**RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

**TYPES OF RESEARCH**

1. **EXPLORATORY STUDIES**

Used to:

* discover general information on a subject/area not clearly understood by the researcher
* provide insights to inform the design of the research
* provide some “preliminary” or “tentative” answers to some initial questions
* form the basis for subsequent research

Methods:

* literature/existing research review (the Internet could provide this basic material and also direct researchers to the relevant journal articles)
* interviewing those seen as “experts” in the field
* more general interviews

Though exploratory these studies enable the researcher to move from the general to the specific. Clearly the enlightened researcher would not, at this stage, be drawing definite conclusions, but it should assist in helping to create the correct design, the data collection method and the selection of subjects.

EXERCISE

Select a topic you know only a little about and describe how you might undertake some exploratory studies to facilitate your research.

2. **DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES**

Although the word “describe” is seen as lower order skill it, nevertheless, has a rôle to play in research. Certainly most of the research you do should, in the end, be analytical and explanatory.

Used to:

* describe with accuracy persons, events or situations
* provide quantitative responses

Methods:

* questionnaire surveys
* sampling
* interviews
* reanalysis of secondary data

It is a “means to an end” not an end in itself. However, it is very informative.

3. **EXPLANATORY STUDIES**

Clearly these move from description to explanation via a discovery of causal relationships between key variables - from “what” to “why”.

Methods:

* case studies
* observation
* historical analysis
* attitude surveys
* statistical surveys

This can be both quantitative and qualitative depending on the focus of the research. If the focus is something like the frequency of an event, then quantitative values can be attached to the variables and the statistics can be subjected to tests like correlation to establish a clearer picture. Even where a researcher appears to be getting qualitative information, much of it can benefit from a quantitative element too.

EXERCISE: Think of a research topic in which qualitative data could be converted to quantitative.