

## BOOK REVIEW

Welman, J.C. & Kruger, S.J. (1999). **Research Methodology for the Business and Administrative Sciences.** Johannesburg: International Thompson Publishing. (ISBN 1 86864 099 X). 312 pages.

The subject Research Methodology is now compulsory at virtually all South African universities and technicons. Until this year lecturers and students had to make use of mostly American texts as course material. Naturally the examples used to illustrate points in those texts were quite often baffling to local students.

This situation has now largely been rectified by the appearance of Welman & Kruger's contribution. Although stated in the book's title and in the preface that it is primarily aimed at the business and administrative sciences, it is equally useful for all areas of research in the social sciences and humanities. The basic principles treated in the book are as valid also for the natural sciences and technology.

The book is organised in a manner reflecting the procedures commonly followed in most research projects, beginning with a discussion of the nature and aims of research, as well as of the sources of scientific and of non-scientific knowledge (Chapter 1).

Formulation of the specific problem to be investigated and formalising hypotheses from that is covered in Chapter 2, illustrated by way of a number of research problems (research questions) which are relevant to the commercial and administrative sciences. Most of these examples are taken from the South African situation so that students can easily relate to the situations.

An appropriate starting point for any research project is to check what has already been done and what still needs to be done. This is accomplished by the literature review, the topic of Chapter 3. Useful leads are provided on searching for relevant literature and methods of recording and obtaining the material. Compilation of the review is discussed comprehensively, as is the reference system, preference being given to the system required by the South African Journal of Psychology,

reflecting the senior author's background as a psychologist. Mention is however made of the Harvard system, which is probably more commonly used.

Central to successful research is the research design (Chapter 4: population / universum and sampling types; Chapter 5: Quantitative research designs, and Chapter 8: qualitative research). Factors that may influence the sampling method and the validity of conclusions are discussed in Chapter 6. The collection of data and the use of measuring instruments, including techniques for its development are dealt with in Chapter 7, followed by the analysis of the data and the interpretation of the results in Chapter 9.

The research process is not concluded if the results are not made known. This is of course by means of report writing, whether as a thesis/dissertation, an article in a professional journal, or an internal report of an organisation. Chapter 10 deals with this activity by focussing on the constituent sections of a research report, the conventions to follow in writing the report, its editorial revision in terms of grammar and style, and the criteria in terms of which such reports are evaluated.

The book concludes with a final chapter regarding the research proposal: its requirements (originality, topicality, replicability, feasibility), the design of a research project, the sections of the proposal, and concluding with an overview of evaluation criteria for research proposals

The effort by the authors to cross-link various facets throughout have resulted in pages that appear overly busy with shaded notes, framed examples, an overwhelming number of see references, and illustrations to introduce some humour to the text. As a result some pages (e.g. 138-144) have little continuous text, akin to a speaker being interrupted throughout by members of his audience.

The book is none the less a comprehensive treatise on the subject and is recommended to lecturers and students in the fields of business and administration. Most of the content would be equally useful to anybody first starting out on practical research.

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