DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH METHODS

Week 3, Lesson 3: Introducing Qualitative Research Methods

Development Research Methods
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What we will cover in today's lesson

1. Designing qualitative research
2. Qualitative research – characteristics, data collection and data recording procedures
3. Qualitative purpose statements
4. Theory use, inductive approach and data analysis in qualitative research
5. Validity, reliability, generalizability and writing-up

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Recap- Philosophical worldviews and strategies of inquiry

Philosophical worldviews	• Post positivist • Constructivist • Transformative • Pragmatic
Strategies of inquiry	• Ethnography • Grounded theory • Case studies • Phenomenological research • Narrative research

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Recap- What is Qualitative Research?

- An approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.
- The process of research involves
  - Emerging questions and procedures
  - Data typically collected in the participant's setting
  - Data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes
  - The researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data
- Qualitative research honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.

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What is Qualitative Research?

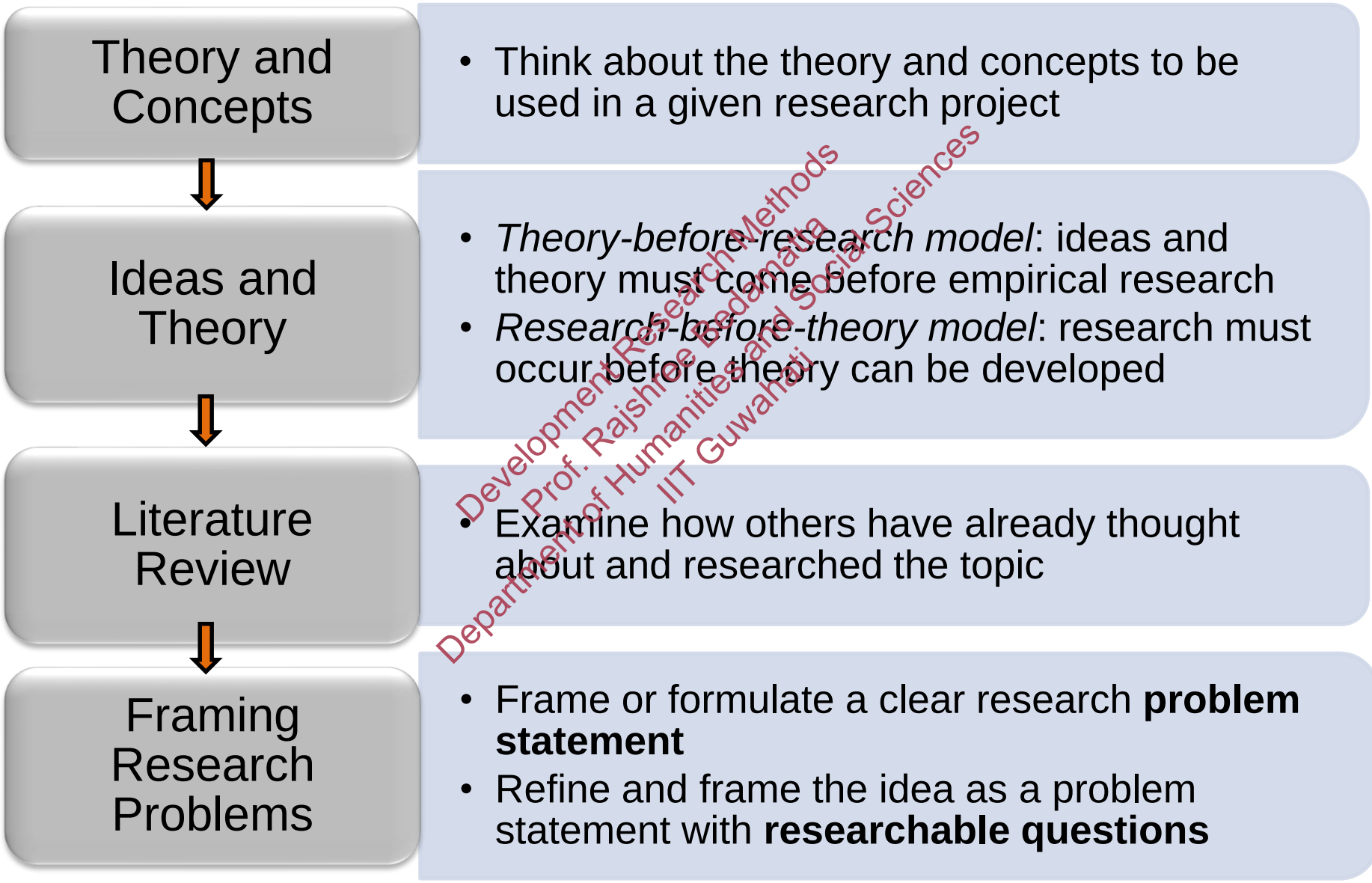
	Qualitative approach
Philosophical assumptions	• Constructivist/advocacy/participatory knowledge claims
Strategies of inquiry	• Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative
Methods	• Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data
Practices of research as the researcher	• Positions him-herself • Collects participant meanings • Focuses on a single concept or phenomenon • Brings personal values into the study • Studies the context or setting or participants • Validates the accuracy of findings • Makes interpretations of the data • Creates an agenda for change or reform • Collaborates with the participants

