CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING BUSINESS RESEARCH

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Detail the research process and explain the utility of the four frameworks approach to the research project.
- Outline and briefly explain each of the stages in the research process.
- Explain the different paradigms in social research.
- Apply different research paradigms in designing research projects.
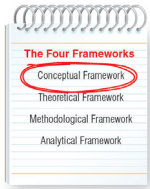- Know how to formulate a researchable problem.

RESEARCH SKILLS

At the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- Outline the steps in the research process.
- Differentiate between a research idea and a research statement or question.
- Trace the elements of the research process in a given sample project.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce you, the student, to the process of carrying out research. As you will see, this step in the process is generally the same in every research project. However, the approaches taken to each step in the process vary a great deal, and are in many cases, unique to each research project.

RESEARCH DIARY ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1.1

Start and maintain a research diary.

It is important to do this as you when you are beginning to think about your research project. Start your research diary by recording your own thoughts in relation to the areas and fields of business and business research that particularly interest you, and the issues and questions that come to mind when you focus on these areas. The purpose of this exercise is to help you move towards selecting an area within which to develop your research project. The notes that you jot down during your reflections do not need to be very elaborate. They are simply notes you write to yourself in order to maintain a record of your thoughts and ideas with regard to your research. These notes will be very helpful when you begin the process of designing, carrying out and writing up your research project. We have provided a template at the end of this section to help you to start your research diary.

Using the ideas that you have for your research project, can you outline the steps of the research process, detailing briefly how, throughout each step of the research process, you intend to develop your research project?
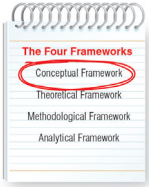
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 1.2

Jot down in your research diary some notes in response to these ethical issues and questions. Consider for a moment any research project in which you have participated. Think about how you felt. Did you feel vulnerable at all? If so, why did you feel vulnerable? What was it about the research, the researcher, or the research process that made you feel like this? Think for a moment about yourself as the researcher. How do you want people to perceive your research project? What impression do you want to give people of you yourself as a researcher? How do you want them to feel about participating in your research? How do you want them to feel as they participate in your research? Write a short reflective piece on how these reflections will help you when you are designing and carrying out your research. Also write a couple of sentences on how these reflections will help you in writing the 'ethics' section of your thesis. The reflection that you engage in for this exercise may appear, in an edited form, in the ethics section of your research project. The ethics section is usually placed in the research methodology chapter of the thesis (this is usually Chapter 3 in the thesis or report of the research).

In your research diary, develop an ethics checklist for your research and for you yourself as a researcher working on that research project. Try to find in your reading of journal articles particularly good ethical reflections on business research projects. Use these reflections, along with your own reflections, to help you develop your own knowledge and skills in terms of research ethics, ethical reflection and writing-up research ethics.
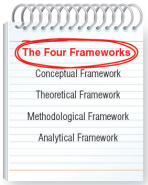
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 1.3

Using the end of chapter case study, can you detail Malik's idea for her research project and then state whether Malik has presented the conceptual framework for her research project as a research statement or question?

Can you briefly explain the difference between a research idea and a research statement or question?

Using Malik's research proposal, can you trace and name the elements of the research process?

ANSWER:

YOUR RESEARCH DIARY

Please use this section to start your own Research Diary and keep accurate records of your research as it progresses

DATE:

RESEARCH ELEMENT/ASPECT:
Detail the topic or section of research being undertaken

SOURCE:
Record website addresses, book citations, library references, contact details etc.

SUMMARY:
Reflect on your experiences, thoughts, ideas and developments

NOTES:
Make general notes on your research, for example questions for further reflection and/or investigation, your thoughts, your observations and plans for future research.