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DOCTORAL PAPER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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I INTRODUCTION

The research issue is two-dimensional. Firstly, the purpose is to examine the ideas and beliefs of public sector people responsible for purchases about the private sector, its fundamentals and decision-making processes. With the qualitative interviews the researcher will search for prejudiced information, beliefs about the business habits, suspicions and hopes, ideas about price levels, customer loyalty, privatization, management, etc. Secondly, the researcher will study how and what the decision-makers in private sector think about the public sector, its purchases and decision-making. The study will cover the attitudes and backgrounds. The aim is to separate the experiences from prejudice.

Then, the two types of decision-making processes are analyzed and compared with each other and explanations for emerging differences are searched. Thus, the final report comprises of three parts, public sector analysis, private sector analysis, and consistence and problem analysis.

In addition, by examining the decision-making processes and business transactions between the public and private sector the researcher tries to develop a model for open-market decision-making process to be implemented particularly in hospitals and, thereby, increase AP Medical Hearing Ltd's competitiveness in industrial marketing. AP Medical Hearing Ltd is a company, owned by the researcher, operating in hearing aids.

In other words, the purpose is to find out how to influence on and change the hospitals' decision-making processes in order to sell more and gain bigger market share. AP Medical Hearing Ltd must be prepared as the hearing instrument business opens to real competition. However, the change is not expected to happen overnight. One purpose of this project, then, is to increase researcher's personal management and business capabilities.

This paper includes not only the research methodology to be used but actually the whole framework and structure for the dissertation work starting from the research questions to the research design, and time and resource management. The structure and framework here are based mainly on a model presented by Marshall and Rossman (1989). The next chapter frames the conceptual body of the dissertation paper. It will tell what the research is about, who ought to care about it, and what others have described and concluded about the subject. Then, research design is presented including the choice of research methodology. Different data collection techniques are examined and data analysis strategies presented. Finally, an action plan for the dissertation project is given.

II FRAMING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The researcher begins with interesting, curious, or anomalous phenomena, which he observes, discovers, or stumbles across. Not like the detective work of Sherlock Holmes or the best tradition in investigative reporting, research seeks to explain, describe, or explore the phenomenon. The research proposal must demonstrate that (1) the research is worth doing, (2) the researcher is competent to conduct the study, and (3) the study is carefully planned and can be executed successfully.

Research is worth doing if it builds knowledge. One can build knowledge in many ways, from the creation of better measuring or observing devices to the construction of innovative theories. Qualitative research begins with observations in the real world that raise questions such as (1) Why don't the everyday experiences I am hearing about fit with extant theory? (2) Why haven't policy and practice led to the predicted results? (3) How do the existing theories, models, and concepts apply to this new and different population or setting?

Personal, tacit theory and formal theory help to bring the question, the curious phenomenon, or the problematic issue into focus. The potential research moves from a troubling and/or intriguing real-world observation to personal theory, to formal theory, concepts, and models from literature, which frame a focused research question. The researcher may create a model, ascertain relevant concepts, develop a set of guiding hypotheses, and even derive operational definitions from the related literature review. He may also use the review to justify the setting and the sample for the study. The researcher may test hypotheses, develop better descriptions and indicators of concepts, expand generalizations, or challenge extant theory; whatever the focus, the researcher must demonstrate that the research contributes new information. The research proposal is a written demonstration of the means by which the research will add to knowledge.

A research proposal demonstrates a link with the research model in general, but it must also answer the following questions?

- (1) Who might care about this research? To whom will it be significant?
- (2) How will the researcher conduct this research?
- (3) Is the researcher capable of doing this research?

1.0 How to Begin

In qualitative research, the general research question or topic, related literature, significance, and research design are interrelated, each one building on the others. The design must remain flexible, because it will probably change throughout the research process. One for the researcher to begin is by plunging into the field; however, this strategy is effective only when the researcher has a background knowledge of related literature, an awareness of significant problems for research, and an established repertoire of research skills.

Research proposals vary in format but generally include the following sections:

- (1) introduction (and general questions or topic)
- (2) significance of the research
- (3) review of related literature
- (4) statement of problem, research questions, or focus of the study
- (5) research design or research methods

The first four sections form the conceptual framework of the study and tell the reader the study's substance and purpose. These, in turn, are embedded in larger substantive research traditions. Next, the design section describes how the study will be conducted and displays the writer's ability to conduct the study. Because of the interrelatedness of the sections and because writing is a developmental task, the writer may find it necessary to rewrite the research questions after discussing the literature, or to refocus the significance after the research design is developed.

2.0 Introduction and General Research Questions

The section of the proposal devoted to the introduction and general research questions provides an overview of the study and, as such, is often rewritten during proposal development. The introduction presents an outline of the body of the proposal. First, the areas of relevance of the study for practice, policy, and theory are briefly described. Next, the broad areas of theory and research to be discussed in the literature review section are outlined. The design of the study is sketched, and the particular approach, major data collecting techniques, and unique features of the design are noted. Finally, the introduction provides a transition to a more detailed discussion of the general topic or research questions to be explored in the study. In qualitative research, questions and problems for research most often come from real-world observations, dilemmas, and questions. They are not stated as if-then hypotheses derived from theory.

Initial hunches begin the process of bounding and framing the research, of establishing the parameters and developing a perspective through the conceptual framework. Moreover, developing general research questions provides the framework for the next three sections of the proposal: significance, review of the literature and statement of problem.

3.0 Significance of the Study

General research questions or diffuse topics cannot stand on their own. One can only guess about the problem's significance and whether or not it can be researched effectively and competently until thorough discussion of related literature builds an argument demonstrating the significance of the proposed study. This second section of the proposal develops such an argument and begins to describe a logical framework for the research that sets it within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies.

A couple of years ago, Office of Free Competition examined the equipment markets for impaired and disabled people (Eerola, 1991). The purpose of the study was to examine the market circumstances regarding the competition and prices in that market. Eerola's study demonstrated that the suspicions about the high profit margins of the importers and the lack of price competition in the markets were correct. Furthermore, it showed that the prices for the same products in Sweden were considerably lower. The research concluded that the purchases of the public sector were loose and expensive. The study included couple of weaknesses, but its conclusions were similar to Petäjäväära's (1992) results. Petäjäväära examined the strategic aspects of the purchasing process in hearing instrument business and draw the similar conclusions about the poor cost-effectiveness of the public purchases and the lack of competition in the field. The results from the two studies suggest that there exist pricing co-operation, i.e. cartels, among the importers of certain health care instruments.

One purpose of this study is to help create such purchasing methods and models that are based on rational decision-making criterias and are neutral of nature. The aim is to put an end to irrational and costly purchasing methods and/or change the purchasing activities so that they put more emphasis on price and quality of the products. One should not change the purchasing criterias so that it totally neglects the medical aspects and groundings, because, in the end, we are talking about treating patients. When we are, for example, talking about two technically identical apparatus, purchasing decision should base on economical more than medical criterias, not on possible personal benefits of the decision maker. Rationality can save considerable amounts of money to hospitals and, in the end, to taxpayers.

