

TOPIC 4

Conceptualising a business research project



The Conceptual Framework

Once you have decided on your topic for your research project it is a good discipline to be able to express this idea in a clear fashion through the conceptual framework for the research project.

All of the key concepts in the research project should be included in this conceptualisation of one's work.

Secondary Data → Conceptual Framework →
Methodological Framework → Primary Data



The Conceptual Framework – as the linchpin between secondary and primary data

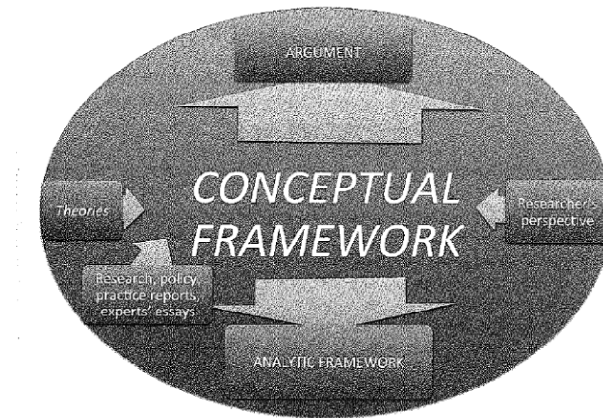


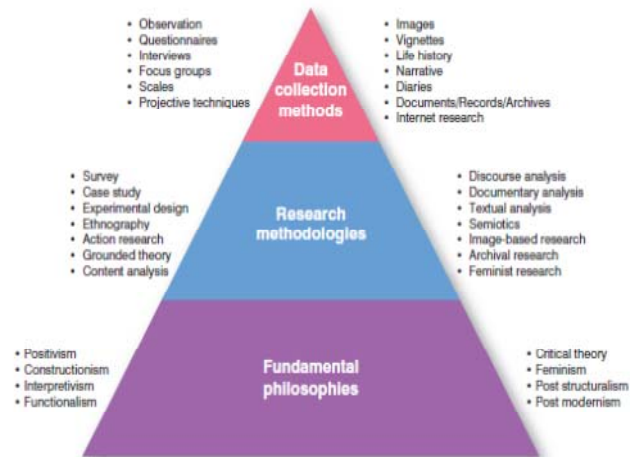
FIGURE 5.1. Conceptual and analytic frameworks.

Sources: Rallis & Rossmann (2012)

Different research paradigms

- ▶ You will note from your reading of the literature that there are different approaches to research
- ▶ These different approaches reflect the different philosophical underpinnings of research projects
- ▶ The methodological pyramid details these different approaches

The methodological pyramid



Sources: Quinlan (2012)

The research process

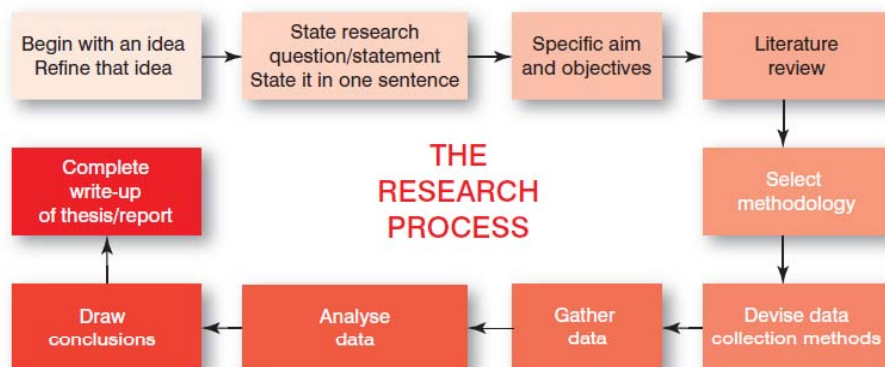


Figure 1.1 The research process

Sources: Quinlan (2012)

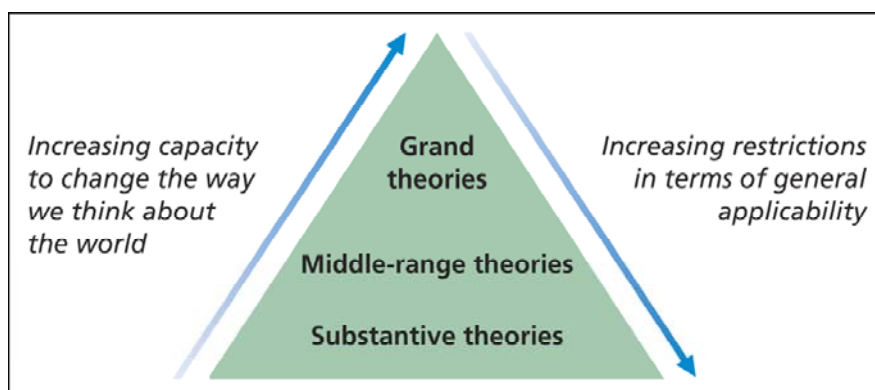
The importance of theory

- ▶ In order to:
- ▶ Explain phenomena
- ▶ Analyse relationships
- ▶ Predict outcomes
- ▶ Compare and generalise

