

OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA
FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
MBA DEGREE PROGRAMMES
OBS 610 .BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS
COURSE OUTLINE

1. Introduction

Managers of organizations, business men and women need a lot of information to make decisions about their markets, customers, business opportunities, resource use and growth of the firms they operate. They obtain all kinds of information through different sources, either from company intelligence network or through scientific method. The company intelligence network may not use formal data collection methods and subject the data to rigorous analysis. The resulting data may not be that reliable but still useful information. The data may give some indications as to the current situation and a chance for the business person to make intuitive decisions. Unreliable data and information suggest that a more reliable and systematic approach be used to obtain adequately dependable data and information. The quest for more reliable data has made expert to develop the scientific research methods to suit the needs of business researchers. This course is a core component of the MBA degree program. The present outline describes the approach we have adopted to study the subject of business research methods (OBS 610)

2. Main Learning Objectives

The main of this course is to provide the basic knowledge of concepts and theories which are the building blocks of business research methods. In addition to this aim the intention is to enable the student to acquire the skills required for conducting practical exercises in business research methods.

3. Key Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course you should be able to

- Understand the scientific methods of conducting research in a business context
- Understand the basic concepts and theories underlying research issues
- Plan and conduct a business research project by making decisions on
 - (i) using the elements of the research process
 - (ii) what analytical techniques or computer software package to use
 - (iii) how to present and communicate the results of the research
 - Give quality answers to all assignments, sit and pass timed tests and final examination
 - Apply the acquired knowledge and skills in research methodology after graduation.

4. CCOURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is essentially an introductory course. It covers basic concepts, theories and methodological issues and how the experts have dealt with them. The concepts include research methodology and scientific method, research process, types of research and designs, definition of research problem, research design-exploratory, descriptive and experimental; sampling designs-probability and non-probability procedures; measurement techniques and procedures; data requirement and collection procedures; data processing and analysis- types analysis, objectives of analysis and techniques; statistical inferences; testing of hypotheses; ICT in research; interpretation and report writing; communicating research results. The course is organized around twelve topics. Each topic starts with key learning objectives. Subtopics are indicated, too. The topic ends with some discussion questions and a list of relevant readings. It will be to your interest to search for and read the lists and attempt answering the discussion questions. How the course is assessed is explained at the end of the course outline.

5 COURSE CONTENT

The course content is outlined around specific principles and topical issues which researchers must know and understand and be able to apply them in developing research projects. In all these issues are grouped and discussed around twelve topics, which, for the purpose of convenience, may be placed under five major sections, namely, preliminaries in research, research problem formulation, research design, data analysis and communicating the findings. An additional section discussing the application of the knowledge and skills gained from studying the course has been added to this compendium.

TOPIC 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Business research methods is an interesting course, because it gives you a lot of insights into why and how people want to know about their businesses and the environment in which the businesses take place. They must first recognize the need for information, they should determine the kind of information they require and organize themselves to collect it. Then it must be analyzed and interpreted in terms of the need before making a decision that must be made. Because business is dynamic and so is the environment a lot of information collection goes on all the time. Business people use scientific research to improve upon the quality of information the use in making decisions. What is the nature of scientific methods of doing a research and how can it be used in business context? Read on, please.

The main objective is to enable you to learn about the most common concepts and terminologies used in research methodology and particularly in business research

Key Learning Objectives:

After reading the text and learnt about the terms you should be able to

- Explain the terms in your own words
- Recognize and understand them, whenever you meet them
- Understand why business people have to do research
- Know in which areas of business most researches are done
- Learn to use computer in your research activities

- Prepare yourself to learn more in the next group of sub-topics

Sub-topics:

- Definitions of key research concepts and terminologies
- What is scientific method of doing research?
- What is business research method?
- Why is research needed in business?
- In which business areas are researches conducted?
- Differences Between Research methodology and Research Methods
- What is a research process?
- Using computers in researching
- What problems do researchers face in Tanzania?

