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Using a Research Approach in HR

The Research Process

Julie Thomas: September
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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Module Overview

This core unit develops the learners' knowledge about the research process and how research can improve understanding, aid decision-making and provide the basis for a change in practice.

This unit seeks to develop the skills of:

1

Independent research and enquiry

2

Identifying and reviewing data sources

3

Preparing and presenting a business report for different purposes

Core Resources

- Essential Texts
- Module descriptor
- Lesson plan
- Assessment activity
- Assessment marking scheme
- URA Moodle page and resources
- Your student group



Initial Feelings About Research

Common Objections

- Just a way of proving what you already know
- Best left to academics or experts
- Just a way of justifying what the CEO wants to do anyway
- Too difficult
- Too time consuming
- Too scientific and statistical
- Too boring

Topics – 26th September 2018

- What is research, stages in the Research process
 - Choosing your topic
 - Research Methods
 - Referencing
- Sources of Information
 - Selecting sources
 - Creating a Critical Review
- Drawing Conclusions
 - Making Recommendations
 - Presenting your report

Session Overview

The aim of this session is know how to understand the research process and different approaches to research.

At the end of the session you will be able to:

- 1 Summarise the stages in the research process
- 2 Identify an area of HR practice for investigation
- 3 Compare different data collection methods
- 4 Reference sources using the Harvard convention

1. Summarise the stages in the research process

What is research?

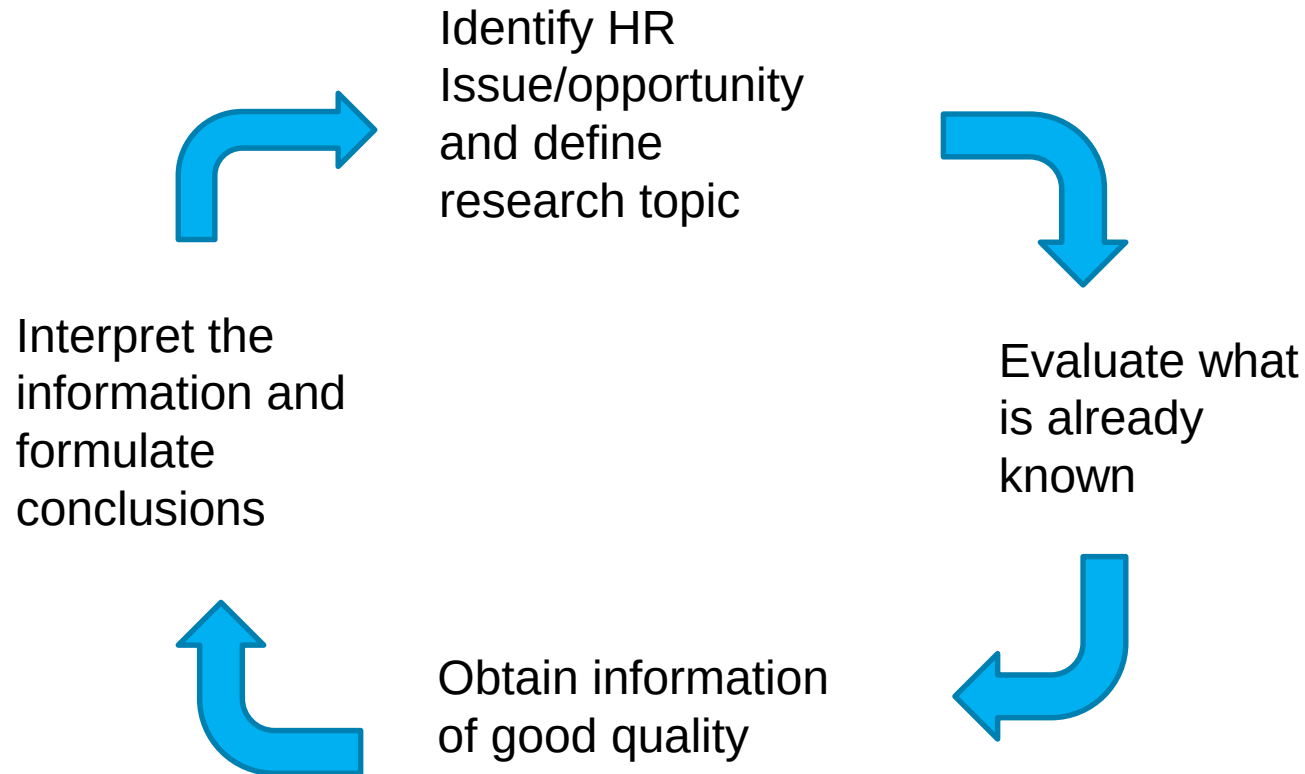
Systematic (*involving a system, method, or plan*)
process of enquiry and investigation in order to
enhance knowledge of a particular issue or problem.

