

# NOTE ON BUSINESS RESEARCH PROCESS: A SUMMARY

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## **Introduction**

This note provides a summary of the business research process and outlines the main stages, phases and decisions.

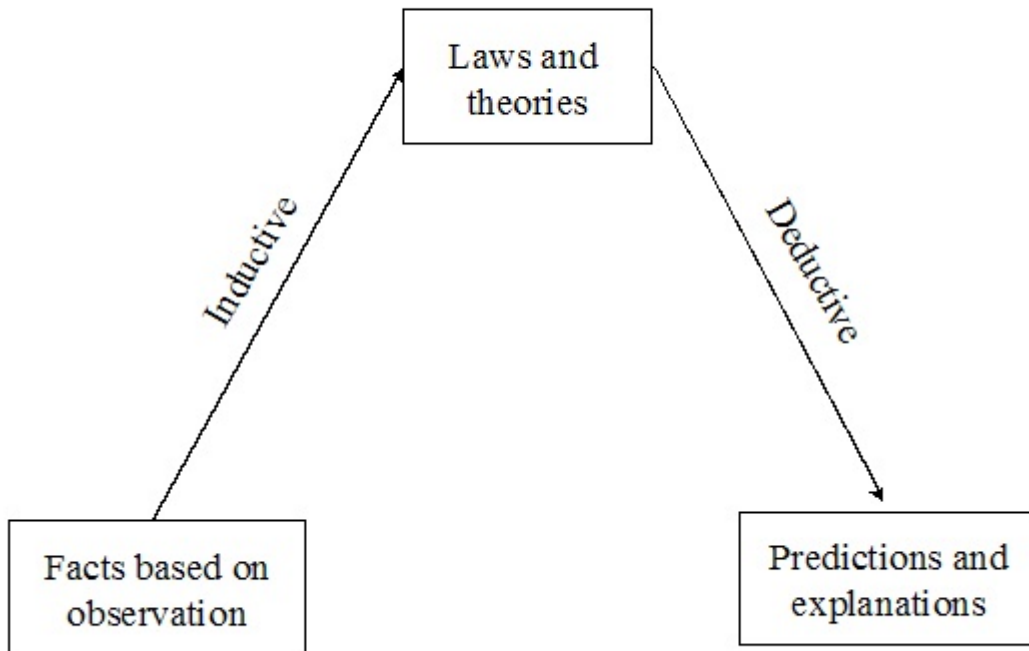
The content includes :

- science development
- research process
- principles
- contextual factors affecting research design
- timeframe
- report outline
- references

## Science development

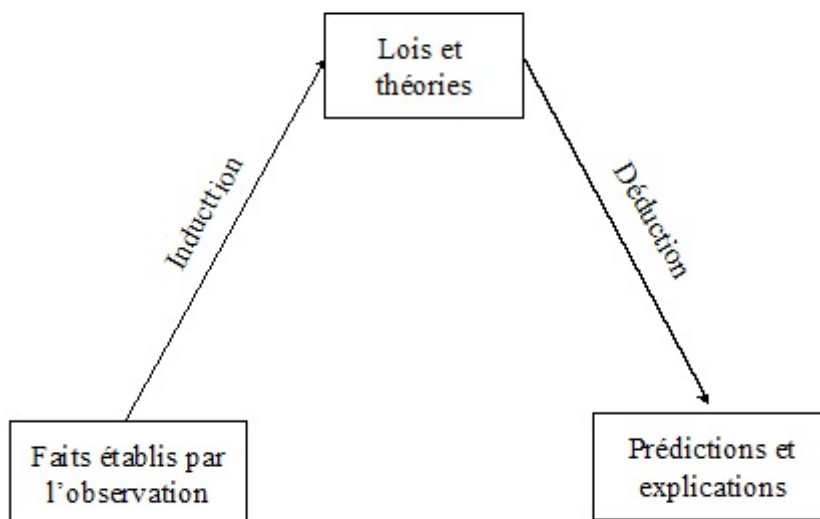
Science includes inductive and deductive approach (figure 1).

**Figure 1 - Science development**



Source : Chalmers (1976, p.24)

**Figure 1 - Développement de la science**



Source : Chalmers (1976, p.24)