Therefore, it should be clear that the results of this study interest common people as taxpayers, because better choices save their money. Furthermore, as hospitals are nowadays forced to cut expenses by reducing their staff it threatens to worsen the quantity and quality of medical services. Therefore, common people as well as the hospitals' top managements should be interested to know where the major savings can be done without harming the services they provide.

AP Medical Hearing Ltd, as one of the importers of hearing instruments, is anxious to learn about the research results because it can increase its competitiveness due to better understanding of hospitals' purchasing processes.

The previous research has not deeply examined how the prices and market shares have changed during the past 5-10 years. Petäjäväära's (1992) findings suggest that there has not been any considerable changes in market shares. Furthermore, some importer's of hearing instruments have not been able to enter the market properly even with a strong penetration strategy, basing on good price-quality relationship.

The roles of the economic as well as the purchasing departments of the hospitals have not been studied widely enough either. There are five university hospitals and 25 other bigger hospitals in Finland. Both departments should support the decision-making and have an important role in that process. Today, e.g. the purchasing department mainly collects the incoming offers. It does not analyze them nor participate to the decision making of what and from whom to purchase instruments in question.

Someone should also examine the profitability of the hearing instrument business. Is it financially reasonable for the hospitals to maintain services such as fitting of hearing instrument or would it be less expensive to buy those services from a private sector company? There are many people who are interested to know the share of the hearing instrument purchases of the total hospital budget regarding the hearing aid. One should also expand the study to cover other areas than hearing aids in hospital business.

It seems that despite of the Eerola's (1991) study and the publicity around it as it was released, there has not occurred any major changes towards better in hospitals' purchasing criterias. If this study confirms the suspicions that the hospitals' purchasing systems are still ineffective and costly and that hospitals' do not make the importers of hearing instruments compete with each other in a proper way, this study means a lot and should be widely published in order to make the required change happen. The researcher has approached the Government Institute for

Economic Research and Office of Free Competition upon that matter.

4.0 Review of Related Literature

The literature review serves four broad functions. First, it demonstrates the underlying assumptions behind the general research questions. If possible, it should display the research paradigm that undergirds the study and describe the assumptions and values the researcher brings to the research enterprise. Second, it demonstrates that the researcher is thoroughly knowledgeable about related research and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study. Third, it shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need. Finally, review refines and redefines the research questions and related tentative hypotheses by embedding those questions in larger empirical traditions.

As the researcher conceptualizes the research problem, he locates it in a body of theory. Initially, this may be an intuitive locating, chosen because of the underlying assumptions, how the researcher sees the world, and how he sees the research question fitting in. However, as the researcher explores theoretical literature, he must identify and state those assumptions in a framework of theory. This framework could be child development theory, organizational theory, learning theory, adult socialization theory, or whatever body of theory is appropriate. This section of the literature review provides the framework of the research and identifies the area of knowledge that the study is intended to expand.

The next portion of the review of the literature should, quite literally, review and critique previous research that relates to the general question selected. This critical review should lead to a more precise problem statement or refined questions because it demonstrates the specific area that a different design would be more appropriate. If a major aspect of the significance of the study arises from a reconceptualization of a topic of inquiry, this is where that should be developed fully.

It should be becoming apparent that the several sections of the research proposal must be conceptually related. The researcher cannot write the significance section without a sense of the substance of the literature review section. Similarly, she cannot describe the design without the general problem statement. The dissertation proposal is divided into sections because of tradition and convention; there is no magic to these divisions.

The literature review serves many purposes for the research. It validates the importance of the study's focus and may serve to validate the eventual findings in a narrowly descriptive study. It also helps develop explanations during data collection and data analysis in studies that seek to explain, evaluate, and suggest causal linkages among events. In grounded theory development, the literature review provides theoretical constructs, categories, and their properties that are used to organize the data and discover new connections between theory and real-world phenomena.

5.0 Statement of Problem

A problem statement includes a brief restatement of the general focus of the research (from the introduction), a more precise statement of the problem, questions, or areas for exploration (derived from the literature review), and a number of guiding hypotheses. The purpose of this approach is to satisfy readers who expect tight problem statements because it demonstrates the researcher has grounding in the area of study and that the research choices flow from a well-developed rationale grounded in theory and empirical research. The researcher may also wish to retain the flexibility needed to allow the precise focus of the research to evolve during the process itself. By avoiding a precise problem statement, the researcher retains his right to explore and generate hypotheses in the area of the problem statement. The guiding hypotheses illustrate for the reader some possible directions the researcher may follow. The researcher, however, is still free to discover and pursue other patterns.

III DESIGNING THE RESEARCH - GENERATION AND EVALUATION OF OPTIONS

The four sections discussed thus far - introduction and general research questions or topic, significance, literature review, and statement of problem - stand together as the conceptual body of the proposal. Here the major (and minor) ideas for the proposal are developed, their intellectual roots are displayed and critiqued, and the writings and studies of other researchers are presented and critiqued. All of this endeavor is intended to tell the reader what the research is about (its subject), who ought to care about it (its significance), and what others have described and concluded about the subject (its intellectual roots). All three purposes are interwoven into the first four sections of the proposal. The final major section - research methods or research design - must flow conceptually and logically from all that has gone before. Here the researcher makes a case, based on the conceptual portion of the proposal, for the particular methods, sample, data analysis techniques, and reporting format chosen by the study. Thus the research methods sections must build a rationale for the selection of the specific approach.

1.0 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

The researcher should not decide to do a qualitative study and then search for the problem. Some people do this based on the mistaken notion that qualitative studies are easier than experimental studies. Researcher should design the study according to the research questions they seek to answer. Survey and experimental research is more appropriate for unambiguous concepts and finely tuned indicators with high levels of reliability. When the relevant variables are known, the researcher can proceed into the research by manipulating those variables or testing their interaction in a different setting.

However, the researcher may find through the literature review that previous research has raised many questions, that there is no need to explore interactions among unambiguous or unclear variables, that there is no reason to suspect that the context contains important domains that must be explored. By the same token, he may find that a descriptive study will yield the most important results for theory development. If any of these conditions obtains, then a qualitative study is most appropriate.

Technically a qualitative observation identifies the presence or absence of something, in contrast to quantitative observation which involves the degree to which something is present (Kirk and Miller, 1986). However, the popular perception of qualitative research is contained in the definition offered by Gordon and Langmaid (1988), that it is centrally concerned with understanding of things rather than measuring them.