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Designing Qualitative Research

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Designing Qualitative Research



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Theory-before-research or Research-before-theory

Idea -> Theory -> Design -> Data Collection -> Analysis -> Findings

Idea -> Design ->> Data Collection ->> Theory -> Analysis ->>Findings

Idea -*~ Literature review -*~ Design -*~ Data collection and organisation -. Analysis and findings -*. Dissemination

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Designing Qualitative Research-2

Operationalization

- Defines the intended meaning of a concept in relation to a particular study and provides criteria for measuring the empirical existence of that concept
- Explaining terms or concepts to mean what you want it to mean throughout the research

Conceptualization

- Also to form an agreement over what a concept means and how that concept is to be identified and examined

Designing Projects

- Designing the plan for how the study will be conducted

Data collection and Organisation → **Data storage, Retrieval, and Analysis** → **Dissemination**

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A Checklist of Questions for Designing a Qualitative Procedure-1

1. Are the basic characteristics of qualitative studies mentioned?

2. Is the specific type of qualitative strategy of inquiry to be used in the study mentioned? Is the history of, a definition of, and applications for the strategy mentioned?

3. Does the reader gain an understanding of the researcher's role in the study (past historical, social, cultural experiences, personal connections to sites and people, steps in gaining entry, and sensitive ethical issues)?

4. Is the purposeful sampling strategy for sites and individuals identified?

5. Are the specific forms of data collection mentioned and a rationale given for their use?

6. Are the procedures for recording information during the data collection procedure mentioned (such as protocols)?

7. Are the data analysis steps identified?

8. Is there evidence that the researcher has organized the data for analysis?

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A Checklist of Questions for Designing a Qualitative Procedure-2

9. Has the researcher reviewed the data generally to obtain a sense of the information?

10. Has coding been used with the data?

11. Have the codes been developed to form a description or to identify themes?

12. Are the themes interrelated top show a higher level of analysis and abstraction?

13. Are the ways that the data will be represented mentioned-such as in tables, graphs, and figures?

14. Have the bases for interpreting the analysis been specified (personal experiences, the literature, questions, action agenda)?

15. Has the researcher mentioned the outcome of the study (developed a theory, provided a complex picture of themes?)

16. Have multiple strategies been cited for validating the findings?

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Qualitative research – characteristics, data collection and data recording procedures

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The Characteristics of Qualitative Research

1. **Natural setting**: Data collection takes place in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem
2. **Researcher as key instrument**: Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants.
3. **Multiple sources of data:** Gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information rather than rely on a single data source.
4. **Inductive data analysis**: Inductive data analysis involves building patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information.