Compulsory Readings:

- Compendium Chap 1
- Compendium Chap 2

Additional Readings:

- a. Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill, Research Methods for Business Students, 3rd edition, FT-Prentice Hall, 2003. Chap 1
- b. Churchill, Chap 1 and 2
- c. Emory, Chap 1 and 2
- d. Gill, J and Johnson, P.(1997) Research Methods for Managers 2nd edition, London, Paul Chapman, Chaps 1 and 2.
- e. Kothari, C.R., Research Methodology. Methods and Techniques, 2nd edition, Wiley Eastern Limited, 1992

TOPIC 5.2 THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION

This topic is very critical in the research process. It underpins many research questions for which you need to develop answers. particularly when it comes to data collection and analysis. Here you need to make a decision regarding your philosophical orientation. For without this it might be difficult to proceed to the next question, that is what research design or will you employ in your project? It may be necessary to think a little bit ahead about the research strategy that you will use. At this juncture you may begin to wonder what relationships exist between theoretical orientation, philosophical orientation, research approach and research strategy? You had better try to understand each of them before answering this question.

Learning Objectives

After studying this topic, you should be able to

- Identify and understand the different philosophical orientations
- Know what theory is and its role in research and knowledge creation
- Make informed choice of appropriate methodology for your research
- Understand what is meant by management action paradigm

- Use the knowledge gained in your research project.

Sub-topics

- What is Theory?
- Induction and deduction
- Role of theory in business research methods
- Philosophical Orientations in research
- Types of Research Approaches
- Types of Research designs (strategies)
- Time horizons to consider in your research
- Credibility of research findings

Readings

Saunders and others, (2002), chap 4

TOPIC 5.3 CLARIFYING THE RESEARCH TOPIC

Before you start the research you need to have some ideas of what you want to do. This is not particularly easy yet it is the most important aspect of the study. Because if you don't know it. You will have difficulties in planning the research project. That will be frustrating, to say the least. But once you have been able to clarify your topic you will be able to choose the most appropriate research design, data collection methods and analysis techniques. Formulating and clarifying the research topic is very difficult and time consuming, but it has to be done, with the help of your supervisor or tutor. He or she can't do that for you, it's your work and you have to start it and through discussions with your supervisor you will be able to formulate a researchable topic.

Learning Objectives

After reading and studying this topic you should be able to

- Generate ideas from which a researchable topic may be chosen
- Identify and understand the characteristics of a good topic
- Turn research ideas into a research project that has clear research questions and objectives
- Draft a research topic that has clear research questions and research objectives

Sub-topics

- Definition the need for a research
- What is a research Problem?
- Techniques involved in Problem Definition
- Characteristics of a good research topic
- Generating and refining research ideas
- Translating Research Ideas into Research Projects
- Statement of the problem in general way

Readings

Saunders, and others, (2002) chap.2

TOPIC 5.4 CRITICAL REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

Obviously your research will not be the first and the last and therefore you need to know what has been done in the area of your research interest. This means that no knowledge exists in a vacuum and that your contribution will have value only in relation to other people's. The critical review is therefore essential so that you do not waste your energy and other resources to repeat what is already known and in which no one will show any interest.

Learning Objective

- To be aware of the range of different sources of literature available
- To know what to include when writing your critical review.
- To understand and know the theories underlying variables, concepts
- To understand and know what has been done in your area of interest
- To know what remains to be done
- To position your research in the context of what remains to be done
- To be able to formulate testable hypotheses
- To be able to apply the knowledge, skills and understanding gained to your research project

Sub-topics

- 5.4.1 Introduction
- 5.4.2. The critical Review
- 5.4.3. Literature Sources Available
- 5.4.4. Planning the Literature Search
- 5.4.5. Conducting the Literature Search
- 5.4.6. Obtaining and Evaluating the literature
- 5.4.7. Recording the literature

Readings:

Saunders, and Others, (2002), Chap.3

Kothari, (1992), page 16

TOPIC 5.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design outlines all the decisions that have to be made, the procedures that have to be followed in order to achieve a systematic collection of data, their analysis so as to generate information for making effective decision about the problem or the opportunity facing the manager. The research design is therefore a plan of action. It plays an important role in directing you to make the right decisions and choices as to what to do during the research function.