The prime difference is one of methodology. In quantitative research, data are obtained from a large number of respondents, using rating scales or similar techniques, usually in numerical form, which are then subjected to formal statistical analysis. In contrast qualitative research uses what may be loosely described as 'open ended' techniques - in particular group and individual depth interviewing, and occasionally projective tests of various types. An analysis of the rather unstructured content is then carried out in order to discover any important themes within the various areas of interest, and more controversially, an interpretation may be made by the researcher. The interpretation depends on skill, and to an extent whatever expertise and experience the researcher brings to bear, and so it may be idiosyncratic.

Stereotypes have arisen of quantitative being scientific, experimentally based, reliable, valid, trustworthy, expensive, but not actually providing much in the way of understanding and guidance, and of qualitative being the opposite. As with most stereotypes contradictory information is ignored; quantitative research sometimes uses open ended questions and some probing, and an analysis of the content, and of course qualitative researchers do count to the forming an impression (Griggs, 1987), but, as with most stereotypes, there is some basis in reality.

However, Kirk and Miller (1986) argue that qualitative research is an empirical, socially located phenomenon, defined by its own history, not simply a residual grab-bag comprising all things that are not quantitative. In addition to that, it is socially concerned, cosmopolitan, and, above all, objective.

Qualitative research approaches its subject tangentially, and by allowing respondents to talk freely, and to choose descriptive categories significant to them (rather like an informal repertory grid test at one level and psychoanalysis at another), it produces rich data, which should then be subjected to rigorous analysis. However, the apparent absence of normal structure, and numbers, does not make qualitative research unscientific, and nor for that matter does the presence of formal structure and numbers make quantitative research scientific, one of the issues addressed by Calder (1977).

1.1 The Researcher's Choice

The researcher decided to use qualitative methods to approach the research questions because of its strengths and benefits in studying decision-making processes. A decision-making process involves humans as decision makers. As human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs, one must study that behavior in situations. The physical setting - e.g. schedules, space, pay, rewards - and the internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles, and values are crucial contextual variables. Therefore, research must be conducted in the setting where all the contextual variables are operating. In experimental research, the lab, the questionnaire, and so on, have become artifacts. Subjects are either suspicious and wary, or they are aware of what the researcher wants and try to please him. Additionally, subjects sometimes do not know their feelings, interactions, and behaviors, so they can not articulate them to respond a questionnaire. One cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within the subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand that framework. In fact, the "objective" scientist, by coding and standardizing, may destroy valuable data while imposing his world on the subject.

This research requires a qualitative approach because it delves in depth into complexities and processes of decision-making. It seeks to explore why policy, and practice does not necessarily work as one might expect. The research looks for informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organizations. To fully understand the decision-making processes one can only lean on qualitative methods.

Once the selection of qualitative approach has been made (or confirmed through literature review), some alterations in the proposal may become necessary because of the nature and assumptions of the approach. There are three facets of qualitative studies that suggest some alterations: (1) Qualitative problem statements are often very general, (2) qualitative research design must be flexible, and (3) qualitative studies usually have several bodies of related literature.

In addition, the research design section should include details concerning how the researcher will deal with the following issues:

- site and sample section
- researcher's role management, including entry, reciprocity, and ethics
- research strategies
- data collection techniques
- managing and recording data
- data analysis strategies
- management plan, and time line

Site and sample, researcher's role management, management plan, time line and data management will be dealt later in action plan presented in chapter V. Next, available research strategies are presented.

2.0 Research Strategies

The range of possible qualitative strategies is small; choice depends on the focus for the research and on the desired time frame for the study. Examples of the strategies include life histories, case studies, and field studies. Ethnographies are special cases of field studies, deriving from a particular social science discipline and relying on a specific set of constructs.

If the researcher is focused on the development and evaluation of a college's distinctive ethos, then the selection of historical methods is a sound choice. If the research focus is on complex interactions between a mentally retarded adult and her social world, then, a life history would be the most appropriate research strategy. The choice is shaped by the general research questions and the theoretical framework provided by the literature review.

The selection of a research strategy does not necessarily dictate the exclusive use of qualitative data collection techniques. The strategy is a road map, an overall plan for engaging the phenomenon of interest in systematic inquiry. A history, for example, can rely on an array of techniques ranging from in-depth interviewing to retrieval of census data. A case study can similarly use several techniques to elicit the desired information. Some techniques are usually associated with specific strategies, but rather than dictating whether qualitative or quantitative data will be gathered, the overall approach frames the study by placing boundaries around it, identifying the level of analytic interest (person, group, program, organization, interorganization), and specifying whether interest is in the past or in the present. Thus the research strategy reflects a series of major decisions made by the researcher in an attempt to ascertain the best approach to the research questions posed in the conceptual portion of the proposal.

In determining the soundest research strategy Yin (1984) proposes three questions:

- (1) What is the form of the research question - is it exploratory, does it seek to describe the incidence or distribution of some phenomenon or does it try to explain some social phenomenon?
- (2) Does the research require control over behavior, or does it seek to describe naturally occurring events?
- (3) Is the phenomenon under study contemporary or historical?

Answers to these questions suggest the choice of one research strategy over another. Yin (1984) identifies five distinct strategies: experiments, surveys, archival analyses, histories, and case studies. To these Marshall and Rossman (1989) add more explicitly qualitative strategies, such as field studies and ethnographies.

This study is explanatory by nature. It tries to explain the forces and important variables causing the phenomenon in question. It studies and examines events, beliefs, attitudes, and policies that shape the decision-making processes. In other words, this study tries to identify plausible causal networks shaping the phenomenon. The study is also descriptive, it describes the decision-making processes in business fields. It examines the salient behaviors, events, beliefs, attitudes, structures and processes occurring in decision-making. Therefore field study seems the most appropriate research strategy to conduct the study providing the answers the researcher is searching for.

The next section introduces a range of data collection techniques. Each technique is described briefly with its strengths and weaknesses as it is used in qualitative research.

3.0 Data Collection Methods

3.1 Primary Data Collection Techniques

The fundamental techniques relied on by qualitative researchers for gathering information are (1) observation and (2) in-depth interviewing. These two techniques form the core, the staples of the diet. Supplementing these are several specific techniques.

3.1.1 Observation

Observation entails the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study. Classroom observational studies are one example often found in education. Through observation, the researcher learns about behaviors and the meanings attached to those behaviors. An assumption is made that behavior is purposive and expressive of deeper values and beliefs. Observation can range from highly structured, detailed notation of behavior to more diffuse, ambiguous description of events and behavior.

Participant observation is a special form of observation and demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study. Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do. Ideally, the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life. This technique for gathering data is basic to qualitative research studies.

Patton (1980) develops a series of continua for thinking about one's role during the conduct of qualitative research. First, the researcher's role can vary in terms of "participantness" - that is, the degree of actual participation in daily life. At one extreme is the full participant, who goes about ordinary life in a role or set of roles ascribed by the setting. At the other is the complete observer, who engages not at all in social interaction and shuns involvement in even the material world being studied.

Next, the researcher's role can vary as to its "revealedness" or the extent to which the fact that there is a study going on is known to the participants. Full disclosure lies at one end of this continuum; complete secrecy lies at the other.

