Management Research Methods

*Management Research Methods* is a comprehensive guide to the design and conduct of research in management-related disciplines such as organisational behaviour, human resource management, industrial relations, and the general field of management. The book provides an overview of the research process and explains the main types of design used in management research – experimental and quasi-experimental designs, correlational field studies (surveys), case studies, historical analysis, and action research. It also describes the methods of data collection – interviews, questionnaires, documentation, and observation – commonly employed by management researchers. In addition, the book examines the issues of reliability and validity, the construction of multi-item scales, and the methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis. It concludes with a practical guide explaining how to report research findings and a discussion of ethical issues in the conduct and practice of research.

*Management Research Methods* is an essential guide for students, managers and researchers.

**Phyllis Tharenou** is Dean of Research in the Division of Business, University of South Australia.

**Ross Donohue** is a lecturer in the Department of Management, Monash University.

**Brian Cooper** is a lecturer in the Department of Management, Monash University.
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo
Cambridge University Press
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521694285

© Phyllis Tharenou, Ross Donohue, Brian Cooper 2007

First published 2007

Printed in Australia by Ligare

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication data

Tharenou, Phyllis.
Management Research Methods.
Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN-10 0-52169-428-0 paperback

II. Cooper, Brian. III. Title.
658.0072

ISBN-10 0-52169-428-0 paperback

Reproduction and Communication for educational purposes
The Australian Copyright Act 1968 (the Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of
the pages of this work, whichever is the greater, to be reproduced and/or
communicated by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided
that the educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a
remuneration notice to Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) under the Act.

For details of the CAL licence for educational institutions contact:
Copyright Agency Limited
Level 15, 233 Castlereagh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: (02) 9394 7600
Facsimile: (02) 9394 7601
E-mail: info@copyright.com.au

Reproduction and Communication for other purposes
Except as permitted under the Act (for example a fair dealing for the purposes of study,
research, criticism or review) no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval
system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written
permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for
external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee
that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.
Contents

Preface page vii

Part 1 Introduction 1
  1 The research process 3

Part 2 Research designs 31
  2 Experimental and quasi-experimental designs 33
  3 Correlational field study (survey) designs 45
  4 Case study research designs 72
  5 Action research designs 88

Part 3 Methods of data collection 99
  6 Asking questions: Questionnaires and interviews 101
  7 Documentation and observation 123

Part 4 Measurement 147
  8 Reliability and validity 149
  9 Scale development 160

Part 5 Methods of data analysis 187
  10 Quantitative data: Data set-up and initial analysis 189
  11 Quantitative data: Multivariate data analysis for answering research questions and hypothesis testing 220
  12 Content analysis 250

Part 6 Reporting research findings and ethical considerations 273
  13 Writing up a quantitative or qualitative project 275
  14 Ethical issues and conduct in the practice of research 316

Index 329
Preface

In order to conduct sound research in the discipline of management, it is critical that you develop an awareness of research approaches and techniques. The purpose of this text is to foster your capacity to understand the appropriate method of research to undertake and what outcomes you could reasonably expect from that research. By using this text, you will be encouraged to become critical of the use of different techniques and methods applied in this research field.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this text is to develop your understanding of the research process suitable for the management discipline. Having completed this text, it is expected that you will be able to:

- critically analyse, interpret, and understand basic research designs in the management discipline;
- identify management-related issues for research;
- build the capacity to develop research questions grounded in a theoretical and conceptual framework;
- compare the appropriateness and use of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques as a means of investigating and answering research questions in the management discipline;
- outline the process of collecting primary data, and identify, search for, and locate secondary data and knowledge relevant to management research;
- summarise the role and introductory use of computer software packages and facilities in the collection, analysis, and presentation of research findings;
- demonstrate a general understanding of the role of management research in academic, industry, government, and professional and community organisations; and
develop academic writing skills appropriate to the discipline for reporting on business management research projects.

Every day, managers are involved in designing projects, jobs, organisational or departmental structures, and ways of matching individual and group needs in organisations. They base their decisions on existing knowledge resulting from what they or others have learnt from applied or pure academic research. In fact, designing questions to solve management problems is such a fundamental skill that we overlook its significance as a major factor contributing to quality management.

Management Research Methods aims to foster in readers an understanding of the basic research processes and a capacity to identify management-related research questions. Readers will learn the manner in which others have designed and conducted research studies to answer management-related questions, the sources of the main existing literature in management-related studies, the procedures involved in collecting primary data, the purposes of techniques for analysing and presenting data, and the necessary structuring and writing skills to generate a research report.

This text therefore provides a basic introduction to research design in management, types of research designs, data collection and measurement techniques, coding data, reliability and validity, qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, interpreting and discussing results, structuring and writing the research report, and integrating individual research into the overall management literature.

This text is organised into six parts. Part 1, Introduction, contains Chapter 1, which outlines the research process, discusses foundational issues, defines key terms, and provides readers with an overview of topics discussed more comprehensively in subsequent chapters. Part 2, Research Designs, is comprised of chapters examining experimental and quasi-
experimental designs (Chapter 2), correlational field study (survey) designs (Chapter 3), case study research designs (Chapter 4), and action research designs (Chapter 5). Part 3 of the book is focused on Methods of Data Collection and includes chapters on asking questions using questionnaires and interviews (Chapter 6) and documentation and observation (Chapter 7). Part 4, Measurement, consists of chapters discussing reliability and validity (Chapter 8) and scale development (Chapter 9). Part 5 of the text groups the Methods of Data Analysis and contains chapters on quantitative data set-up and initial analysis (Chapter 10), quantitative multivariate analysis (Chapter 11), and content analysis (Chapter 12). Reporting Research Findings and Ethical Considerations is the final part and comprises chapters on writing up a qualitative or quantitative project (Chapter 13) and ethical issues and conduct in the practice of research (Chapter 14).

**Learning outcomes**

The main components involve:

- developing a critical understanding of basic research designs (for example, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, correlational field study designs, case study designs, and action research designs) in order to conduct applied management research;
- developing skills in designing research studies in relation to contemporary management issues, including ethical considerations in design;
- devising or locating techniques to generate or collect primary data, and identifying and locating sources of secondary data;
- developing basic, introductory skills in data collection – for example, interviewing, using questionnaires, observation techniques, and documentation;
- developing skills in the construction of multi-item scales;
- developing an understanding of basic data analysis concepts in relation to answering research questions and testing hypotheses;
- developing skills in writing up an academic research study in formal research report format; and
Preface

having an appreciation of the overall steps in research design and of integration of the individual research skills that comprise effective research designs in management.

Having completed the text, readers will be able to:

- prepare research questions both from applied and theoretical perspectives for management research;
- conduct computerised literature searches for management research;
- prepare research designs for a range of management research questions;
- design and conduct research in keeping with ethical considerations;
- identify and locate sources for data collection and design questionnaires, interviews, and multi-item scales;
- appreciate the broad purpose and applicability of data analytic techniques for quantitative and qualitative data analysis; and
- develop skills in writing an academic research report.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge Cathy Miles for her meticulous assistance during the editing process of this book and for her assistance during the production stages. The authors are also appreciative of the excellent support and guidance provided by Cambridge University Press, specifically the managing editor, Kate Indigo, as well as the freelance editor, Robyn Fleming.