Chapter 1 : Download An Introduction To Qualitative Research PDF â€" PDF Search Engine

An Introduction to Qualitative Research has everything a social science student needs to understand and explore the richness of qualitative research.

Other Reviews Qualitative Research is that huge field between hard science and the serious social novel. It serves as a means of understanding why and how people behave as they do. Methods such as statistical sampling may be borrowed from traditional quantitative science; while techniques such as transcribing dialogue and writing narratives may be not far from literature, as in the fine anthropological writings of past masters like Evans-Pritchard, for instance. But the intention in the field is different from that of either neighbour. Classification of data, systematic collection, and explicit theorizing all indicate that this is a research discipline. On the other hand, the involvement of the researcher, the writing of realist, confessional, or even impressionist tales "written in the form of dramatic recall" can allow the audience "to see, hear, and feel [almost] as the fieldworker saw, heard, and felt". Plainly this is a research domain with its own set of rules. Qualitative Research thus involves human skill in the description - which can never be perfect, precise, or complete - of human interactions, situations, relations, meanings, and goals. Needless to say, there is a multiplicity of techniques and approaches embodying widely different philosophies. It has an enormous bibliography, and a matching text which covers, section by section, the theories, methods, and approaches. These are classified by likeness and distinguished by their most conspicuous fieldmarks and essential principles. Each method is described in stages, with its basic phases and activities, the problems in conducting the method, examples, contribution to the wider picture, how it fits into the research process, and its limitations all itemised. Flick then summarises seven features of participant observation from another researcher, Jorgensen, including the performance of a participant role or roles that involves establishing and maintaining relationships with natives in the field; and the use of direct observation along with other methods of gathering information. Over a page is then dedicated to explaining the phases of the method. Flick goes to further sources, starting with Spradley who identified three phases back in , namely descriptive observation, focused observation, and selective observation, each of which is concisely explained in a sentence. The observer is, like the quantum physicist, certain to affect what is observed. Flick goes on by quoting Bergmann from The participant observer thus has no other choice than to note the social occurrences which he was witness to mainly in a typifying, resuming, reconstructive fashion. Participant observations were carried out over two months in lectures, practical exercises, dormitories and all departments, for periods of up to a whole day. This leads naturally into the next standard subsection, Problems in conducting the method. One needs to see as much of the range of events as possible, not just the average. Another problem is how to access the field or the studied subculture. Key persons can be vital for introductions, but can themselves distort the perspective or even make access more difficult -- the party line may tend to exclude contact with outsiders. The observer can readily be inundated with events, especially if things happen very rapidly, as was the case for Sprenger who observed medical intensive care units. The standard structure continues with a subsection on Contribution to the general methodological discussion. The section concludes with a brief mention of Fitting the method into the research process - it belongs with a background of symbolic interactionism - and a page on Limitations of the method. The main problem is that not all phenomena can be observed in situations. Rare events can be captured only with luck; biographical and knowledge processes need to be elucidated by interview. In this review I have chosen to give a detailed impression of one method rather than to attempt a thin coverage of the whole book. In so doing, I have of course faced the same kind of problems of selection, generalization, and personal involvement as qualitative researchers encounter in their work. Norman Denzin writes on the back cover "This is the text I wish I had written! The flow of ideas is admirable, making the book of interest to workers in other fields, such as requirements engineering, which apply human techniques of interview and observation for their own ends. Flick has constructed a rich and detailed picture of a complex

field, one full of methodological doubts and contradictions. He has written a text accurate enough for students, but so crisp and clear that it will certainly serve for many years as an invaluable reference to the field. You may also like:

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'The fourth edition of Uwe Flick's Introduction to Qualitative Research remains the most comprehensive and thorough text in qualitative research. It is student-and user-friendly, thoroughly up-to-date in terms of the latest developments in the field, imminently practical. it is the single most important introductory book on qualitative inquiry in the social sciences today' - Norman K. Denzin.