Third, the researcher's role can vary in intensiveness and extensiveness of the study, that is, the amount of time spent in the setting on a daily basis and the duration of the study over time. Various positions on both dimensions demand certain role considerations on the part of the researcher.

Finally, the researcher's role varies depending on focus of the study: specific or diffuse. When the research questions are well developed beforehand and the data appropriate to address those questions have been identified, the researcher's role will be managed efficiently and carefully to ensure good use of available time. However, even when well specific, sound qualitative design protects the researcher's right to follow the compelling question, the nagging puzzle, that presents itself once in the setting. When the research questions are more diffuse and exploratory, management of the researcher's role should ensure access to a number of events, people, and perspectives on the social phenomenon chosen for study.

3.1.2 In-Depth Interviewing

In-depth interviewing is a data collection technique relied on quite extensively by qualitative researchers, and in this case by the researcher himself. It is often described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn and Cannell, 1957). Once again, this technique can vary depending on the degree the interview is structured beforehand and on the amount of latitude the interviewee is granted in responding to the questions.

Typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal, structured interviews. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses. This, in fact, is an assumption fundamental to qualitative research - the participant's perspective on the social

phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it.

An interview is a method of data collection that may be described as an interaction involving the interviewer and the interviewee, the purpose of which is to obtain valid and reliable information. Interviews may range from casual conversation or brief questioning to more formal, lengthy interactions. Formal interviews are sometimes necessary in research in order to standardize interview topics and general questions. The most important aspect of the interviewer's approach concerns conveying the idea that the participant's information is acceptable and valuable.

The researcher chose here to use in-depth interviewing as a primary data collection method because of its appropriateness and its particular strengths. An interview is a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly. When more than one person is used as an informant, the interview process allows for a wide variety of information and a large number of subjects. It also allows for immediate follow-up questions and, if necessary, for clarification, follow-up interviews may be scheduled at a later date. Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to check description against fact.

However, the interview technique has limitations and weaknesses. Interviews must involve personal interaction; cooperation is essential. Interviewees may not be willing to share all the information that is needed with the interviewer. The interviewer may not ask appropriate questions because of lack of expertise or familiarity with technical jargon; conversely, the answers to the questions may not be properly comprehended by the interviewer - or, worse, interviewees may not always be truthful. In addition, they must cope with concerns about data quality. When interviews are used alone, distortions in data are more likely, as interviewers may interject personal biases. Finally, volumes of data may be obtained through interviewing, but such data may be difficult to manipulate.

The researcher does not see the above weaknesses insurmountable. A full cooperation from the subjects can be expected. Purposeful questioning will be carried out to obtain required truthful answers. Technical jargon is not an obstacle because the interviewer is professionally involved in and familiar with the line of businesses in question. Interviewer has furthermore good listening skills, and he is skillful at personal interaction and question framing.

3.2 Supplemental Data Collection Techniques

In addition to the basic data gathering techniques outlined above, several supplemental techniques are relied upon as needed.

3.2.1 Kinesics

Learning about society can be enhanced if we study not only what people say with their lips, but what their body movements reveal as well. The study of body motion and its accompanying messages is a technique known as kinesics. Specifically, kinesics is the study of the structure of body motion communication. The motion is analyzed systematically in a way that allows the researcher to see and measure significant patterns in the communication process.

Birdwhistell (1970) asserts that nonverbal body behaviors function like significant sounds that combine into single or relatively complex units, like words. Body movements ranging from a single nod to a series of hand and leg gestures can attach additional meaning to spoken words.

All kinesics research rest upon the assumption that, without being aware of it, humans are engaged constantly in adjustments to the presence and activities of other persons. People modify and react verbally and nonverbally; their nonverbal behavior is influenced by culture, gender, age, and other factors associated with psychological and social development.

In the interpretation of body language lies one of the weaknesses of kinesics. Novice "body readers" who have a "pop psych" understanding of the science of kinesics may make incorrect, perhaps damaging, interpretations of behavior. Related closely to this possibility of misinterpretation is the fact that the body language concept can be trivialized. For example, many studies focus on frequency counts of isolated units of behavior that alone convey little meaning. Knowing that a person blinked 100 times during a fifteen-minute interview is not significant unless the context of the situation is also apparent.

The strengths of kinesic analysis are that it provides a view into unconscious thoughts and it provides a means for triangulation of verbal data. The researcher will take the advantage of kinesics because he can be more confident about the accuracy of information provided by a subject if the speaker's body language is congruent with his words. Also, the researcher can monitor his own nonverbal behavior in order to clarify messages sent to the subject and to stay in touch with his own feelings during data collection. Finally, measuring instruments are available for the researcher to use.

Kinesic analysis is limited because body language is not universal, and researchers must be aware of cultural differences. There are some gestures that signal different meanings in different cultures; for example, in some countries, an up-and-down head nod signifies no and side to side movement of the head means yes. Body movements must be interpreted in context, and fine-tuned kinesic interpretations can be made only by experts. Body language such as movements of tiny jaw or neck muscles or amount of pupil dilation cannot be comprehended fully by a novice. The limitations and weaknesses of kinesics will not damage the data collection, because the purpose of using kinesics is to obtain additional informative data to support the interviewing.

For more on the subject of kinesics in qualitative research, see Birdwhistel (1970), Bull (1983), Ekman and Friesen (1978), Galloway (1968), Harper, Metarazzo, and Wiens (1978), Key (1975), Knapp (1980), Leathers (1976), Mehrabian (1981), Myers and Myers (1976), and Rutter (1984).

3.2.2 Elite Interviewing

The researcher will mainly interview elites. An elite interview is a specialized treatment of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of respondent. Elites are considered to be the influential, the prominent, and the well-informed people in an organization or community. Elites are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research.

Elite interviewing has many advantages. Valuable information can be gained from these respondents because of the positions they hold in social, political, financial, or administrative realms. Elites can usually provide an overall view of an organization or its relationship to other organizations. They are more likely than other informants to be familiar with the legal and financial structure of their organization. Elites are also able to report on their organizations' policies, past histories, and future plans.

Elite interviewing also presents many disadvantages. The problem of accessibility to elites is often great because they are usually busy people operating under demanding time constraints; they are also often difficult to reach. The interviewer must rely on sponsorship, recommendations, and introductions for assistance in making appointments with elites. In this case, however, accessibility will not become a problem because so many people is interested about the study in question.

Another disadvantage in the process of interviewing elites is that the interviewer must modify the conventional role of confining himself to asking questions and recording answers. Elites, in general, resent the restrictions placed on them by narrow, stereotypical questions. They desire a more active interplay with the interviewer. In the course of the elite interview, considerable variation will occur in the degree of control, with the respondent occasionally assuming the questioner's role. Elite respond well to inquiries related to broad areas of content and to a high proportion of intelligent, provocative, open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination.

