

Qualitative Research

Week 7

Lecture 1

Clarifying / Simplifying Qual Research

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What is Qual Research?

Research is not:

- Data collection without clear purpose.
- Reassembling such without interpretation.
- 'Esoteric' activities with no/little real-life relevance.
- To get a product noticed/respected.

(Saunders *et al.*, 2016)



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What is Qual Research?

Systematic data collection & interpretation with a clear purpose.

- Systematic: logical relationships rather than beliefs.
 - Explains method, meaningfulness of results & limitations.
- Purpose: to find things out.
 - It ends at some point (when the purpose is fulfilled).
 - Explaining, understanding, criticising & analysing the data.

(Saunders *et al.*, 2016)



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What is Qual Research?

- High relevance research is a circle of theory & practice.
- It is to avoid the relevance gap.
- Especially business & management research as such engages with theory & practice.
- Best research: develops ideas on theory with practical relevance.
- In practical terms: evidence-based management.

(Saunders *et al.*, 2016)



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Why bother Qual Research?

- Correct information is critical.
- The larger the corporation, the lower the contact between decision-makers & f.e. the customers.
- Management decisions tend to come from various sources.
- Effective decisions rely on information on:
 - Clients.
 - Competitors.
 - Environment.

(Wilson, 2011 & 2018)



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Two kinds of Qual Research...

Basic research



Applied research

Purpose

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand knowledge of processes of business & management.• Outcomes: universal principles linked to the process & its relationship to outcomes.• Of significance & value for society. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand knowledge of particular business or management issue.• Outcomes: solution to problem.• Knowledge limited to problem but of significant practical relevance & value to managers. |
|---|--|

Context

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In universities.• Researcher determines topic & objectives.• Flexible time scales. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In organisations & universities.• Objectives negotiated with originator.• Tight time scales. |
|--|--|

Decision problems

Researchers are called to inform management decisions.

Key part of the process is the **research problem formulation** which is f.e. turning a management problem into a series of research questions.

Important here:

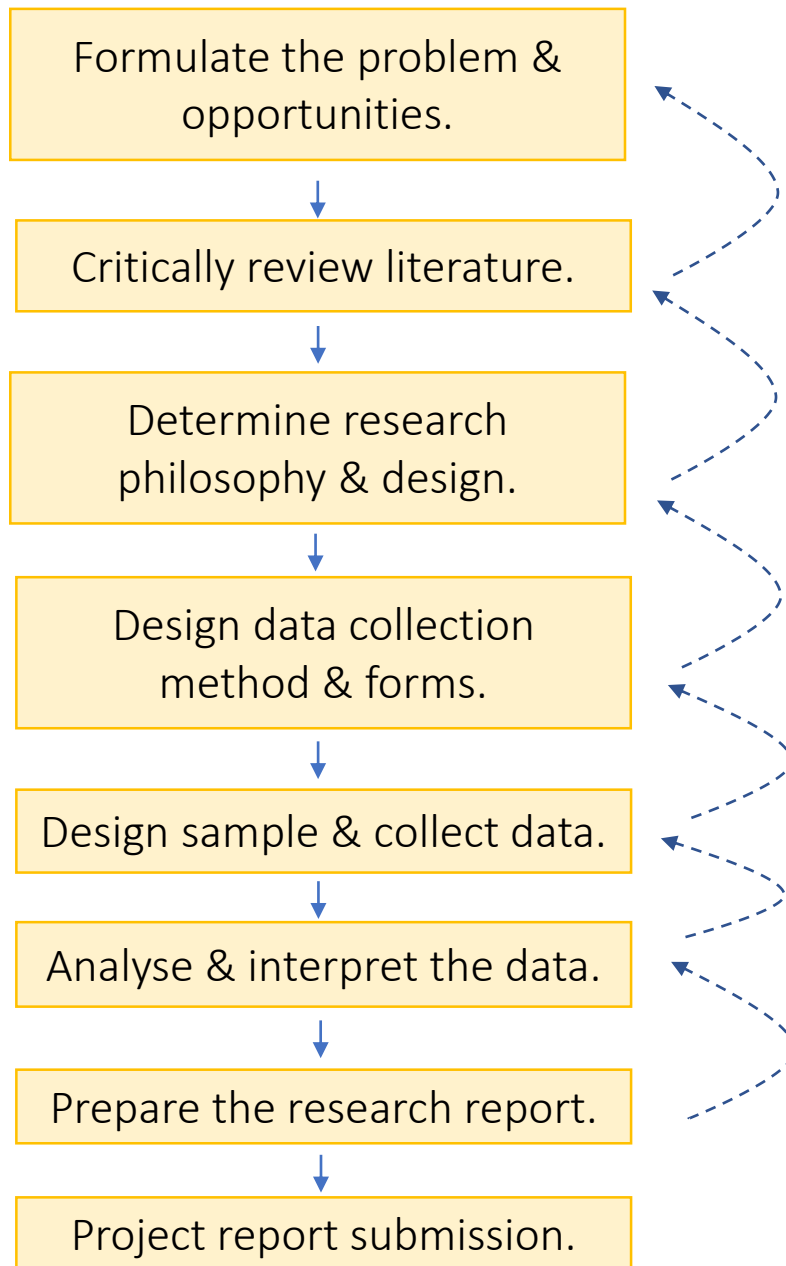
- Specifying what information is needed.
- How to collect & analyse it.
- How to interpret it.



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The research process stages



—> Forward planning
- - -> Reflection & revision

(Saunders *et al.*, 2016; Wilson, 2011 & 2018)



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We will get you started with...

- How to identify a problem & what questions to ask?
- How to research it to set up a literature review & the problem discussion?
- How to gather, analyse & interpret data?



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The MRS Code
of Conduct

Ethical considerations

Researchers have at least three ethical responsibilities, beyond any legal constraints:

1. Towards **respondents**, to ensure that they are not harmed in the process of contributing data.
2. To the **MR industry** in general, to ensure that current research activities do not damage future activities.
3. To **clients** to ensure that findings are valid & reliable, & that insight is meaningful & useful.

The behaviour of professional researchers is governed by the MRS Code of Conduct.

(MRS, 2019)



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Points to summarise...

- Research is all pervasive & big business. It supports decision-making in a fast-changing environments.
- Research is an organised function & reflects the firm's size & capabilities. It takes two broad forms: to expand universal knowledge or research an applied problem.
- Any data collection in the social sciences carries an ethical risk. This is governed in the UK by the MRS, who publish an agreed code of conduct for members.
- Technology now makes data collection very easy - but the quality of the data & subsequent insight rely entirely on the expertise of the researcher.