QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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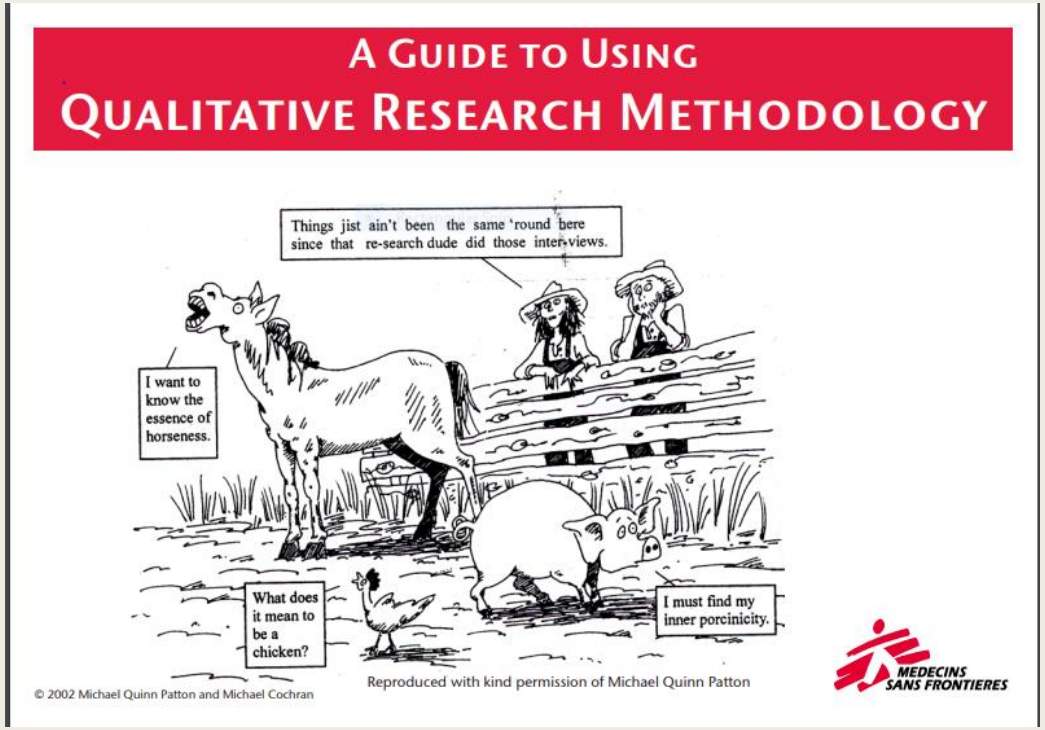

Qualitative research characterised by

- its aims
  - *Deep understanding of some aspect of social life*
- its methods
  - *which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis*

When is Qualitative Research needed?

- If the question is a qualitative one, then the most appropriate and rigorous way of answering it is to use qualitative methods
- How many people are affected by xxx - Quantitative
- How are people affected by xxx - Qualitative

Some common criticisms from quantitative researchers

- samples are small and not necessarily representative of the broader population, so it is difficult to know how far we can generalise the results;
- the findings lack rigour;
- it is difficult to tell how far the findings are biased by the researcher's own opinions.

When is Qualitative Research needed?

- Qualitative methods generally aim to understand the experiences, perspectives, beliefs, practices, barriers and attitudes of people, the community or population. How culture and individual life experiences can impact on these. How an outsider can ‘witness’ the experiences of others.
- These methods aim to answer questions about the ‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ of a phenomenon rather than ‘how many’ or ‘how much’, which are answered by quantitative methods

Where to start to decide on the right approach for research methods?

- Your research question!
  - *For short, undergraduate projects, consider finding published studies and applying them to a new context, using the same research methods, methods of analysis etc.*
  - *Consider pairing students eg giving same research question but different case studies*
  - *Help each other with data gathering, analysis etc. and to compare and contrast findings*

RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

- V1 -*How might activities to promote awareness of graduate attributes development, which will be carried out in advance of work placement, affect the quality of reflection displayed in student pharmacy technicians' reflective assessment blogs compared to previous years?*
- [too vague, longwinded and immeasurable]

RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

- V2 - *How do activities designed to promote awareness of graduate attributes development affect the quality of reflection displayed in student pharmacy technicians' reflective assessment blogs compared to previous years*?
- [somewhat less vague and longwinded]

RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

- Vfinal - *What is the effect of activities to promote awareness of graduate attributes development on the quality of reflection displayed in student pharmacy technicians' reflective assessment blogs compared to previous years*?
- [so much simpler … why didn't I think of this first??]

RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

- V3– sub-research questions
- *Sub-question 1: What is the current level of understanding of graduate attributes for pharmacy technician students [student survey], and what learning activities are suitable to promote student awareness of graduate attributes development [literature review]?*
- *Sub-question 2: What are the most relevant graduate attributes for DIT pharmacy technician students, and how can these be developed? [stakeholder survey]*
- *Sub-question 3: What change if any in the quality of reflection occurs in comparison to previous years? [qualitative method – content analysis of assessments before/after intervention]*

Reflect on the proposed Research Question or Case Study

- What scope is the for each type of research method to help address the question. Which should come first?
- For novice researchers, consider content analysis of pre-existing data
  - *It is a systematic, objective, replicable set of procedures for analysis of written speeches, newspaper articles, documents and reports; digital media; pictures and audio visual content.*

If generating new data need to consider : (A) Sampling

- Important to select your sample in a systematic way so as to ensure that the stakeholders see it as a credible and indicative sample.
- However, statistical representativeness is **not necessarily** the aim
- Samples in qualitative research are usually purposeful
  - *participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the project*
  - *E.g. maximum variation sample covers all demographics to minimise bias*
  - *Continue interviewing until analysis shows nothing new (saturation)*
- Sample sizes are small
  - *Compared e.g. to survey methods*

SAMPLE	PURPOSE
Intensity sampling	To provide rich information from a few select cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but are not extreme cases
Deviant case sampling	To learn from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon in question
Stratified purposeful sampling	To illustrate characteristics of particular subgroups of interest; to facilitate comparisons
Snowball or chain sampling (locate one or two key individuals, and then ask them to name other likely informants)	To facilitate the identification of hard-to-find cases
Maximum variation sampling (purposely select a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest)	To document diverse variations; can help to identify common patterns that cut across variations
Convenience sampling (Select whoever is easiest, closest, etc.)	To save time, money and effort. Information collected generally has very low credibility
Criterion sampling	To investigate in depth a particular “type” of case; identify all sources of variation

(B) Research Methods
(1) Interviews

- Conversation conducted with interviewers need for data and with *reliability* and *validity*
  - *Reproducible: that is, someone else could use the same topic guide to generate similar information;*
  - *Systematic: to ensure that we are not just picking interviewees or data that support our pre-existing ideas about the answers;*
  - *Credible: the questions we ask, for instance, and the ways in which we ask them should be reasonable ones for generating valid (or 'truthful') accounts of phenomena.*
  - *Transparent: methods should be written up so that readers can see exactly how the data were collected and analysed.*

Types of interview

- Semi-structured
  - *These are conducted on the basis of a loose structure made up of open-ended questions defining the area to be explored.*
  - *Uses a 'Topic Guide' that identifies key topics/questions and prompts*
- In-depth (also referred to as qualitative or unstructured)

Developing Topic Guides

- For any kind of interview, it may take a while to develop the right question for getting precisely the kind of data you are interested in.
- Pilot questions with colleagues first – does it make sense?
- Do they respond in the ways you expected?
- Then pilot them with people similar to your participants.

Developing Topic Guides

- Early questions should be directly related to topic of research
- Most relevant/interesting questions should be asked as soon as possible to interest interviewee
- Embarrassing/sensitive questions should be left till later
- Put general questions before specific ones

Interviewing planning

- Access
- Ethical Issues
- Bias e.g. avoiding giving your own perspective
- Setting
- Rapport (including cultural awareness)
- Communications (look at the subject)
  - *Words = 7%*
  - *Tone of voice = 38%*
  - *Body language = 55%*

(2) Group Interviews / Focus Groups

- Can you think of any advantages of interviewing subjects as part of a group, instead of individuals?

Natural group Interviews / Focus Groups

- Help to understand the dynamic of how
  - *teams communicate with each-other and work together? Power?*
  - *How opinions are formed and knowledge transferred*
  - *Communities operate e.g. social structures*

- Discussing sensitive topics (if they have a common experience)?
- Brainstorming/broad range of ideas
- 6-10 participants
- 90-120 minutes
- How to record for later analysis?

Moderator

- provide a clear explanation of the purpose of the group
- help people feel at ease and facilitate interaction between group members.
- promote the debate by using the topic guide
  - *challenge participants*
  - *draw out differences in opinion*
  - *ask for details*
  - *avoid drift*
  - *ensure that everyone speaks*

Data management

- Confidentiality and security of data
- Audio following by transcription

Analysis

- Read data
- Identify themes (or us a priori themes)
- Code (by hand or using software)
- Gather coded material together
- Identify patterns and relationships
- Review individual cases again to see how themes relate

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thematic_analysis#Braun_and_Clarke's_six_phases_of_thematic_analysis
- https://research.hud.ac.uk/research-subjects/human-health/template-analysis/what-is-template-analysis/

Interpret

- Validation (trustworthiness) strategies
  - *Triangulation (seeking evidence through several methods or sources)*
  - *Member checking (findings back to sources)*
  - *Double coding*
  - *Comparability to other research*

Ethical issues

1. Consent
2. Confidentiality
3. Data storage and management

- Aiming always for -respect, doing good, not doing harm, for justice and equity
- https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018

Formal ethical review

- In some situations, you will need formal ethical review of your intended
  project before starting to collect data
  - *research sponsored by many publicly funded organisations*
  - *research carried out by individuals registered as students at many institutions, if done as part of their studies*
  - *research intended for publication in many journals. All peer reviewed journals require ethical review before acceptance.*
  - *Even if formal review is not needed, it is good practice to give your protocol for peer feedback on potential ethical issues.*

Limitations and delimitations should be stated for every study

- Limitations of any particular study concern potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control, and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, or other factors. In this respect, a limitation is an 'imposed' restriction which is therefore essentially out of the researcher's contr
- Delimitations are in essence the limitations consciously set by the authors themselves. They are concerned with the definitions that the researchers decide to set as the boundaries or limits of their work so that the study's aims and objectives do not become impossible to achieve ol.