In working with elites, great demands are placed on the ability of the interviewer, who must establish competence by displaying a thorough knowledge of the topic or, lacking such knowledge, by projecting an accurate conceptualization of the problem through shrewd questioning. However, the interviewer's hard work usually pays off in the quality of information obtained. Elites often contribute insight and meaning to the interview process because they are intelligent and quick-thinking people, at home in the realm of ideas, policies, and generalizations.

For more on the subject of interviewing elites, see Dexter (1959,1964), Glick (1970), Gordon (1981), Hunt, Crane, and Wahlke (1964), Hunter (1953), Kincaid and Bright (1957), Smigel (1958), and Webb and Salancik (1966).

There are several other supplemental data collection techniques that the researcher will not use in obtaining data for various reasons. Some techniques will not provide the searched information and others had to be rejected due to their strong weaknesses outlined below. There are also techniques that are very costly to carry out. The excluded techniques are presented next. These methods comprise questionnaires and surveys; films, photographs, and videotapes; projective techniques and psychological testing; proxemics; historical analysis; life history; content analysis; and unobtrusive measures.

3.2.3 Questionnaires and Surveys

Researchers administer questionnaires to some sample of a population to learn about the distribution of a characteristic or set of characteristics or a set of attitudes or beliefs. In deciding to survey a group of people chosen for study, researchers make one critical assumption that characteristic or belief can be described or measured accurately through self-report. In using questionnaires, researchers rely totally on the honesty and accuracy of participants' responses. While this limits the usefulness of questionnaires in delving into tacit beliefs and deeply held values, there are still many occasions when surveying the group under study can be useful.

There are some definite advantages of surveys when the goals of research require obtaining quantitative data on a certain problem or population. They facilitate research in politically or ethically sensitive areas. Surveys are used in programs for public welfare or economic development. Large surveys often focus on sensitive or controversial topics within the public domain.

Strengths of surveys include accuracy, generalizability, and convenience. Accuracy in measurement is enhanced by quantifications, replicability, and control over observer effects. Surveys are amenable to rapid statistical analysis and are comparatively easy to administer and manage.

Surveys were excluded from the chosen collection techniques because of its weaknesses in examining complex social relationship in decision-making processes or intricate patterns of interaction. The strength of surveys can also be weaknesses. While controlling accuracy, a survey cannot assure without further evidence that the sample represents a broader universe. Thus the method of drawing the sample and the sample size is critical to the accuracy of the study and its potential for generalizability. Also, while surveys are convenient, they are generally a relatively expensive method of data collection. Finally, surveys may result in an invasion of privacy or produce questionable effects in the respondent or the community. Some research projects may enhance the position or resources of a particular group, and conflicts frequently arise between sponsors and research teams concerning how problems are defined. For further reading on the use of survey methods, see Alwin (1978), Benson and Benson (1975), Belson (1982), Jick (1979), Kish (1967), Parten (1950), and Sudman and Bradburn (1982).

3.2.4 Films, Photographs, and Videotapes

Films and photographs have a long history in anthropology. Called visual anthropology or film ethnography, this tradition relies on films and photographs to capture the daily life of the group under study. Films provide visual records of passing neutral events and are useful as permanent scientific resources. The concept and method of the research film has emerged and are compatible with a variety of research methods. Methods associated with the research film specify a

format for turning exposed footage into research documents after filming in order to maximize its scientific potential.

Research filming is a powerful tool for inquiry into past events. Film has the unique ability to capture visible phenomena objectively. However, research film methodology requires the documentation of the time, place, and subject of the filming, as well as the photographer's intent and interest. Also, a great wealth of visual information emanates from all natural events - to attempt a "complete" record of even a small event would be a fruitless pursuit.

Film is particularly valuable for discovery and validation. It documents nonverbal behavior and communication, such as facial expressions and emotions. Film preserves activity and change in original form. It can be used in the future to take advantage of new methods of seeing, analyzing and understanding the process of change. Film is an aid to the researcher when the nature of what is sought is known but the elements of it cannot be discovered because of the limitations of the human eye. Film allows for the preservation and study of data from nonrecurring, disappearing, or rare events. With films, interpretation of information can be validated by another researcher. Feedback can be obtained on authenticity of interpretation and it can be retaken to correct errors.

Film has certain weaknesses and limitations. There are always fundamental questions, such as, What is the nature of truth? Does the film manipulate reality? Concern exists about professional bias and the interests of the filmmaker. On the practical side, film is expensive, and most research budgets are minimal. Production can be problematic. The researcher needs technical expertise. And filming can be very intrusive, affecting settings and events. Film cannot be published as a part of a book, journal, or dissertation. And finally, serious consideration must be given to the ethics of ethnographic filming.

For further reading on the use of films and photography in qualitative research, see Asc (1979), Gardner (1974), Hockings (1975), Sorenson (1968,1974,1976), and Wiseman (1969).

3.2.5 Projective Techniques and Psychological Testing

Some types of interpretive psychological strategies were developed many years ago by clinical psychologists to obtain personality data. These strategies have been used fairly extensively in comparative studies about culture and for analysis of personality dynamics. Based on an internal perceptual frame of reference, the techniques assume that one can get a valid picture of a person by assessing the way the individual projects his personality onto some standard, ambiguous stimuli. Standardization and ambiguity are common elements in tests of this nature, although "clinical" judgements are the primary interpretation bases of responses to these stimuli. Results are typically expressed in the form of a verbal report assessing the subject's dominant needs and ambitions, tolerance of frustrations, attitudes toward authority, major internal conflicts and so on. The reputation and qualifications of the tester sometimes play a role in how the report is received and how much credibility is attached to the interpretation.

3.2.6 Proxemics

Proxemics is the study of people's use of space and its relationship to culture. The term was coined by Edward T. Hall, although he did not perform the original work in this area. Many studies have been conducted on the activities that take place in bars, airports, subways, and other public places where individuals have to deal with one another in limited space; using proxemics, the researcher focuses on space, ranging from interpersonal distance to the arrangement of furniture and architecture. Anthropologists have used proxemics to determine the territorial customs of particular cultures. Proxemics have been useful in the study of the behavior of students in the classroom and of marital partners undergoing counseling.

There are several advantages to the use of proxemics. It is unobtrusive, and usually it is difficult for a subject to mislead the observer deliberately. Since proxemics is concerned with nonverbal behavior, subjects would have to be skillful in order to "lie" about their feelings. Proxemics is useful for studying the way individuals react to others regarding space and the invasion of their territory. Likewise, proxemics can be used in cross-cultural studies, since people's use of personal space varies

greatly from one culture to the next. Finally, proxemics analysis is useful for studies in such areas as the effect of seating arrangements on student behavior or the effect of crowding on workplace productivity.

