **Holistic** i.e. the entire case or **Embedded** i.e. a specific aspect of the case
   - Through data collection a detailed description of the case emerges
   - The researcher might focus on a few key issues i.e. **analysis of themes**
For Multiple Cases:

– **Within-case analysis**: here you would be building up descriptions whether quantitative or qualitative of one or each case, so that you can identify trends, patterns with the hope of pinning down a theory or phenomena

– **Cross-case analysis**: here you may wish to identify:
  
  • **similarities**, which would help to show whether your theory can be generalized or
  
  • **differences**, which would help to extend or modify any theory.

  • Essentially, both will help you identify some common patterns
Grounded Theory

- The intent of Grounded Theory is to move beyond description of a phenomenon
- Essentially, to generate or discover a theory
- The development of the theory might help explain practice
- The theory-development does not come “off the shelf” but is generated or ‘grounded’ in the data from participants who have experienced the process or phenomenon
“Grounded Theory is a research strategy in which the researcher generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process shaped by the views of a large number of participants”

Creswell (2007, pg.63)
Types of Grounded Theory

• Systematic Procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998)
  – The researcher seeks to systematically develop a theory that explains a process or phenomenon
  – The researcher typically conducts 20 to 30 interviews based on several visits to the organization or field
  – It utilize Analytical Induction, were data is collected until saturation occurs i.e. continue to add explanations until no more can be found or no more inconsistencies or variants
– While the data is being collected, analysis is done simultaneously

– Data collection is a ‘zigzag’ process: out to the field to collect data, into the office to analyze, back to the field to collect more and so forth

– Thus, Grounded theory utilize Constant Comparative method of data analysis to develop Categories- Core, Casual Conditions, Strategies, Intervening Conditions and Consequences

– From these categories the researcher can develop a theory- Substantive Level
• Constructivist Approach of Charmaz (2005, 2006)
  – Charmaz advocates for a social constructivist perspective, emphasizing diverse and multiple realities
  – Constructivists grounded theory depends on the researcher’s view, learning about experiences within embedded, hidden networks, situations and relationships
  – It places more emphasis on views, values, beliefs feelings, assumptions and ideologies of individuals rather than the methods of research
  – It is flexible in structure: reflexivity
Bibliography


