

Qualitative Research

An Introduction to Research Approaches and Methods

Nicola Simmons, Ph.D.

Research and Evaluation Consultant,
Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE)
University of Waterloo

An investigation...

- Write down a question you might wish to study...
- What methods and approaches could be used to study this question?

Qualitative Research - 5 Approaches

(according to Creswell, 1998)

- Biography
- Phenomenology
- Grounded Theory
- Ethnography
- Case study

Biography

- Studies of a single individual “and his or her experiences as told to the researcher or as found in the documents and archival materials” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 448). Includes biographies, autobiographies, life histories, oral histories.
- Data collected from interviews, documents (diaries, family histories, photographs, newspaper articles).
- Examples?

Phenomenology

- The study of “the shared meaning of experience of a phenomenon for several individuals” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 449).
- Data from in-depth interviews is distilled to the central meaning (or essence) of the shared experience.
- Examples?

Grounded Theory

- Generates an “abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, a theory that explains some action, interaction, or process” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 448).
- Data collection through interviews, multiple site visits, developing and interrelating categories, and writing a “context-specific theory” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 448).
- Examples?

Ethnography

- A study of “an intact culture or social group (or an individual or individuals within a group) based primarily on observations and a prolonged period of time spent ... in the field” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 449).
- Data collection through recording ‘voices’ of participants to paint a “cultural portrait” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 449).
- Examples?

Case studies

- “Investigations of ‘bounded systems’ with the focus being either the case or an issue illustrated by the case(s)”
(McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 449).
- Data collection through diverse array of methods
- Examples?

And other approaches...

- Autoethnography
- Narrative Inquiry
- Hermeneutics
- Action Research (Participatory Action Research)
- Phenomenography

Discuss with a partner...

- Which approach best suits your question? (and why?)
- If none, why not?
- Why do you think you wrote this particular question?

Other Considerations

- Researcher as research ‘tool’

“The study and practice of teaching is grounded in our conceptions. There can be no neutral ground from which to understand another person’s teaching” (Pratt, 1992, p. 204).

- Sampling - purposive vs. random
- Data analysis approaches - Coding? Highlighting? Selective transcription?

Analysing data

Activity:

- What supports have helped you in your academic role?

Other considerations

Validity? Or Credibility ...

- Transferability, dependability, confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
- Catalytic validity (Lather, 1991)

Bracketing?

Dissemination

- Journals? Conferences? Other?

Research Paradigms

“All of our scientific explanations and critical readings start from, embody, and imply some interpretive standpoint, conceptual framework, or theoretical perspective. The relevance and adequacy of our explanations can never be demonstrated with Platonic rigor or geometrical necessity.... Instead, the operative question is, Which of our positions are rationally warranted, reasonable, or defensible - that is, well-founded rather than groundless opinions” (Toulmin, cited in Eisner, 1992, p. 15).

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