Chapter 1
The nature of business and management research and the structure of this book

Introduction to the research process

Things to consider

- Realities and pitfalls of research

- Approaches, strategies and methods

- Techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis

- Appropriate use of information technology

Terminology

Methods -

The techniques and procedures used to obtain data

Methodology -

The theory of how research should be undertaken

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

The nature of research

Definition:

'Something that people undertake in order to find things out in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge'

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Characteristics:

- Data are collected systematically

- Data are interpreted systematically

- There is a clear purpose to find things out

Features of business and management research (1)

- Managers draw on knowledge from other disciplines

- Managers are more likely to allow access if they see commercial or personal advantage

- Managers now tend to be as educated as the researchers

- Managers require research to have some practical consequence

Easterby-Smith *et al. (2008)*

Features of business and management research (1)

Key debates

- Knowledge production –
  (Modes 1, 2 and 3 knowledge)

- The 'relevance gap'

- 'Evidence based' management

- Basic and applied research

Mode 1

- **Mode 1** knowledge creation emphasises
- research in which the questions are set and solved by academic interests, emphasising a
- fundamental rather than applied nature, where there is little if any focus on utilisation of the research by practitioners.

Mode 2

- **Mode 2** emphasises a context for research governed by the world of practice, highlighting the importance of collaboration both with and between practitioners and the need for the production of practical relevant knowledge (bringing the supply side of knowledge represented by universities together with the demand side represented by businesses and overcoming the double hurdle.

Mode 3

- **Mode 3** knowledge production focuses on an appreciation of the human condition as it is purpose being to 'assure survival and promote the common good at various levels of social aggregation'. This emphasises the importance of broader issues of human relevance of research. and as it might become, its

The 'relevance gap'

- The relevance gap is resulting from the separation of knowledge producers from knowledge users; (RG) has become more marked over recent years.

- Ignoring such a gap would be 'unthinkable in other professional fields, such as medicine or engineering, where a national scandal would ensue if science base and practice were not inextricably and interlinked'.

Hodgkinson's Taxonomy of Research

		THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL RELEVANCE	
		HIGH	LOW
PRACTICAL RELEVANCE	HIGH	Pragmatic science	Popularistic science
	LOW	Pedantic science	Puerile science

Table 1.1 A taxonomy for considering the 'relevance gap' in relation to managerial knowledge

Theoretical and methodological rigour	Practical relevance	Quadrant
Higher	Lower	Pedantic science
Lower	Higher	Popularist science
Lower	Lower	Puerile science
Higher	Higher	Pragmatic science

- Pedantic science is characterised by a focus on increasing methodological rigour at the expense of results that are relevant and can sometimes be found in refereed academic journals.

- popularist science is characterised by a focus on relevance and usefulness whilst neglecting theoretical and methodological rigour, examples being found in some books targeted at practising managers.

- Puerile science both lacks methodological
- rigour and is of limited practical relevance and, although unlikely to be found in refereed academic journals, can be found in other media.
- Pragmatic science is both theoretically
- and methodologically rigorous and relevant.

Features of business and management research (2)
Basic and applied research

Basic research ←—————————————→ **Applied research**

Purpose:
- Expand knowledge of processes of business and management

- Results in universal principles relating to the process and its relationship to outcomes

- Findings of significance and value to society in general

Context:
- Undertaken by people based in universities

- Choice of topic and objectives determined by the researcher

- Flexible time scales

Purpose:
- Improve understanding of particular business or management problem

- Results in solution to problem

- New knowledge limited to problem

- Findings of practical relevance and value to manager(s) in organisation(s)

Context:
- Undertaken by people based in a variety of settings including organisations and universities

