

Slide 1



**Range of Qualitative
Methods**

Workshop Number 4
ESRC workshops for
qualitative research in
management

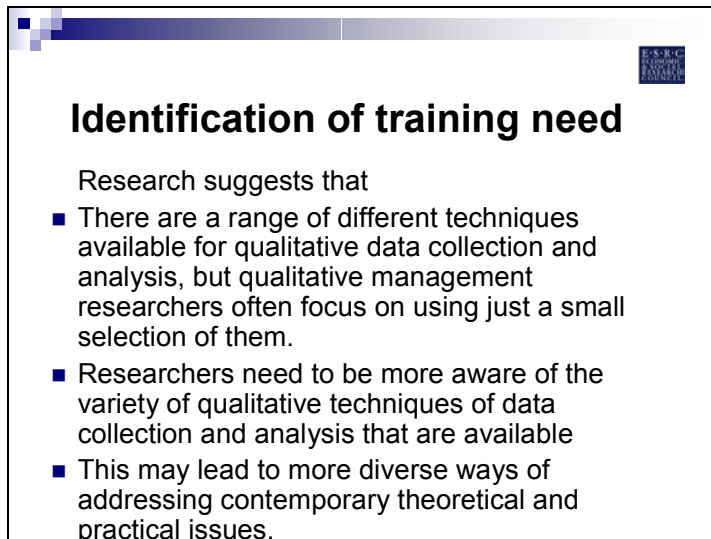
The Range of Qualitative Methods: A Facilitator's Guide

Pre-reading: N/A

Handouts: N/A

Target audience: PhD Students, Researchers, Policy Makers

Any thing else to note? This is an introductory workshop.





Identification of training need

Research suggests that

- There are a range of different techniques available for qualitative data collection and analysis, but qualitative management researchers often focus on using just a small selection of them.
- Researchers need to be more aware of the variety of qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis that are available
- This may lead to more diverse ways of addressing contemporary theoretical and practical issues.


Additional Comments:

This training need was identified in the accompanying study carried out by Cassell et al 2005 entitled 'Benchmarking Good Practice in Qualitative Research'. >>



Workshop aims

To provide an overview of the range of different qualitative research methods available to the management researcher




Objectives

By the end of this module participants will:

- Understand the different purposes of qualitative research
- Be familiar with how qualitative methods have been categorised
- Be aware of the key questions to ask when selecting a qualitative method for their research
- Know where to find more information about the different qualitative techniques available.


Why is this issue important?


- There are a diverse range of qualitative methods available to the management researcher that are currently not widely utilised
- Enhancing the methodological options available to researchers will ideally lead to higher quality and more methodologically diverse management research



Outline of the workshop

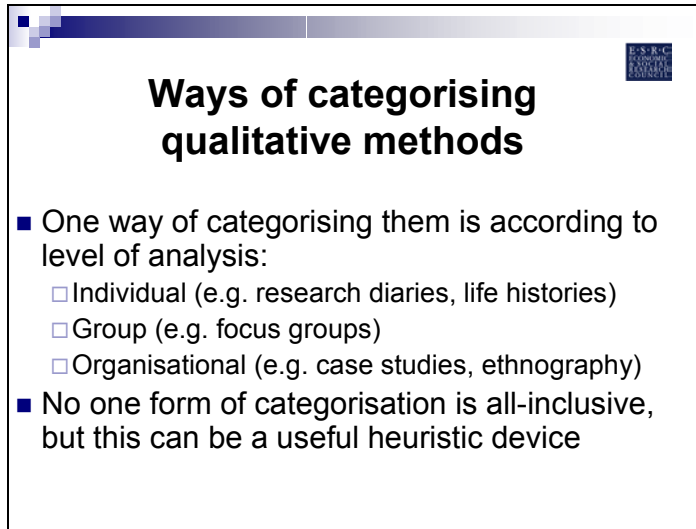
- Categorizing qualitative research methods
- The variety in qualitative research methods
- Choosing the 'right' technique for data collection and analysis: some questions
- Conclusions
- Further reading





Categories of qualitative research methods

As a result of the diversity in qualitative techniques, number of authors have tried to provide various taxonomies, or categories, of different qualitative methods.