Learning Objectives

After studying this topic you should be able to

- Understand what is meant by research design
- Understand how and why it is classified
- Learn about the different types of research designs
- Relate them to the different philosophical orientations
- Use the knowledge gained in your research project

Sub-topics

- What is a research design?
- Specifying the information needed
- Classification of Research Designs
- Exploratory research design
- Descriptive research design
- Causal research design
- Qualities of a good research design
- Ethics of research design

Readings

Saunders and others, (200), Chap. 4 ...4.5

Kothari, (1992), chap.3

TOPIC 5.6 MEASUREMENT AND SCALING TECHNIQUES

Measurement is used in our everyday life. There are different ways of determining height, weight, volume of liquid and even judging the qualities of individuals or object. Measurement is a very complex and demanding task, especially when it concerns qualitative and abstract phenomenon. Measurement involves assigning numerical values to the characteristics of the object or event being studied. And therefore through measurement you are able to generate data for the objects being studied.

Learning Objectives

After Studying this topic you should be able to

- Understand the meaning of measurement in research
- Learn about the different scales of measurement used in research
- Use the knowledge and skills in your project

Sub-topics

- Meaning of measurement
- Measurement scales
- Sources of error in measurement
- Tests of sound measurement
- Techniques of developing measurement tools
- Meaning of scaling
- Important scaling techniques
- Verbal protocols

- Scale evaluation

Readings

Kothari,(2002), chap 5

TOPIC 5.7 QUESTIONNAIRE AND FORM DESIGN

Questionnaire or form design is an important research activity in formulating the research design. It is the means by which the required information and data will be obtained. Therefore once you have specified the nature of the research design, identified the information needed and determined the scaling procedures you can proceed to develop the questionnaire or the observational forms

Learning Objectives

After studying this topic, you should be able to

- Understand why you need to develop a questionnaire or observational form
- Explain the purpose of questionnaire
- Describe the questionnaire design process
- Discuss the observational form of data collection

Sub-topics

- Meaning of questionnaire and observational form
- Individual question content
- Choosing question structure, wording and sequencing of questions
- Form and layout
- Reproduction and pre-testing
- Observational forms

Readings

Naresh K. Malhotra, Marketing Research An Applied Orientation (Prentice Hall International Editions, 1993

Chap. 12

TOPIC 5.8 SAMPLING DESIGNS AND PROCEDURES

The subject of a research varies from one object to several objects. In the first one you will be considering a case. In the second you will be talking about a population. Sometimes in a case you will find that it contains some population, for example, an organization like Urafiki Textile Company has a population of about 3000 employees. Therefore in studying objects you may have to make a choice between studying the entire population or a sample of it.

Learning Objectives

After studying this topic, you should be able to

- Differentiate a sample from a census
- Describe the process of sampling

- Classify sampling techniques
- Apply the knowledge and skills in your project

Sub-topics

- Census or sampling
- Sampling fundamentals: definitions
- Sampling theory
- Sampling design process
- Different types of sampling designs
- Criteria for selecting a sampling procedure
- Dealing with non-response issues in sampling

Readings

Kothari, (1992), chaps 4 and 8

Malhotra, (1993), Chap 13

TOPIC 5.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

At this stage of the project you are ready to go to the field to identify the respondents and or sources from where data may be obtained. Data collection involves making personal contact with the respondents, administer the questionnaire or observation forms, recording the data and bringing in the completed forms for processing. In some cases, that is, if the research project is big you may need the assistance of other people, who must be trained to understand and use the data collection instruments.

Learning Objectives

After studying this topic, you should be able to

- Understand how you can collect data from various sources
- Know the basic methods for collecting different types of data
- Manage the logistics (fieldwork) involved in data collection

Sub-topics

- Negotiating access to data sources
- Different methods of data collection
- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- Collection of secondary data
- Collection of primary data
- Selection of appropriate data collection method

Reading List

Kothari (1992), Chap.6

Malhotra, (1993), chap. 15

Saunders and others, Chaps 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

TOPIC 5.10 PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

When you have all the questionnaires and forms in hand they need to be processed and analyzed in accordance with what has been planned in the research design. This is an important research activity to generate information for resolving the issues that precipitated the research. Data processing entails editing, coding classification and tabulation of data so that they become easily accessible to analysis. Data analysis implies computation of certain measures and manipulation of figures and qualitative information to reveal the underlying patterns of relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with what is known and or to respond to the research questions