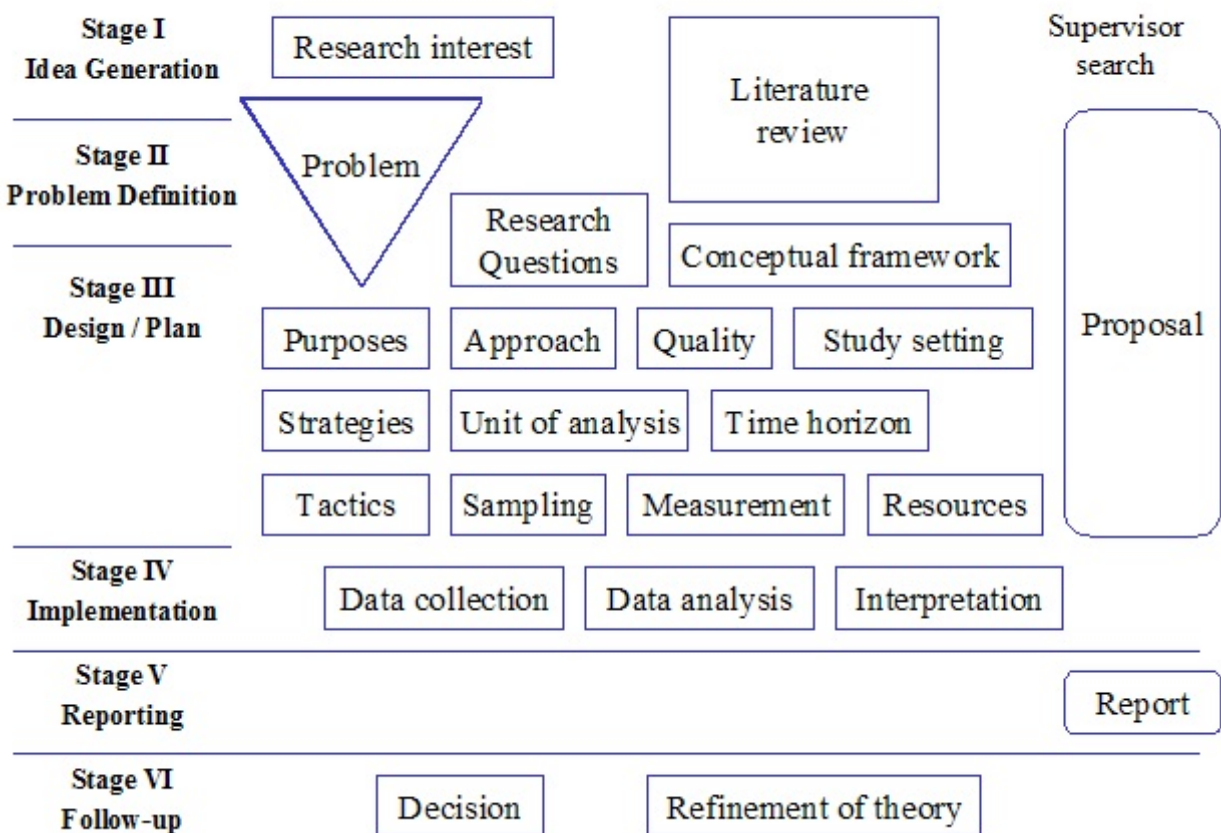
## Research Process

Any research project should be a response to a need for information in order to solve a problem. Research is the light (solution) at the end of the tunnel (problem).

“Business Research can be described as a systematic and organized effort to investigate a specific problem encountered in the work setting, that needs a solution.” (Sekaran, 2000, p.3)

The research process could be divided in six stages and multiple phases (figure 2). Table 1 provides some decisions to be made for each stage and phases.

**Figure 2 - Research Process**



**Table 1 - Research Process**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Phases</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
Stage I Idea Generation	Observation / experience	- Broad area of research interest identified
	Preliminary data gathering	- Interviewing - Literature review
Stage II Research Definition	Understand the problem	- Problem identified - Literature review
	Identify / Refine questions	- General and specific research questions - Generation of hypotheses
	Conceptual framework	- Literature review - Paradigms and theories - Concepts defined
Stage III Research Design	Purpose of enquiry	Exploratory, Descriptive, Explanatory
	Approach	Qualitative, Quantitative, Qual/Quant (both)
	Strategies	Experiment, Survey, Case studies, Other
	Tactics	Observation, Questionnaires, Interviews, Secondary data, Archives, Trace, Other
	Unit of analysis (population)	Individuals, Dyads, Groups, Divisions, Organizations, Industry, Clusters, Nations
	Sampling design	Probability/Nonprobability, Sample size
	Measurement	- Operational definition - Scaling
	Study setting	Field, Laboratory
	Resources	Financial (funding); Human; Time
	Quality	Validity, Reliability, Generability, Ethics
	Time horizon	One-shot (Cross-sectional), Longitudinal
Stage IV Implementation	Data collection	
	Data analysis	- Editing; Coding; Categorizing; Programming - Descriptive; Inferential; Other techniques
	Interpretation of data	Discussion of findings; Research question answered?
Stage V Reporting	Report writing	
	Oral presentation	
Stage VI Follow-up	- Managerial Decision Making (applied research) - Refinement of theory (pure research)	