Ways of categorising qualitative methods

- One way of categorising them is according to level of analysis:
 - Individual (e.g. research diaries, life histories)
 - Group (e.g. focus groups)
 - Organisational (e.g. case studies, ethnography)
- No one form of categorisation is all-inclusive, but this can be a useful heuristic device

Additional Comments:

A number of authors have produced different categorisations of methods (e.g. Locke and Golden-Biddle, 2004).

One potential problem with categorisations based on types of approaches (e.g.: case study, ethnography etc.) is that they can be too restrictive, and detract from the diversity that exists within the field.

The categorisation on the slide is fairly simple, but can be useful when examining the rationale for choosing a particular technique.

Other ways of grouping qualitative techniques

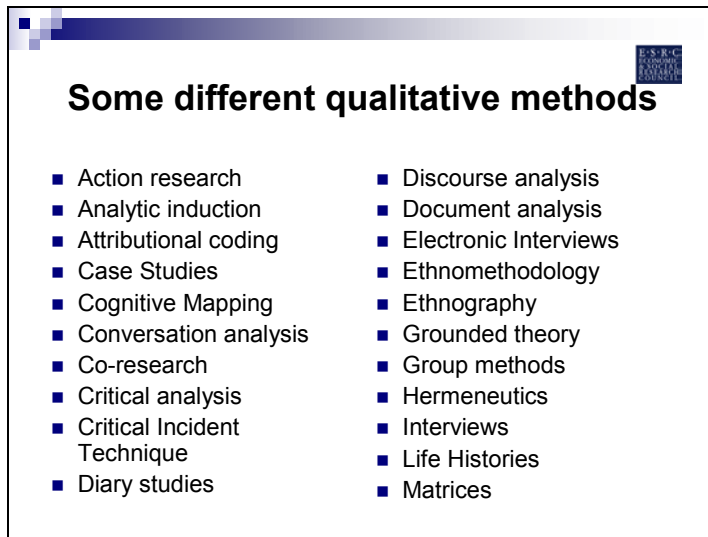
- Some are research strategies: eg: case studies; stakeholder analysis; hermeneutics, which prescribe particular approaches to research
- Some are different ways of conducting interviews: e.g.: repertory grid, electronic interviews, critical incident technique, life histories
- Some fit in with a particular epistemological approach e.g. discourse analysis, repertory grid

Additional Comments:

Rather than producing categories we can group qualitative techniques in a number of different ways.

These are some of the ways in which different techniques can be grouped together.

We will now look at the various techniques available.



Some different qualitative methods


- Action research
- Analytic induction
- Attributional coding
- Case Studies
- Cognitive Mapping
- Conversation analysis
- Co-research
- Critical analysis
- Critical Incident Technique
- Diary studies
- Discourse analysis
- Document analysis
- Electronic Interviews
- Ethnomethodology
- Ethnography
- Grounded theory
- Group methods
- Hermeneutics
- Interviews
- Life Histories
- Matrices

Additional Comments:

When we come to look at specific techniques, the above slide contains both techniques of data collection and analysis.

Clearly participants can go away and read about each of these techniques in more detail after the workshop in the sources outlined at the end.

The aim of this and the slide that follows is to highlight the variety in techniques available.




Some different qualitative methods

- Metaphors
- Narratives
- Participant Observation
- Pictures (video etc.)
- Repertory Grid
- Search conferences
- Soft systems analysis
- Story analysis
- Template analysis
- Twenty Statements Test
- Tracer studies

Additional Comments:

We cannot explain each of these techniques in detail in this workshop, but we can look at an example of variety in techniques.