Research can be used to:

- Investigate an issue
- Provide solutions to a problem
- Support decision making
- Generate and enhance intellectual capital
- Benchmark good practice/performance to ensure continuous improvement



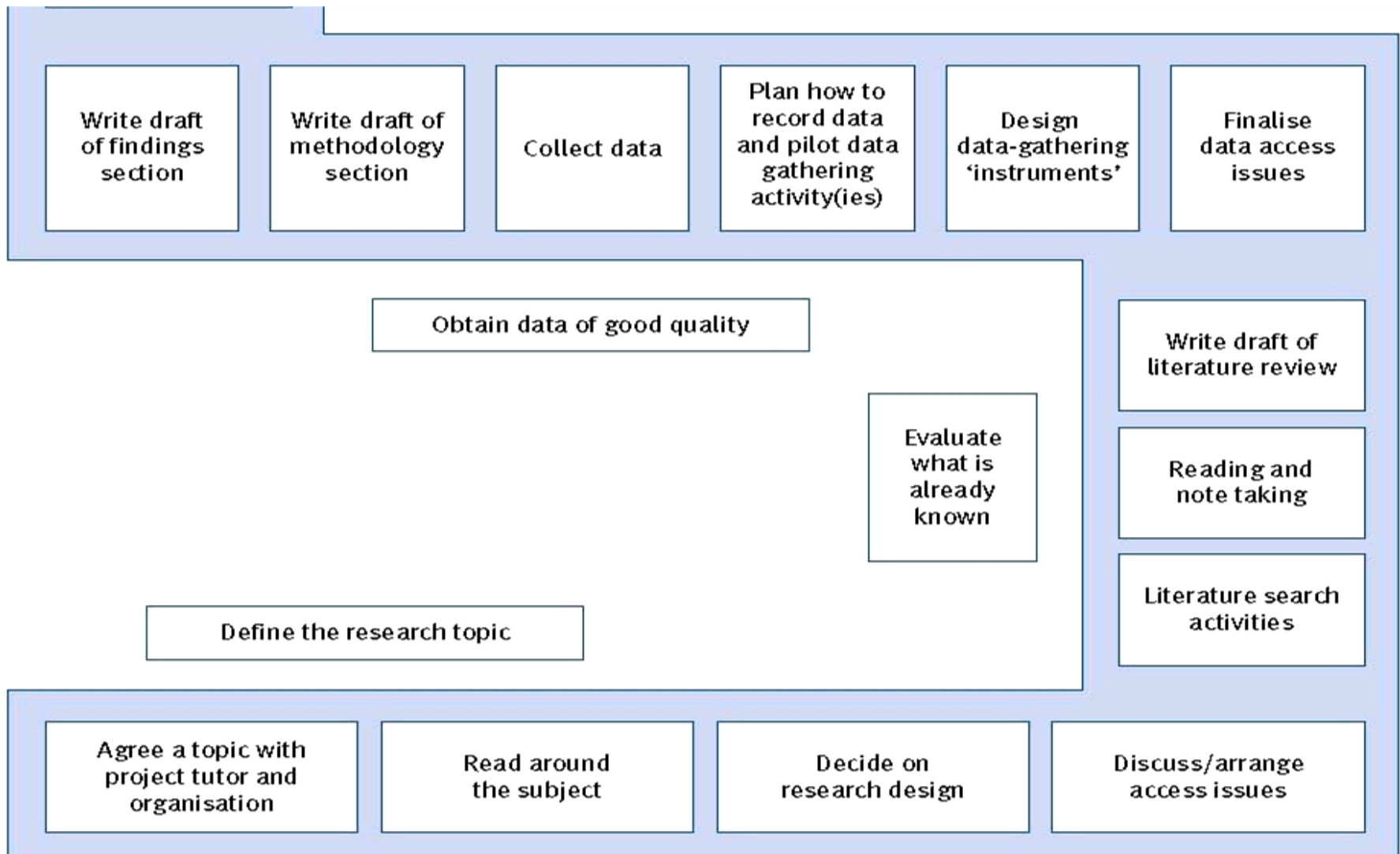
Components of the Research Process



Anderson (2013)