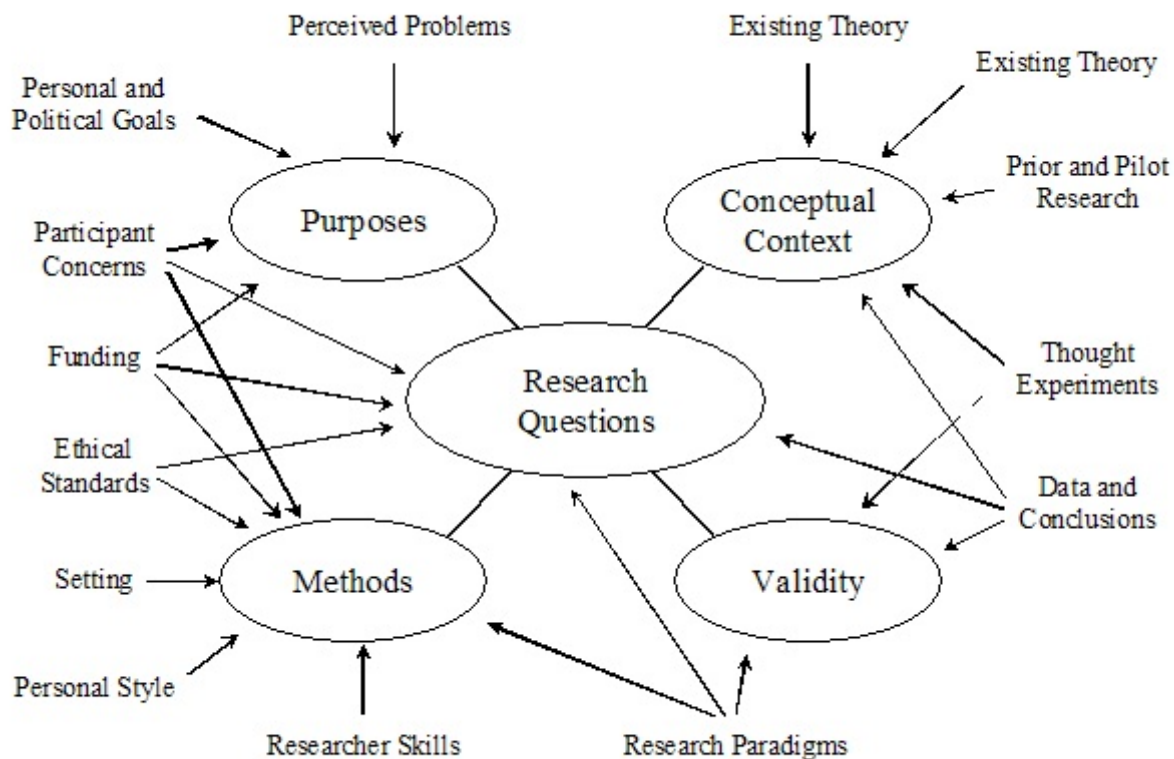
Adaptation based on Bickman, Rog and Hedrick (1998), Robson (1993) and Sekaran (2000)

## Principles

- “The general principle is that the research strategy or strategies, and the methods or techniques employed, must be appropriate for the questions you want to answer.” (Robson, 1993, p.38)
- The research process is not linear.
- Rigor is essential.
- Ethical research
  - Obtaining free and informed consent
  - Providing the right to withdraw; respect
  - Protecting privacy, anonymity and/or confidentiality
  - Minimizing the risk of harm; balancing harms and benefits; maximizing benefits
  - Avoiding conflicts of interest
  - Avoiding deceptive practices

## Contextual factors influencing research design

**Figure 3 - Contextual factors influencing research design**



Source : Maxwell (1998, p.73)

## Timeframe

Establish a calendar for your research project. Here is some guidelines.

Stage	Master			Doctoral Thesis	
	Project	Thesis	Thesis		
I	Idea generation (area)	1-2 weeks	1-2 weeks	1-2 weeks	2-3 weeks
	Preliminary data gathering	1-2 weeks	1-2 weeks	2-3 weeks	4-6 weeks
	First proposal	1 week	1 weeks	1-2 weeks	2-6 weeks
II	Research definition 30%	5 weeks	8 weeks	12 weeks	25 weeks
	Problem revision	1 week	1 week	1 week	2 weeks
III	Research design 40%	9 weeks	11 weeks	16 weeks	35 weeks
	Official proposal	1-2 weeks	2-4 weeks	3-7 weeks	5-12 weeks
IV	Implementation 30%	5 weeks	8 weeks	12 weeks	30 weeks
	Supplementary work	1 week	1 week	2 weeks	10 weeks
V	Writing plan	1 week	1 week	1 week	2 weeks
	Writing	2-4 weeks	3-6 weeks	6-10 weeks	20-30 weeks
	Revision	2 weeks	2 weeks	2 weeks	8-10 weeks
	Defense	-	3 weeks	5 weeks	9 weeks
	total	35 weeks	50 weeks	75 weeks	180 weeks

Adapted from Beaud and Latouche (1988, p.44)

## Report outline

- Prefatory pages
  - Title page
  - Executive summary
  - Tables of contents, tables, figures
- Body of report
  - Introduction  
(background, problem statement, research questions)
  - Conceptual framework
  - Methodology
  - Results
  - Interpretation and discussion
  - Conclusion
- Appended sections
  - References

A note on PhD proposal structure and content is available.

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