An example of variety: different types of interviews

The qualitative research interview can take on a number of different formats. Some examples are highlighted below and on the next slide:

- Repertory grid interview: This is framed within a particular theoretical framework, (Kelly's personal construct theory) and located within a specific epistemological position. It allows the interviewer to structure an individual's personal constructs through using a grid
- Life history interview: In this method, the interview focuses on asking an individual to tell their life story, and then draws on various aspects of that story to make an interpretation about social phenomena

Additional Comments:

This slide and the one that follows highlight that a technique such as the interview can have a number of different manifestations. These manifestations occur as a result of a number of factors, for example the epistemological approach underlying a technique, the focus or the aim of the research.




An example of variety: different types of interviews

- Electronic interview: Here the interview takes place through some form of electronic communication, therefore the dynamics of the process are different from the face to face interview
- Critical incident technique: Here the structure of the interview questions is built around particular incidents that the individual has experienced in relation to the research area of interest
- Interviews may also be part of other research strategies (e.g. case studies, search conferences)

Additional Comments:

The next question therefore, is given this diversity, how do we select an appropriate qualitative technique for our work?



Questions to ask when selecting your technique of data collection

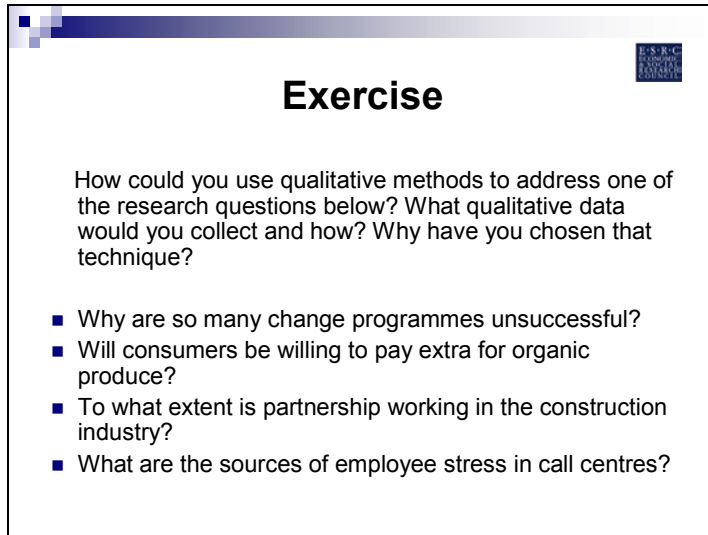
- What is the nature of the data to be collected? (e.g. textual, visual etc.)
- What is the unit of analysis? (e.g. the text, the argument; the individual, the group, the organization, the relationship etc.)
- Is the research about individuals, groups, or organizations more generally?
- What are the assumptions underlying your epistemological approach?
- What are the ethical issues involved?

Additional Comments:

All these will impact upon the technique you choose. These are the questions you should ask yourself before deciding on a particular technique.

Some techniques are designed to address particular units of analysis for example.

You may need to read about the techniques in detail before you can decide which is the right approach for you



Exercise

How could you use qualitative methods to address one of the research questions below? What qualitative data would you collect and how? Why have you chosen that technique?

- Why are so many change programmes unsuccessful?
- Will consumers be willing to pay extra for organic produce?
- To what extent is partnership working in the construction industry?
- What are the sources of employee stress in call centres?

Additional Comments:

The key point of this exercise is to find out why one technique is chosen to address the question rather than another one.


Participants should be divided into small groups and allocated one of the above questions. Alternatively they can choose their own question from the above list, or choose an alternative question.

They should then spend 20 minutes talking about how they would research that question and what technique they would use.

The groups should then feedback to the whole workshop about what they have chosen to do and why. A flipchart will be useful here for the participants to note their ideas.

In discussing the presentations the facilitator needs to focus specifically on why a particular technique has been chosen rather than another one. Towards the end of the feedback stage the facilitator can go back to the previous slide and see the extent to which the participants have taken the questions listed on that slide into account.