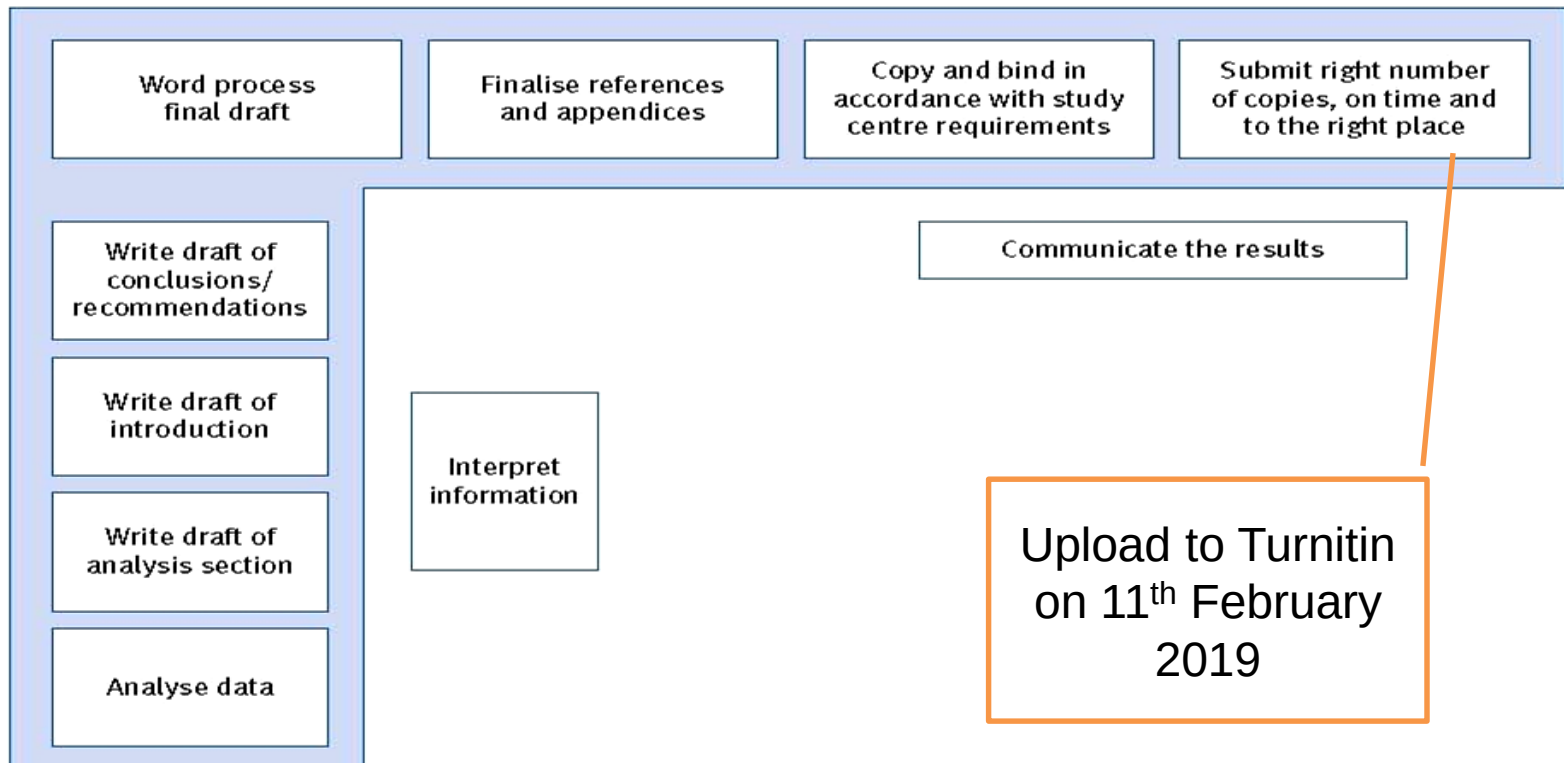
1. Summarise the stages in the research process

The research project journey



1. Summarise the stages in the research process

The research project journey



No.	Project Name	2016-2017							
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
1	Research Proposal								
	Read relevant literature								
	Submit proposal.								
2	Literature Review								
	Read and analyse best practice								
	Read and analyse specific literature								
	Submit draft literature review.				6th				
3	Conduct Primary Research								
	Conduct focus groups.								
	Conduct interviews.								
	Transcribe focus groups and interviews.								
4	Research Methods Chapter								
	Write chapter								
	Submit draft chapter.					17th			
5	Analysis of Results								
	Analyse results								
	Write chapter.						17th		
6	Finalise Dissertation								
	Collate Bibliography.								
	Finalise Bibliography.								
	Proof-read and editing.								
	Binding.								
	Submission.								5th