Sources: Phillips and Pugh (2005)



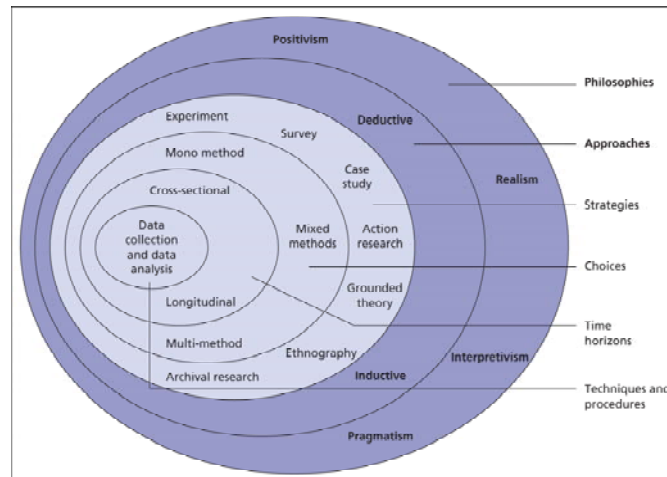
Typologies of theory



Sources: Creswell (2002)



The 'research onion'



Sources: Saunders et al. (2008)

Philosophy in research

'Research philosophy is an over-arching term relating to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge'

- ▶ *Ontology*
- ▶ *Epistemology*

The nature of the reality under observation

- ▶ Ontology – “a branch of philosophy is the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality”
- ▶ Objectivism
- ▶ Subjectivism

Sources: Ed. by Floridi (2003)



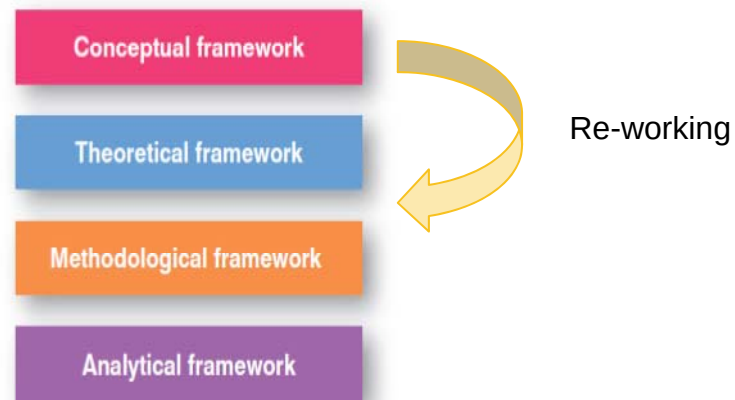
Ex. 4.2 – YOUR RESEARCH PARADIGM

Re-conceptualising the Conceptual Framework:

- ▶ Discuss in pairs your dissertation topic / idea to define its ontology
- ▶ How much do you know about this subject right now?
- ▶ Can you make any 'prediction'?



Model of the Four Frameworks



Sources: Quinlan (2012)

Generating valid knowledge (assumptions)

- ▶ Epistemology – “is concerned with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge”
- ▶ Positivism
 - ▶ Applies the ‘scientific’ method (from natural sciences)
- ▶ Interpretivism
 - ▶ Emphasises the importance of perceptions, intentions and beliefs (from social sciences)

Sources: Adapted from Klein (2005)

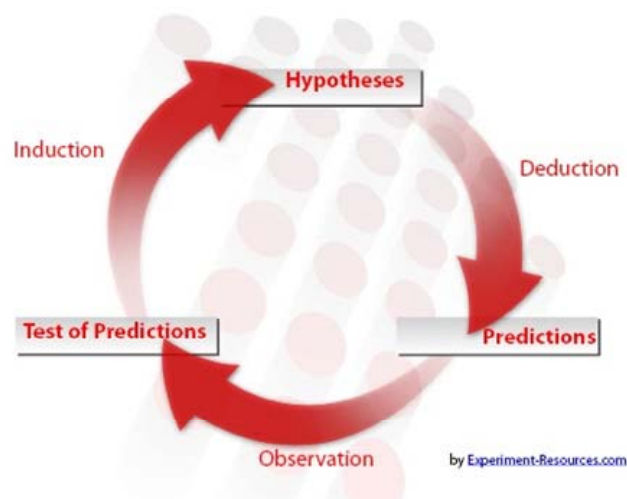
Ex. 4.3 – YOUR RESEARCH PARADIGM

Re-conceptualising the Conceptual Framework:

- ▶ Now discuss in pairs your dissertation topic / idea to decide the applicable epistemology:
- ▶ What does appear to be a reasonable choice between the two key 'positions' within the epistemological debate?
- ▶ Can you see any situation where researchers might not have / want to make such a choice?

▶

Inductive versus deductive approaches



▶

The emphasis of research

Deduction emphasises	Induction emphasises
• scientific principles • moving from theory to data • the need to explain causal relationships between variables • the collection of quantitative data • the application of controls to ensure validity of data • the operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition • a highly structured approach • researcher independence of what is being researched • the necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions	• gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events • a close understanding of the research context • the collection of qualitative data • a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses • a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process • less concern with the need to generalise

Sources: Sauters et al. (2009)

Simplifying the research journey

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ▶ Objective nature of reality | ▶ Subjective nature of reality |
| ▶ Positivist generation of knowledge | ▶ Interpretive generation of knowledge |
| ▶ Deductive approach to research | ▶ Inductive approach to research |
| ▶ EXPLANATORY research | ▶ EXPLORATORY research |

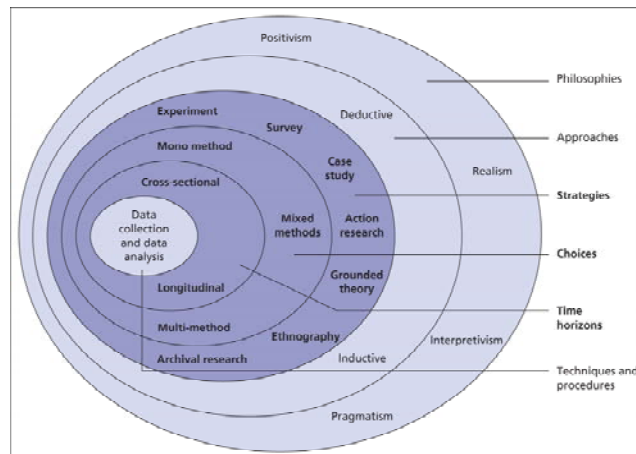
Types of data

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▶ Deductive approach to research | ▶ Inductive approach to research |
| ▶ EXPLANATORY research | ▶ EXPLORATORY research |
| ▶ Quantitative data | ▶ Qualitative data |
| → Test theory | → Build theory |
-

Quantitative and qualitative data

- ▶ **Quantitative**
 - ▶ Quantitative data is data in the form of numbers, numerical data
 - ▶ Different variables (nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio)
 - ▶ 'Double translation' problem – coding and interpreting results
 - ▶ **Qualitative**
 - ▶ Qualitative data is non-numerical data
 - ▶ Indexing and interpreting results
 - ▶ Lack of 'generalisability' (using appropriate terminology)
-

Research strategy



Sources: Saunders et al. (2009)

Ex. 5 – YOUR RESEARCH STRATEGY

Defining the Methodological Framework:

- ▶ What are suitable methods for your data collection (based on previous theoretical and conceptual choices)?

→ Analytical Framework

Ethics in research

Ethics:

‘The appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of or are affected by your work’

- ▶ Critically engage with your own ethical standards and behaviours
- ▶ Critically engage with the ethical standards of your own research

Sources: Adapted from Saunders et al. (2009); Quinlan (2012)



Anonymity and Confidentiality

- ▶ Anonymity is a guarantee that researchers sometimes make to research participants that they will not be identified at any time during the research, and that they will not be identifiable in any way in any written account of the research
- ▶ Confidentiality in research generally refers to the guarantee that researchers make to participants that their contribution to the research will remain confidential

Sources: Adapted from Quinlan (2012)



Further (selected) ethical issues in research

- ▶ Privileged access – where the person has some advantage in securing access
- ▶ Intrusion – unwarranted, unnecessary and/or unwelcome intrusion for the purposes of research is unethical, and potentially illegal
- ▶ Vulnerable populations are populations with some vulnerability, for example, in terms of their social position, their age or their state of well-being

Sources: Adapted from Quinlan (2012)



And finally...

“there is no one best way for undertaking all research”

Saunders et al. (2009)