The facilitator should highlight that there is no one correct answer in this exercise, rather the key aim is to discuss the rationale underlying the choice of a particular technique.

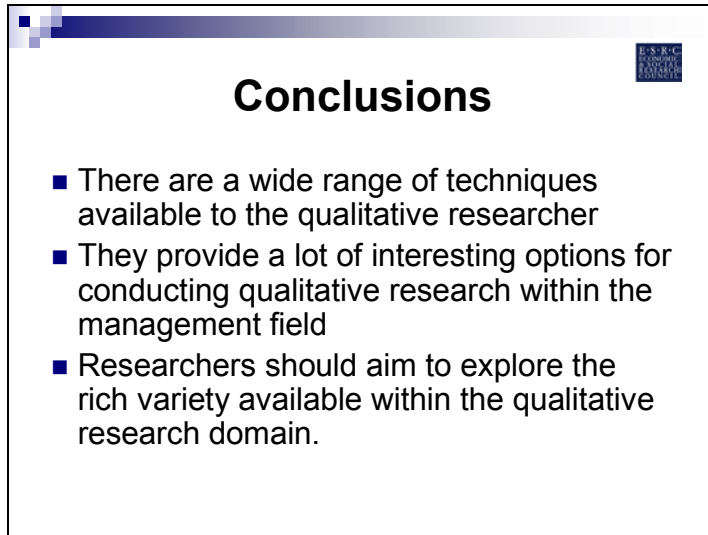


Questions to ask when selecting your technique of data analysis

- How does the technique link in with my epistemological position? Data analysis needs to link in with the underlying philosophical stance of the research
- How structured are my research aims? For example is the research aiming to develop hypotheses, answer research questions, or explore sensitising concepts?
- What kind of data are being analysed?
- What are my personal preferences re structured/ unstructured techniques?
- Will I be using a computer package to enable my analysis?

Additional Comments:

At this point the participants can be referred to Workshop Number 5: Qualitative Data Analysis >>




The slide features a blue gradient header bar at the top. On the left side of the header, there is a small graphic of a blue square with a white crosshair. On the right side, there is a small blue square containing the text 'S-R-C' and '2008'.

Conclusions

- There are a wide range of techniques available to the qualitative researcher
- They provide a lot of interesting options for conducting qualitative research within the management field
- Researchers should aim to explore the rich variety available within the qualitative research domain.



Additional Comments:

At this point participants will be encouraged to follow up some of the sources outlined to read more about the variety of techniques available



Further sources: different techniques

- Cassell, C.M. and Symon, G. (2004) *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*, London: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Second Edition.
- Flick, U., von Kardorff, E. and Steinke, I. (2004) *A companion to qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lee, T.W. (1999) *Using qualitative methods in organizational research*, Thousand Oaks, Cal: Sage Publications
- Locke, K. and Golden-Biddle, K. (2002) 'An introduction to qualitative research', In S.G. Rogelberg (Ed.) *Handbook of research methods in industrial and organizational psychology*, Oxford: Blackwell publishing
- Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium and Silverman, D. (2004). *Qualitative research in practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2004) *Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook*, London: Sage Publications.



References

- Cassell, C.M., Buehring, A., Symon, G., Johnson, P. and Bishop, V. (2005) *Qualitative Management Research: A Thematic Analysis of Interviews with Stakeholders in the Field*, Report for the ESRC.

Contents

Introduction and user instructions

Workshop 1: Skills of the qualitative researcher

Workshop 2: Philosophies that inform qualitative research

Workshop 3: Reflexivity

Workshop 4: Range of qualitative methods

Workshop 5: Qualitative analysis

Workshop 6: Qualitative writing and publishing skills

Workshop 7: Assessment criteria

Workshop 8: Reviewing qualitative papers and research grants

Workshop 9: Supervision for qualitative research