Example Gantt Chart for a Dissertation

2. Identify an area of HR Practice for investigation

Horn (2012) Methods of Identification

- The Burning Desire
- The Replication
- The Practical
- The Convenient Access

2. Identify an area of HR Practice for investigation

Focus on a 'live'
HR issue

- Important but manageable topic
- Relevant to context
- Leads to recommendations for action

Assessment of
existing knowledge
about the issue

- Journal articles
- Research reports
- Contemporary practice

Collect and analyse
data

- Link between literature review and research study
- Justification for research methods
- Insightful analysis

2. Identify an area of HR Practice for investigation

Who are the stakeholders?

- Who will be the recipient of the report and what are they looking for?
- Who will be involved and how will it impact them – consider access to information
- What will be the impact of your proposed recommendations on any other stakeholder groups?

3. Compare different data collection methods

Primary and Secondary Research

Primary: collected first hand for the study in which it will be used (e.g. questionnaires, observation, focus groups, interviews, brainstorming)

This is the information that you collect by doing your own research. It is not data you analyse from pre-collected information e.g. a company survey

Secondary: already published sources from other studies to draw a conclusion

(e.g. academic journals, online databases, industry reports, the Internet, governmental reports, market research, studies, podcasts, website articles)

3. Compare different data collection methods

Quantitative and Qualitative

Quantitative Methods

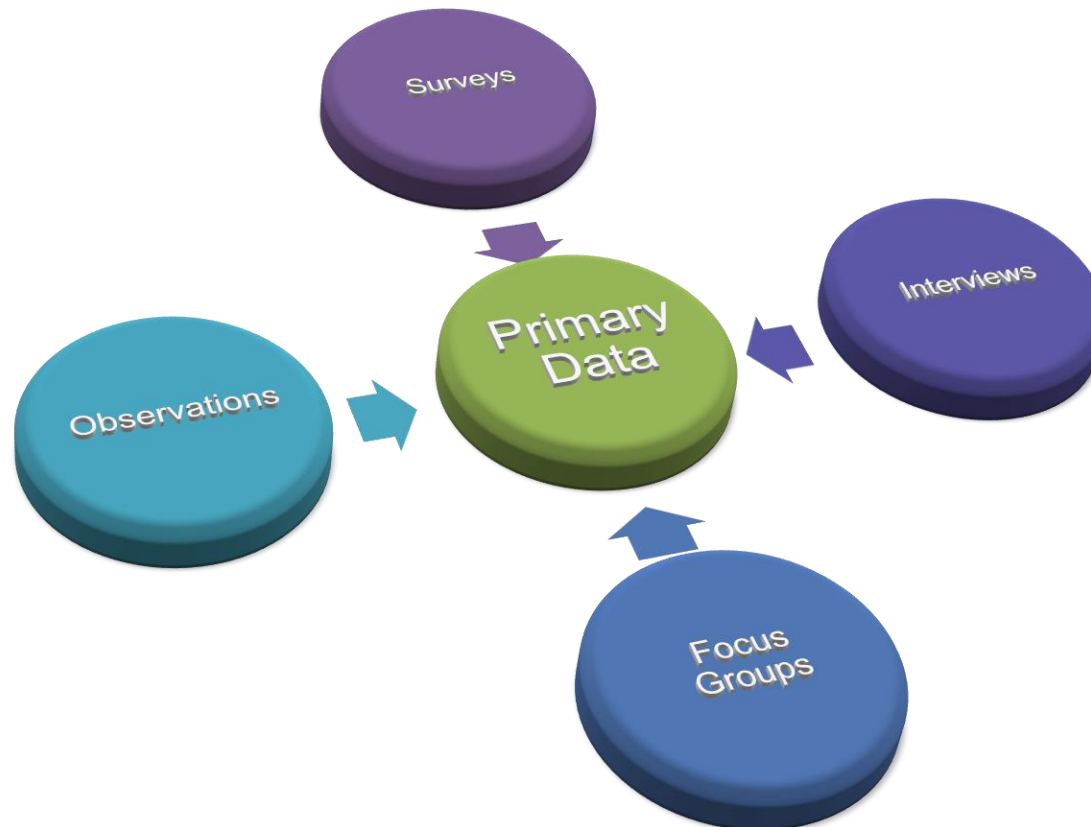


Qualitative Methods



3. Compare different data collection methods

Primary Data Collection Methods



Questionnaires:

Cameron & Price (2009)



Good for gathering large quantities of data relatively cheaply



Must be properly designed

Interviews:



Good for gathering rich data and exploring themes



Need robust interviewing/interpersonal skills

Focus groups:

Cameron & Price (2009)



Good for allowing the respondents to develop and elaborate on themes



Need to be able to control discussions so that you get the information you need

Observations:



Good for gathering data and information in natural settings



Need to make sure the data and information produced is trustworthy

Research Designs (Anderson, 2013)

- Cross-sectional Designs
- Case Study Designs
- Action Research Designs
- Comparative Designs

3. Compare different data collection methods

Research Design: Cross Sectional

Collection of data in a relatively standardised form from groups/individuals at a single point in time

- Useful when trying to uncover patterns/make comparisons between groups/scenarios
- Relatively cheap to organise/administer; can achieve a broad coverage
- Can lead to a production of a large amount of information
- Can be inappropriate at times as depth is sacrificed for breadth
- Poor survey/interview Qs can lead to poor quality data
- Lack of control over how individuals respond to questions
- Different individuals may interpret questions in different ways



e.g. Distributing a questionnaire on employee engagement to an organisation's employees, and analysing the data for patterns and trends

3. Compare different data collection methods

Research Designs: Case study

Detailed investigation into a situation which might be a single case/small no. of related cases

- Useful where issues being examined difficult to separate from wider context
 - Interviews and observation commonly used
 - Data can be complex and detailed
 - Can focus on one issue
- 
- Can overproduce qualitative data which can be difficult to analyse
 - Difficult to impossible to cross—check information
 - Ability to generalise from results limited (so specific to a specific setting)
- 

e.g. to discover more about an organisation's culture

3. Compare different data collection methods

• Research Designs: Action Research

Grounded in problem-solving, aim is to understand and promote change
Researchers are involved in a continual cycle of planning, taking action, and observing the effects of that action

- Can be used to solve a specific problem in an organisation
- Can be overly descriptive (rather than explain why)
- Can be resource intensive



e.g. Involving employees, managers and TU reps in the planning and design of a system to promote employee voice and participation at work – this way patterns of thinking can be changed, contributes to practical action and experimentation with different ideas and solutions

3. Compare different data collection methods

Research Designs: Comparative

Comparisons to be made between different groups/situations, usually internationally

- Allows for comparisons to be made between different groups/situations
- Can tell a lot about how HR practices work in different environments
- Can be difficult to administer/organise
- Difficult making valid/accurate comparisons (due to differences)



e.g. Compare levels of staff engagement at different company sites

3. Compare different data collection methods

Must meet 3 basic criteria

- **Reliable** – are the results repeatable / data method collection consistent
- **Replicable** – can another researcher replicate it the same/new setting
- **Valid** – conclusions drawn must be consistent with the data that has been collected

4. Referencing sources using Harvard convention

Blah blah blah blah blah, blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. Blah blah blah, blah blah blah blah. According to Lee (2005), something very interesting was the result. Something something something something, something something. Blah blah blah blah blah. Smith (2005) reports on some key effects of e-something on something, and suggests another interesting point. Something something blah something.

However a recent study indicates something even more interesting: blah something blah something blah something (Jones *et al*, 2006). Blah blah, blah blah, blah blah blah.

Reference List

Jones, C., Smith, A., Garcia, D. & Lee, A. B. (2006). Challenges in e-something. *Something Interesting*, 40, pp50-55.

Lee, A. B. (2005). *An Organisational Theory Of Something*. New York, NY: Reference Books.

Smith, A. (2005). E-something. In: Black, A. & White, B. (Eds.), *An Introduction To Something*, 30-52. Edinburgh: Textbook.

Harvard Referencing

- Quotations
 - should be in inverted commas (‘.....’)
 - should cite the name, year and page in text. There should be a full bibliographical reference
- Paraphrasing
 - should represent a significant alteration of the original author’s words
 - should cite the name and year in text. Full bibliographical reference

Summary

The aim of this session was know how to understand the research process and different approaches to research.

You are now able to:

1

Summarise the stages in the research process

2

Identify an area of HR practice for investigation

3

Compare different data collection methods

4

Reference sources using the Harvard convention