Learning objectives

After studying this topic, you should be able to

- Explain the methods used for preparing data for analysis
- Explain the nature and scope of data preparation
- Understand the procedures for and factors affecting the selection of a data analysis strategy
- Understand how quantitative data are analyzed
- Understand qualitative methods for analyzing data
- Understand the parametric and non-parametric forms of testing hypotheses

Sub-topics

- Processing operations
- Statistically adjusting the data
- Selecting a data analysis strategy
- Analyzing quantitative data
- Analyzing qualitative data
- Testing of hypotheses
- Interpretation of results of analysis

Reading List

Kothari, (1992), chap. 7 and 14

Saunders and others, (2002), Chaps 11 and 12

TOPIC 5.11 REPORT WRITING

After the interpretation of the results of the analysis a report must be written to show that the research was done. The report is also a means of communicating with the stakeholders who are interested in the study. For an academic degree, like the MBA or PH.D the report could be the only means awarding the degree. It might also be a requirement for awarding the degree. Whatever might be the motive, a report must be written in accordance with the accepted format, including content and style.

Learning objectives

After studying this topic, you should be able to

- Consider your report writing as a climax of an exciting literary experience

- Write in such a way that you can reflect on all that you learnt when conducting the research
- Adopt an appropriate format, structure and style for the final report
- Ensure that your report meets the necessary assessment criteria
- Plan and design an oral presentation of your report

Sub-topics

- Significance of report writing
- Types of reports
- Mechanics of writing a research report
- Layout of the research report
- An example Format for writing an academic research report.
- Report binding and production
- Presentation of research report

Readings

Kothari. (1992), chap 14

Saunders, and others, (2002), chap 13

TOPIC 5.12 APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GAINED

You are required, in principle, to apply the knowledge and skills gained from each topic as you go on studying business research methods. This was to be achieved by picking a topic of interest to you and agree with your supervisor and begin to put your ideas together to formulate a researchable project. In this topic you only being reminded of what is expected of you, that is, to write a research proposal and present it before going to field to collect data, analyze and report on your findings.

Learning Objectives

When you participate in this course, you should be able to

- Use the research proposal format to develop a formal proposal
- Use the report writing format to present your findings as a Dissertation

Reading List

Okoso-Amaa, (1) Format for writing a Research Proposal

(ii) Format for writing a Dissertation

Brian White (2000) Dissertation Skills for Business and Management Students, Continuum, London

COURSE ASSESSMENT

The course will be assessed at two levels, namely as continuous assessment a final examination.

- Continuous Assessment
 - One assignment 5%
 - 2 Timed tests 16%

○ Write a research proposal	19%
Total CWA	40%
Final examination	60%
Total examination assessment	100%

Assignment. Choose one of the following and respond to it. Organize your write-up along the following points

- Give a title to the report
- Background Information
- The focus of the essay (explain what the problem you want to write about is)
- Information required (explain the nature data needed and how you acquired them)
- Analysis of the Information (Discuss how you analyze the information to answer the the question that made you write this essay)
- Discussion (discuss and interpret the results of the analysis, with respect to the problem or focus of the essay)
- Conclusion (Draw a conclusion and recommend what should be done about the problem you wrote about. Indicate who should implement it and why)
- References (Write the references of readings you consulted and used in writing the report)

The topics include the following:

- (i) Describe fully how you will define a research problem for transport difficulties in the area where you live.
- (ii) Discuss the problems that researchers might face while conducting studies in Tanzania
- (iii) It is much easier to conduct an experimental research than a descriptive research. Discuss.

Term Paper

Using the research format, (if you don't have it obtain it from the instructor) write a complete research proposal on a topic of your choice and submit it to the instructor before you sit the final examination.

Reading List

C. R. Kothari: Research methodology: Methods and techniques, Wiley Eastern Ltd., 1992
 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill, Research Methods for Business Students

Kweku Okoso-Amaa:

- 1 A Format for Writing Your Research Proposal, FBM-OUT, 2004.(in preparation)
1. Developing An Approach to Defining the Research Problem, FBM-OUT, 2004 (in preparation)
2. Specifying the Information Needed, FBM – OUT, 2004 (in preparation)
3. Format for writing your research report, FBM – OUT, 2004 (in preparation)