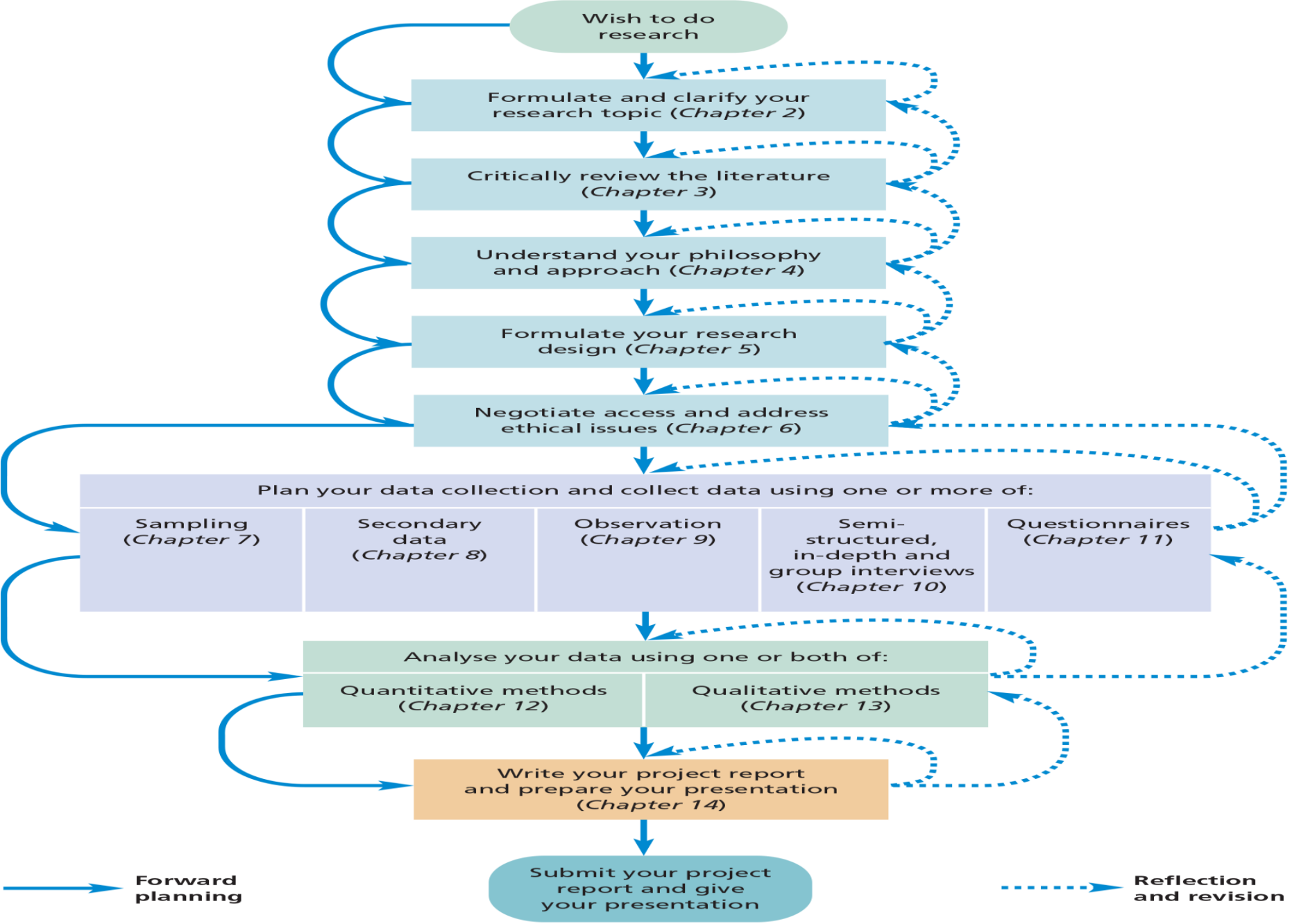- Objectives negotiated with originator

- Tight time scales

Figure 1.1 Basic and applied research

The research process (1)

Stages of the research process

- Formulating and clarifying a topic

- Reviewing the literature

- Designing the research

- Collecting data

- Analysing data

- Writing up

Based on Figure 1.2: Saunders *et al*. (2009)

Figure 1.2
The research process
Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2009.

The research process (2)

Factors to consider

- The impact of your personal feelings and beliefs

- Access to data

- Time and other resources

- Validity and reliability of the data

- Ethical issues

Purpose of the book

To help you undertake research by being

- Clear about what you are doing

- Why you are doing it

- The associated implications of what you are about to do

Overview of the Chapters

Each Chapter contains:

- A summary of key points

- Self- check questions – and answers

- Review and discussion questions

- References and further reading

- A case study that highlights real research issues

Final Sections

- Bibliography

- Appendices

- Glossary

- Index

Summary: Chapter 1

Business and management research

- Is transdisciplinary

- Engages with both theory and practice

- Involves undertaking systematic research

- Should be undertaken with rigour

Summary: Chapter 1

The book acts as a guide to the research process by providing:

- a series of research examples
- checklists to help you acquire relevant knowledge
- review and discussion questions
- self-check questions - and answers
- guidance as you generate material for your project report

And finally……..

"there is no one best way for undertaking all research"

Saunders et al. (2009)