The greatest disadvantage of proxemics as a data collection tool is that the researcher must be skilled in the interpretation of the observed behaviors in order to gain accurate information. If the researcher is observing a conference or a business meeting, the manner in which the subjects take their seats can be of vital importance, but the data must be interpreted carefully. Exclusive reliance on proxemics could be misleading, as it might suggest relationship that do not exist. Because of the relative youth of proxemics as a data collection technique, there are few space measurement instruments available in the field of research, further limiting its diverse use.

3.2.7 Historical Analysis

A history is an account of some past event or combination of events. Historical analysis is, therefore, a method of discovering, from records and accounts, what happened in the past. Historical analysis is particularly useful in qualitative studies for establishing a baseline or background prior to participant observation or interviewing.

Sources of historical data are classified as either primary or secondary. Primary sources include the oral testimony of eyewitnesses, documents, records, and relics. Secondary sources include the reports of persons who relate the accounts of actual eyewitnesses and summaries, as in history books and encyclopedias.

Historical analysis is particularly useful in obtaining knowledge of previously unexamined areas and in re-examining questions for which answers are not as definite as desired. It allows for objective and direct classification of data. Historical research traditions demand procedures to verify accuracy of statements about the past, to establish relationships, and to determine the direction of cause-effect relationships. In fact, all research studies have a historical base or context, so systematic historical analysis enhances trustworthiness and credibility of a study.

In historical analysis care must be taken to avoid the imposition of modern thought patterns on an earlier era. This strategy is limited because the researcher evaluates the statements of others. It cannot use a direct observation approach and there is no way to test a historical hypotheses. There are also weaknesses in classification of historical data. Documents may be falsified deliberately and are subject to incorrect interpretations on the part of the recorder. Words and phrases used in old records may now have different meanings. The meanings of relics are perceived and interpreted by the investigator. Errors in recordings as well as frauds, hoaxes, and forgeries pose problems in dealing with the past. Thus the researcher can never have complete confidence in the data. The researcher must decide what is or is not fact.

For further reading on the use of historical analysis, see Barzun and Graff (1970), Brooks (1969), Fischer (1970), Gottschalk (1969), and Schatzman and Strauss (1973).

3.2.8 Life History

The life history approach is used accross the social science disciplines. It is particularly useful for given the reader an insider's view of a culture (Edgerton and Langness, 1974). Dollard (1935) proposes a definition of the life history as a deliberate attempt to define the growth of a person in a cultural milieu and to make theoretical sense of it. The systematic student of culture views the life history as an account of how a new person enters a group and becomes an adult capable of meeting the traditional expectations of that society for a person of that individual's sex and age. Life history studies emphasize the experiences and requirements of the individual - how the person copes with society, rather than how society copes with the stream of individuals (Mandelbaum, 1973).

Life histories are helpful in defining problems and in studying aspects of certain professions. Their value goes beyond the usefulness of providing specific information about events and customs of the past by showing how the individual interacts with the culture. Life histories are valuable in studying cultural changes that have occurred over time, in learning about cultural deviance, and in gaining an

inside view of a culture. They also help capture the evolution of cultural patterns and how the patterns are linked to the life of an individual - their significance and the individual's reactions. Often this point of view is missing from standard ethnographies (Edgerton and Langness, 1974).

One strength of life history methodology is that since it pictures the total course of a person's life, the reader enters vicariously into the same experiences. Second, the technique provides a fertile source of hypotheses that may be tested by further study. Third, it indicates behavior processes and personality types that may be analyzed when a sufficient number of detailed life histories are accumulated for comparative study. Life history methodology emphasizes the value of a person's own story and provides pieces for a "mosaic" or total picture of a concept. Interconnections of apparently unconnected phenomena can be seen.

The major limitation of the life history is its perceived lack of generality. A major content difficulty is the lack of accepted principles of selection and of suitable analytical concepts to establish a coherent frame of reference. Since life histories are often autobiographical as well as biographical, the issues of truth and bias pose some limitations. Is the writer of the document telling the truth? Is the writer influenced consciously or unconsciously by her conception of her audience? Does any person know the causes of her own behavior sufficiently well for her statements to be given full credence?

Life histories have strong appeal to readers because of the subject matter and the narrative form in which they are written. A life history account adds much flavor to any qualitative study. For more on this subject, and some classic life history accounts, see Chessman (1954), Dollard (1935), Edgerton and Langness (1974), Keiser (1969), Mandelbaum (1973), Shaw (1930), Sutherland and Conwell (1973), and Thomas and Znaniecki (1984).

3.2.9 Content Analysis

Content analysis may be seen more as an analysis strategy than as a data collection strategy. With content analysis, the researcher uses data on communication to identify patterns.

Making inferences about literary, historical, or social events requires competence in analyzing all forms of communications. Content analysis is a technique that allows examination of data to determine whether or not the data supports an hypothesis. It allows the researcher to obtain an objective, and quantitative description of the content of communications (Berelson, 1952).

Content analysis is as much an art as a science. It is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. It is a way of asking a fixed set of questions about data in such a way as to produce countable results.

Probably the greatest strengths of the content analysis method are that it is unobtrusive and nonreactive. It can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. The researcher determines where the greatest emphasis lies after the data has been gathered, he does not set out to prove or disprove a hypothesis by gathering facts to support his position. Also, the method of procedure is explicit to the reader. Therefore, facts can be checked, as can the care with which the analysis has been applied.

For more about the use of content analysis in quantitative research, see Berelson (1952), Carney (1972), Cohen and Fredler (1974), Funkhouser (1973), Gottschalk (1979), Greenberg (1980), Hall and Van De Castle (1966), Holsti (1969), Levin and Spates (1970), Luckenbill (1981), and Poole (1959).

3.2.10 Unobtrusive Measures

Unobtrusive measures are methods for collection of data that do not require the cooperation of the subjects and are “invisible” to them. Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Schrest (1966) describe these measures as nonreactive research because investigator is expected to observe but not react to the behavior or the presence of something in order to avoid unnatural reactions from others.

Unobtrusive measures are particularly useful for triangulation. As a supplement to interviews, nonreactive research can check truthfulness and accuracy. These methods can be used without arousing notice from subjects, and data collection is relatively easy, because it often involves using data (e.g., bills, archival records, sales records) already collected by someone else.

However, when used in isolation, unobtrusive measures may distort the picture. Erosion and survival may be affected by activities unknown to the researcher. Some researchers consider the use of unobtrusive measures to be unethical; they feel that subjects should be informed of the nature of the research.

Where the researcher needs information on measures of frequency or attendance, where direct observation would be impossible or would bias the data, this strategy is useful. Unobtrusive data collection is often aided by hardware such as audiotapes, hidden cameras, one-way mirrors, gauges, and infrared photos. Determined researchers might even search through garbage for insights into behavior.

For additional information about the use of unobtrusive measures, see Allport (1942), Christensen (1969), Coleman and Menzel (1957).

