**Subject:** Business Research Methods **Examination:** Mid Term **Total Marks:** 30 Marks **Date: 20th April, 2020**

Note: Attempt the exam using your own words.

**Q1. Read the case study carefully and in your own words answer the questions at the end.**

**Case study**

**Isabelle’s research dilemma**

Isabelle was very thoughtful. She had a puzzled look on her face. The dilemma she had was one experienced by many students in conducting research for a dissertation. Her research was concerned with managers and how they coped with pressure in the workplace. She particularly wanted to find out the coping strategies they used. This required consideration of theory and method and whether the research would have practical relevance. After her preliminary reading around the topic she decided that it was necessary to engage in both the world of theory and the world of practice and that the problems addressed would develop out of the interaction between these two worlds.

Theory in management could be seen as problematic, because for some researchers management is not a discipline. It is perceived as multi-disciplinary with many of its early practitioners receiving their training in the social sciences (Pettigrew 2001). Isabelle thought this could be advantageous in that it enables management research to gain new insights that may not be obtained through a number of disciplines sepa-rately. She also considered that a topic on pressure and coping could be understood at a number of levels of analysis from an individual to a structural level. In doing this she would be considering theoretical ideas and attempting to perceive them in a pragmatic way. It also meant looking at them anew which would provide some imaginative and original insights for her dissertation.

Isabelle found that more traditional research on managing pressure focused on positivistic approaches with an emphasis on being scientific and rigorous. This approach often uses quantitative methods with an emphasis on measuring and the use of factor analysis. Researchers hope this allows them to find statistical correlations between two variables and demonstrate some relationship between sources of pressure and possible physical, psychological or even physiological outcomes, if coping strategies were not successful. Research of this kind can be found in the work of Sadri and Marcoulides (1997) and Wheatley (2000).

Isabelle decided she would not use this approach. She felt that a number of students’ dissertations had already used this approach and she wanted to get away from statistical analysis and examining pressure on managers using a positivistic approach. She also thought that this traditional research ignored the managers’ biography which could prove to be important in understanding how the manager coped with pressure. The more traditional approach seems to perceive the individual as passive and playing little part in making and constructing his/her reality. It was as if the researcher with questions asked in the questionnaire had already structured the reality. However, people working in organizations do have histories, futures and expectations and pursue their individual goals. For example, long-term sources of a person’s distress may be traced back to experiences at work many years before. To study this would require Isabelle to use a different method. She decided to adopt in-depth interviews as primary sources so that she could study the turning-points in the lives of her participants over a period of time. This may indicate why they took particular decisions and the consequences of making those decisions.

In terms of method Isabelle decided that the approach she would adopt would be qualitative rather than quantitative. This would involve using in-depth interviews. She would also use life stories and family histories because this kind of biographical approach was more holistic (Miller 2007). This holistic viewpoint manifested itself in two ways. Firstly, biographical data range across time. Hence, ‘a biographical approach is indicated where the area of interest is either the effect of change across time, historical events as these events have impinged upon the individual, or his or her movement along their life course’ (Miller 2007:74). Secondly, the biographical approach is a bridge between social structure and the individual. Social structure is a complex concept in which there was some disagreement among social scientists. But it can be understood to mean a relative enduring pattern of social arrangements within a particular society, group or social organization. Thus, social structures may constrain the individual’s behavior and expectations. Discussing your biography means telling about the constraints and opportunities, and turning-points that were available in the past and how one dealt with them. The biographical approach is about the intersection between the individual and social structure.

In conducting such research Isabelle knew she had to deal with complex issues with the subject-matter and the method she wanted to adopt. The relationship between the interviewee and interviewer is central to this type of research. She felt she had the emotional maturity to manage the process. Most importantly she felt that the research was rigorous, systematic and relevant to managers in the workplace.

**References**

Miller, R.L. (2007) *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories.* London: Sage Publications.

Pettigrew, A.M. (2001) ‘Management research after modernism’, *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 12, pp. 61–70.

Sadri, G. and Marcoulides, G.A. (1997) ‘An examination of academic and occupational stress in the USA’, *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 32–43.

Wheatley, R. (2000) *Taking the Strain. A Survey of Managers and Workplace Stress*. London: Institute of Management.

**Questions**

1. How do you think Isabelle’s understanding of theory and method changed in adopting the approach she chose?
2. What particular knowledge and skills did she develop in preparing this research?
3. What problems do you think she would have anticipated in conducting research into pressure and coping among managers that her literature review may not have identified

**Q2. Explain the following in your own words (with proper references).**

1. Difference between pure and applied research.
2. Primary and secondary research with examples?
3. What is difference between theoretical and empirical research? Please explain with practical examples.
4. What are the attributes of good research topic? Please discuss in your own words with references.

**Q3. Determine which type of research (descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, predictive) applies to the following short cases. Give reasons to your answers.**

1. Fresh bite is a one and half year old e-commerce start-up company delivering fresh foods as per the order to customer’s doorstep through its delivery partners. The company operates in multiple cities. Since its inception, the company achieved a high sales growth rate. However, after completion of the first year, the sales started declining at brisk rate. Due to lack of historical data, the sales director was confused about the reasons for this decline in sales. He prefers to appoint a marketing research consultant to conduct a research study in order to discern the possible reasons rather than making assumptions. The prime objective of this research was not to figure out a solution to the declining sales problem, but rather to identify the possible reasons, such as poor quality of products and services, competition, or ineffective marketing, and to better understand the factors affecting sales. Once these potential causes are identified, the strength of each reason can be tested using causal research.
2. If your business only has a $5,000 budget for an upsell marketing campaign and you have three million customers, you obviously can’t extend a 10 percent discount to each customer. Which type of research can help forecast the customers who have the highest probability of buying your product? Give reasons to your answers.