Chapter objectives After reading this chapter, you should see how personal or scientific interests and experiences are the background to developing a research interest in many cases; know more about the process from such an interest to a research question; and see the relevance of taking a perspective and of using theory in qualitative research. In this chapter, we will change the focus from more general considerations about qualitative research. Here, we will address issues of planning and preparing a study as a preliminary to the actual research acts in the field. For this purpose, we will discuss general issues and problems of planning by using concrete examples of my own research. Interest and ideas for research: In this example, the background for developing a research idea, interest and question was a personal one â€" the recent personal experiences of the researchers. Her parents, being part of the US Foreign Service, gave her the chance to see â€" and interpret â€" the different forms of smiles and their meanings produced by diplomats from different cultural backgrounds. Hochschild learned from these experiences that emotional expressions like smiles and handshakes conveyed messages on several levels â€" from person to person as well as from the country the person represented as an emissary to the country the other person represented. This led to the specific research interest much later of course: And so I decided to explore the idea that emotion functions as a messenger from the self, an agent that gives us an instant report on the connection between what we are seeing and what we had expected to see and tells us what we feel ready to do about it. Marie Jahoda ; see also Fleck, , p. The Sociology of an Unemployed Community Jahoda et al. Backgrounds were the Great Depression of and also the political interest and orientation of the researchers, which made them pick up the idea of studying how a community changes when the majority of its members become unemployed. From this general impulse, they developed as a research question what the attitude of the population towards unemployment and what the social consequences of unemployment were like. If we compare these examples, they show the different sources for developing research interests, ideas and subsequently research questions. They range from very personal experiences Glaser and Strauss to social experiences and circumstances Hochschild and societal problems and political commissioning Jahoda et al. In each case, a general curiosity arose, which then was pursued [Page 18]and put into concrete terms. Of course, there are other sources for research interests, which are located more inside the scientific system than in our examples. A lot of research results from previous research, questions that remained unanswered, new questions resulting from previous findings and the like. First, the research team shared a longer engagement in the development of public health see Schwartz, and new public health Flick, as a perspective for research and for professional training and, second, an interest in subjective understandings of health see Flick a, b. From this, we developed an interest in how the ideas of health, health promotion and prevention as some of the core concepts of public health had an impact on the day-to-day practices in health institutions. In this example, the idea for research was rooted in a scientific interest as well as in a political concern how to use public health concepts for transforming and improving the existing health system. Taking a research perspective For developing a research project from such an idea and for elaborating a research question from it, the second step after having such an idea is to take a research perspective. In the case of Glaser and Strauss, this perspective was to develop a theory for an area in which theoretical knowledge or explanations were missing. For this purpose, they collected and analysed all sorts of data by comparing and systematizing the bits and pieces of observation they made. The aim of their research was to identify a basic â€" core â€" concept, which allowed them to relate, systematize and understand these bits and pieces and to explain how the social phenomenon worked which they were interested in. Thus, their

research perspective was focused on theory development, on reducing variety â€" by finding one core concept â€" and finding structure â€" in their case four forms of the core concept. The research perspective they took was to develop theory from data, which has since become one of the basic perspectives in qualitative research. A second perspective, which can be taken to analyse social processes, is to focus on personal experiences of people who have had certain experiences. Such a biographical perspective can start from a specific event and analyze examples [Page 19]of living with the consequences of these events or of dealing with it in general. The event can be a personal one â€" like the beginning or diagnosis of a chronic or terminal illness see Frank, â€" or a more general one like a political change. For understanding how people concerned with this event experience it, deal with it, arrange themselves with the consequences and perhaps reorganize their lives for coping with the event, a biographical perspective is taken in research. This perspective aims at giving individuals with this experience the space to recount their lives in an interview. The analysis then focuses on comparing these experiences for developing, for example, a typology of the different ways of living with this experience. The next step then can again be to develop a theory of coping with the event under study, but this step is not necessarily taken in every study see Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal, Here, we were not so much interested in finding a central concept or in developing a theory. Thus, our interest was not so much to reduce the variety in the data to one core concept or theoretical model. Rather we were interested to see how the theoretical knowledge under study -concepts from new public health â€" were adopted by professional groups, and how they differ in this sort of adoption. Therefore we took up social representations see Moscovici, , ; Flick, a; Flick and Foster, , for more details as a theoretical perspective for our study. A social representation traditionally is understood as a system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function; first to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history. Social representation theory describes how concepts and ideas from a scientific theory are taken up in everyday life, how these are objectified and anchored in routines and practices see Fig. These three examples show how different research perspectives can be taken in qualitative research for studies in very similar areas. Grounded theory research is an example of a bottom-up perspective from phenomena and practices to theory and explanation. Social representation theory is an example of a top-down perspective from theoretical concepts and scientific models to everyday practices. Biographical research is an example of a perspective starting from a mid-level [Page 20] events and coping strategies. It could go either way: Other ones could complement these three examples. An ethnomethodological research perspective would be interested in analyzing everyday routines of talk and action from a more formal perspective. Ethnography would be more interested in close descriptions of such practices without such a formal perspective. Researchers not only need to decide on one perspective for their research but also to choose it from the range of available alternatives. Our examples here should show how research perspectives are chosen in approaching an issue and for formulating a research question in the widest sense see below. Using theory in qualitative research [Page 21] That qualitative research does not build on existing theory has been a myth, which was produced by some writings of Glaser and Strauss That myth and these formulations have been revised a long time ago, for several reasons. One reason is that areas that have not been studied empirically or subject to theoretical analysis are more and more difficult to find compared to the period when Glaser and Strauss set up their research program of developing grounded theories. Following what was said before, we have different sorts of theories that we are confronted with while planning a research project. First, there are background theories that inform our research, beginning with the epistemological fundamentals of our research for example, do we build on some sort of constructivism or on some sort of realist epistemology? Second, the theoretical perspective of our research program informs how we plan our concrete research. If we take a biographical perspective, this comes with a lot of assumptions about biography, about the individual as narrator, about human ability to reflect about what is happening to the individual, and