3.3 Choosing Data Collection Techniques

Most qualitative studies combine several data collection techniques over the course of the research. The researcher can assess the strengths and limitations of each technique, then decide if the technique will work with the particular questions and in the particular settings for a given study.

From the variety of data collection strategies, the researcher chose a combination of in-depth interviewing, kinesics and elite interviewing, kinesics and elite interviewing supporting the primary data collection technique, in-depth interviewing. By choosing more than just one technique the weaknesses in one strategy can be compensated for by the strengths of a complementary ones. In making the choice between the techniques available, the researcher considered whether the technique provides adequate information, is cost-effective, and is feasible in terms of entry and role issues. The relative emphasis on interviewing suggests certain techniques over others.

As for the selected main data collection technique, there two basic types of in-depth interviews (Sampson, 1972). They are nondirective and semistructured, and their differences lie in the amount of guidance provided by the interviewer. The researcher will implement semistructured interviews. Here the interviewer attempts to cover a specific list of topics or subareas, whereas in nondirective interviews, the respondent is given maximum freedom to respond, within the bounds of topics of interest to the interviewer. Semistructured interviewing is especially effective with busy executives and thought leaders. The timing, exact wording, and time allocated to each question area are left to the discretion of the interviewer.

4.0 Data Analysis Strategies

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of

data; it builds grounded theory. This section of research proposal describes the selected data analysis strategy, i.e. analytic procedure.

4.1 Analytic Procedures

Analytic procedures fall into five modes: organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and writing the report. Each phase of data analysis entails data reduction as the reams of collected data are brought into manageable chunks and interpretation as the researcher brings meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants in the study.

4.1.1 Organizing the Data

Reading, reading and once more reading through the data forces the researcher to become familiar with those data in intimate ways. During the reading process, the researcher lists on note cards the data available, perform the minor editing necessary to make field notes retrievable, and generally clean up what seems overwhelming and unmanageable. At this time, the researcher can also enter the data into one of several software programs for the management and/or analysis of qualitative data.

4.1.2 Generating Categories, Themes, and Patterns

This phase of data analysis is the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative, and fun. The analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life. Identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one can integrate the entire endeavor. Through questioning the data and reflecting on the conceptual framework, the researcher engages the ideas and the data in significant intellectual work.

The process of category generation involves noting regularities in the setting or people chosen for study. As categories of meaning emerge, the researcher searches for those that have internal convergence and external divergence (Guba, 1978). That is, the categories are to be internally consistent but distinct from one another. Here the researcher does not search for the exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of the statistician, but instead to identify the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting.

Here, another major approach, logical analysis, represents an option for the researcher. In logical analysis classification schemes are crossed with one another to generate new insights or typologies for further exploration of the data. Usually presented in matrix format, these cross-classifications generate logical discrepancies in the already-analyzed data, suggesting areas where data might be logically uncovered.

4.1.3 Testing Emerging Hypotheses

As categories and patterns between them become apparent in the data, the researcher begin the process of evaluating the plausibility of these developing hypotheses and testing them against the data. This entails a search through the data, challenging the hypotheses, searching for negative instances of the patterns, and incorporating these into larger constructs, if necessary.

Part of this phase is to evaluate the data for their informational adequacy, credibility, usefulness, and centrality. While rigorous procedures can be set up to determine if, in fact, an informant is consistently truthful, a more reasonable stance is to approach the data with some skepticism and willingness to consider that the participants in the study have ensured a particular presentation of themselves (Goffman, 1959) to the researcher. Secondly, the researcher determines whether or not the data are useful in illuminating the questions being explored and whether or not they are central to the story that is unfolding about the social phenomenon.

4.1.4 Searching for Alternative Explanations

As categories and patterns between them emerge in the data, the researcher engages in the critical act of challenging the very pattern that seems so apparent. The researcher searches for other, plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them. Alternative explanations always exist; the researcher must search for, identify, and describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all.

4.1.5 Writing the Report

Writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process. In fact, it is central to that process, for in the choice of particular words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data, the researcher is engaging in the interpretative act, lending shape and form - meaning - to massive amounts of raw data. Here, the report forms the essence of the doctoral dissertation. The researcher looks for an opportunity to write a separate article about the research results and present them in an appropriate Finnish publication.

Several models for report writing exist. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest five different approaches. First is the purely descriptive life history. Second is the presentation of data gathered through in-depth interviews and participants observation, where the participants' perspectives are presented, their worldviews forming the structural framework for the report. The third approach attempts to relate practice (the reality of social phenomena) to theory. Here descriptive data is summarized, then linked to more general theoretical constructs. Taylor and Bodgan's fourth approach is the most theoretical. To illustrate it, they provide an example using a study of mental retardation institutions; the report addresses sociological theory about institutionalization and the symbolic management of conditions in total institutions.

Their final approach is an attempt to build theory by drawing on data gathered from several types of institutions and under various research conditions. The report they use as an example addresses issues of the presentation of self under various difficult circumstances and attempts to draw theoretical conclusions across types of institutions, types of persons, and types of circumstances.

IV ACTION PLAN

The process of planning and projecting the resource needs for a study is an integral aspect of proposal development. The resources most critical to the successful completion of the study are time, personnel, and financial support. While the last of these is not always readily available, serious consideration must be given to time and personnel.

1.0 Managing Resources

1.1 Literature Review

Literature review will be planned and done in December, 1993. The purpose of this review is to refine the conceptual framework and enhance the researcher's knowledge of decision-making theory, especially in industrial marketing. In the literature review process some of the work will be planned to prepare for fieldwork. This portion of the review would be guided by the study's conceptual framework and study questions, which are being formulated at this very moment. Its purpose is to elaborate and refine the concepts in the study questions and clarify the known relationships among concepts.

1.2 Site selection

In the process of identifying sites, the researcher considered it necessary to address two issues: the number of sites to be included, and the guidelines for the site selection.

1.2.1 Number of Sites

The number of sites has to take into account contradictory concerns. On the one hand, there are pressures to choose enough sites to ensure some generalizability of findings. However, practical matters of cost and time act as a counterbalance to a large number of sites. Too many sites might force the researcher to quantify his

findings and rely on statistical techniques, thereby losing the power of qualitative research method. Large number of sites would also mean that data collection and checking would be less thorough at each site. The researcher considered it necessary to include three different business branches and about twenty companies/hospitals per branch.

1.2.2 Branch and Company Selection

The criteria for site selection are that (1) entry is possible; (2) there is a high probability that a rich mix of many of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and/or structures that are a part of the research question will be present; (3) the researcher can devise an appropriate role to maintain continuity of presence for as long as necessary; and (4) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured by avoiding poor sampling decisions.

The researcher is interested in identifying branches where there are the greatest potential for observing behavior and behavioral differences. The selected branches must enable the examination of both private and public companies operating in the same field in order to find pairs such as state-owned-private telecommunication companies. As a natural choice of a branch was the medical business. The researcher intends to interview 20 different public and private hospitals. The two other branches selected are high technology companies and companies, which offer financial services. Twenty companies from the both branches will be selected to act as sites for the interviews. The final number of interviews will be based on the saturation. In other words, as the answers start repeating themselves, it is no longer necessary to continue with other interviewees.

1.3 Site visits

The fieldwork is designed to include visits to all the companies and hospitals of the three branches. The fieldwork will take two months, which requires the researcher to visit one or two sites per day. Researcher's MBA study (Petäjävaara, 1992) showed that one to two is an appropriate number of visits per day. Conversations with the interviewees are to focus on the beliefs and knowledge about their own as well as the other companies decision-making processes

1.4 Data management

The fieldwork will generate a considerable amount of data that will demand a management system. First, interviews will be recorded on tape in order to facilitate analysis. Besides the tape recording, the researcher will take notes during the interviews. Second, after each visit, the researcher will record his own observations and impressions on tape. Then, tape recordings and field notes will be typed to facilitate use of the data collected. Typing will take place as the interviews proceed, i.e. next January and February.

1.5 Data analysis

Data analysis will be based on the analytic procedure presented in chapter III (pp. 32-34). Analysis will be divided to five modes. First, the collected data will be organized. Then, data will be processed to find categories, themes and patterns. Thirdly, developing hypotheses will be tested against the data. Next, the researcher will search for alternative explanations in order to challenge the emerged patterns. Finally, the collected data will be presented in a written report, which will form the substance of the doctoral dissertation itself. Technically the dissertation will be word-processed with Lotus Ami Pro, version 3.0. As for the hardware, a continuous working will be secured by obtaining a back-up hardware systems. For any major hard- or software problems the appropriate deals are ready to get help quickly. Data analysis will be carried out in March and April in 1994.

2.0 Role Management

The purpose of the role maintenance is to facilitate the research. The researcher has the knowledge about the setting and the people, their routines, and their environments in order to anticipate the effect of the researcher's presence.

Researcher will adopt a role or roles that elicit cooperation, trust, openness, and acceptance. At times this means play-acting, dressing a certain way, and allowing himself to be manipulated. If needed, researcher will acquire multiple roles in order to develop research relationships with different people.

People may be given their time to be interviewed or to help the researcher understand group norms; the researcher must plan to reciprocate. The researcher will be indebted to interviewees and therefore he is ready to give time, feedback, coffee, attention, flattery, tutoring, or some other appropriate gift. Constraints of research and personal ethics as well as researchers role maintenance will be taken into account in reciprocity. The ethical issues will be considered as important.

Researcher will demonstrate that none of his actions will be harmful to the subjects of the research and he will reveal an awareness and appreciation of and commitment to ethical principals for research.

3.0 Personnel

Literature review as well as the interviews will be carried out by the researcher himself. As dissertation demands different kinds of supports, the most important of which is that of peers and mentors. Collected data will be typed by a secretary and a research assistant will participate to data analysis phase with the researcher. All three will take part in writing of the dissertation. The support of peers is also necessary for the personal and emotional sustenance that student finds so valuable in dissertation process.

In planning qualitative dissertation research, support from university faculty to help determine the adequacy of the proposal is important. As a mentor for this research acts lecturer Vesa Seppälä from the department of Sociology at Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration. His experience will also partly dictate the allocation of time to various tasks.

4.0 Services and Sources of Information

The library of Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration represents the principal option for the researcher as a source of information for the theoretical framework of the doctoral dissertation. The library has a modern information center, which contains several databases available for the students. Library's services include a database, called Helecon, which has 8 different sub-databases, and 25 other cd-rom databases. The library contains about 260.000 volumes, and 1.600 journals of which 1.000 are foreign ones. In addition, the services of University of Helsinki are available. University has also a fine library, but the library of Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration has offered the services required so far.

The researcher has, in addition, a possibility to use the services of an information specialist, who works for the same company as one of the set-members. Lecturer Vesä Seppälä from the department of Sociology in Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration supports the researcher in emerging problems as well as in other issues, regarding particularly the qualitative research.

As far as the research study is concerned, information collection is mainly based on in-depth interviews. The interviews will cover three different branches, medical business, companies involved with high technology as well as the companies which offer financial services. The pilot interviews in medical businesses demonstrated that the interviews are appropriate to collect the needed information.

An outside research company represents an option if researcher's available time and energy to conduct the interviews turn out to be limited.

5.0 Financial Resources

In November 1993 a firm 50,000 grant was awarded to the researcher to cover the expenses from conducting the dissertation research. The same amount will be granted most likely next spring. The rest of the required budget will be financed by AP Medical Hearing ltd which has a certain amount to be given to educational expenses.

V SUMMARY

A research proposal must demonstrate that the research is useful in three broad ways. First, it must contribute to knowledge. Second, the relevant policy arenas should find usefulness and meaning in the study. And third, the study should be useful for practitioners. However, the relative emphasis given to each aspect of the study's significance depends on the study itself.

The doctoral dissertation study will explain and describe the decision-making processes in industrial marketing. It will try to identify the salient behaviors, events, beliefs, attitudes, structures, and processes occurring in and shaping the decision-making. The research will be expanded to three different business areas covering both private and public sector companies.

The qualitative approach to research demands flexibility in the overall research design so that the site and sample selection can respond to increasingly refined research questions. The research questions are best addressed in a developmental manner, relying on discussions of related literature and theory to help frame and refine the specific topic. Often, the primary research goal is to discover those very questions that are most probing and insightful.

Having posed the research question, the researcher decided that qualitative research methods would provide the most appropriate approach to his research. The research will rely on in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection. The researcher finds the interviewing (supported by kinesics and elite interviewing) the most practical, efficient, and feasible technique for collecting data as the research progresses.

Qualitative data are exceedingly complex, and not readily convertible into standard measurable units of objects seen and heard; they vary in level of abstraction, in frequency of occurrence, in relevance to central questions in the research. Also, they vary in the source or ground from which they are experienced. Therefore, for the researcher, the option represents an analytic data analysis strategy.

One purpose of the dissertation paper will be to give the basis for further studies as the researcher has obtained a full understanding of qualitative approach as a research methodology. The study will be very useful for AP Medical Hearing Ltd as the company's competitiveness is expected to increase as a result of the study. The study aims to examine the assumed ineffectiveness of public purchases in the fields where the market shares have been unchanged for many years. In medical business, the status-quo, i.e. the vertical and horizontal cartels, has been maintained by a certain type of 'grant system' directed to doctors and head nurses. This grant system is provided by the importers of medical instruments etc. As a result, it has been extremely difficult to tear down the shared market with competitive means based on a good price-quality relation. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to fasten the opening of instrument markets in medical business.

Finally, the researcher sees an option, where he is being asked to offer consulting services to hospitals that are moving towards business-oriented profit centers. A cost-effective purchasing model provided by the study would obviously contribute to achieving that target.

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