so on. If we take the perspective of social representations, we assume that people lay people and professionals are informed by scientific or public discourses, process the knowledge coming from them in a specific way, and that social contexts influence how they do that. For example, it is implied that doctors anchor new developments in relevant sciences in their practice differently from how nurses do. These assumptions are not yet specific for the substantial issue of the current project but are essential for the research perspective taken. Third, they are complemented by theoretical knowledge about the issue of research â€" for example, what it generally means for patients to be confronted with a terminal illness or that health promotion goes beyond or starts earlier than curing existing diseases. This theoretical knowledge comes from the literature and the existing body of research. Fourth, we use theoretical assumptions linked to the concrete methods we use in the project â€" a narrative interview comes along with assumptions about what happens when people talk about a crucial experience in the form of a life story and so on. Thus, we have four forms of theoretical knowledge coming from epistemology, from the research perspective, from the issue of research and from the methods we intend to use. All these forms of knowledge play an implicit or better explicit role in how we do our research and before that, how we plan it. Developing a research question [Page 22] Before we can address an issue empirically, we should clarify for ourselves and for later readers what it is exactly that we want to study. A research interest and a research perspective are necessary steps. In most cases, however, both are not focused enough for developing a research instrument like an interview guide or a research design whom to interview or for having a clear and relevant set of data in the end see Flick, , chap. Experience from my own research and even more from supervising and consulting other people in their research has shown how decisive it is for the success of a project to have a clear and explicitly formulated research question. It decides about what is important to collect as data, to analyse in it, etc. However, there are different ways leading to such a research question: One way is to start with defining and formulating your research and then to pursue it through your empirical work in order to find an answer to it. However, for beginners in qualitative or grounded theory research, it seems more than helpful to have a clear research question to answer with their research as a guideline. Finally, even when we start with a more or less general research question, it will be refined and reformulated, sometimes refocused in the course of the project see Flick, , chap. In a biographical research project, the formulation of a research question includes the event that the project is referring to, the idea of a group of persons or a specific context of experiencing this event, and a period in the life history, which will be focused in the empirical approach. In the case of illness experiences, it is often the time since the outbreak or diagnosis of the illness, but frequently the focus is also on the period before that event. This is of course not yet a research question that you can use for starting an empirical study. So we had to develop this general interest into a more focused perspective. Therefore, we first focused on health concepts held by home-care nurses and general practitioners. Then we focused on the attitude towards prevention and health promotion as parts of their work and more concretely with a special part of their clientele â€" the elderly. Against this background, we developed a set of questions we wanted to pursue in a study using interviews: Which dimensions of health representations are relevant for professional work with the elderly? What is the attitude of professionals towards prevention and health promotion for the elderly? What are the concepts of ageing held by general practitioners and home-care nurses? What is the relation of these concepts with those of health? What relevance do professionals ascribe to their own concepts of health for their own professional practice? Are there any relations between the concepts of health and professional training and experience? We took these research questions as a starting point for developing an instrument for episodic interviews see Flick , with doctors and nurses. Looking back on this project, we thought critically about the number of different research questions included in the above list. Especially for novices to qualitative research, it is suggested to concentrate on one or two such questions in planning a similar project to the one we did. Conclusion These steps in planning and preparing a study are important to make a design and a study work in the concrete case. Researchers who start a study using qualitative methods today for addressing a problem they are interested in, are confronted with enormous background knowledge they could use for making their research more

successful. Therefore, it seems necessary to clarify the research question and to get acquainted with the existing literature about the research. You should also carefully plan and decide for a research perspective and do your homework in the planning phase of your project. This includes preparing your access to the field, clarifying your relations to the field and the members and institutions in it, and becoming an expert in the methods you and your research team want to use. Key points For preparing and planning a qualitative study that is up-to-date, it seems necessary: Further reading [Page 24] In these texts, the examples used here for clarifying the relation of ideas, research perspectives and research questions are unfolded in a little more detail: Steinke eds , A Companion to Qualitative Research.

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Qualitative research therefore becomesâ€"or is linked still more strongly withâ€"a specific attitude based on the researcher's openness and reflexivity AN INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TABLE 2. and the relativity of what is presented have been stressed.1 Germany Early studies (end of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) Phase of.