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The Characteristics of Qualitative Research-2

5. **Participants' meanings**: The focus is on the meanings that the participants hold about the problem or issue.
6. **Emergent design**: The initial plan for research may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data.
7. **Theoretical lens**: Use lens to view the study such as the concept of culture, central to ethnography, from the theoretical orientations.
8. **Interpretive**: Researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand.
9. **Holistic account:** Develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. Involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges.

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Qualitative data collection methods

1. **Individual interviews-** can be unstructured, semi-structured or structured
2. **Focus groups** - used when it is better to obtain information from a group rather than individuals.
3. **Observations** - may take place in natural settings and involve the researcher taking lengthy and descriptive notes of what is happening.
4. **Written descriptions by participants-** people asked to write descriptions of their experiences of phenomenon.
5. **Ethnography**- a methodology for descriptive studies of culture and people and looks at the people, cultures and commonalities of shared experiences.
6. **Action Research**- Enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work.

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Data Collection Procedures

1. **Identify** the purposefully selected sites or individuals for the proposed study. A discussion about participants and site might include four aspects:
   - **the setting** (where the research will take place),
   - **the actors** (who will be observed or interviewed),
   - **the events** (what the actors will be observed or interviewed doing), and
   - **the process** (the evolving nature of events undertaken by the actors within the setting).
2. **Indicate** the type or types of data to be collected.
3. Be **specific** about the types of data collection and include arguments concerning the strengths and weaknesses of each type.
4. **Include** data collection types that **go beyond** typical observations and interviews.

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Observations - Options, advantages and limitations

Options	• Complete participant-researcher conceals role • Observer as participant-role of researcher is known • Participant as observer-observation role secondary to participant role • Complete observer-researcher observes without participating
Advantages	• Researcher has a first-hand experience with participant • Researcher can record information as it occurs • Unusual aspects can be noticed during observation • Useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss
Limitations	• Researcher may be seen as intrusive • Private information may be observed that researcher cannot report • Researcher may not have good attending and observing skills • Certain participants (e.g., children) may present special problems in gaining rapport

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Interviews - Options, advantages and limitations

Options	• Face-to-face-one-on-one, in-person interview • Telephone-researcher interviews by phone • Focus group-researcher interviews participants in a group • E-mail internet interview
Advantages	• Useful when participants cannot be directly observed • Participants can provide historical information • Allows researcher control over the line of questioning
Limitations	• Provides indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees. • Provides information in a designated place rather than the natural field setting. • Researcher's presence may bias responses • Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.

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Documents - Options, advantages and limitations

Options	• Public documents, such as minutes of meetings, or newspapers • Private documents, such as journals, diaries, or letters.
Advantages	• Enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of the participants. • Can be accessed at a time convenient to researcher-an unobtrusive source of information • Represents data which are thoughtful in that participants have given attention to compiling them • As written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing.
Limitations	• Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive. • May be protected information unavailable to public or private access. • Requires the researcher to search out the information in hard-to-find places • Requires transcribing or optically scanning for computer entry • Materials may be incomplete • The documents may not be authentic or accurate.

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Audio-visual materials – Options, advantages and limitations

Options	• Photographs • Videotapes • Art objects • Computer software • Film
Advantages	• My be an unobtrusive method of collecting data • Provides an opportunity for participants to directly share their reality • It is creative in that it captures attention visually.
Limitations	• May be difficult to interpret • May not be accessible publicly or privately • The presence of an observer (e.g., photographer may be disruptive and affect responses).

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A list of qualitative data collection approaches

Observations

- Gather field notes by conducting an observation as a participant.
- Gather field notes by conducting an observation as an observer.
- Gather field notes by spending time as a participant than as an observer.
- Gather field notes by spending more time as an observer than as a participant.
- Gather field notes first by observing as an outsider and then moving into the setting and observing as an insider.

Interviews

- Conduct an unstructured, open-ended interview and take interview notes.
- Conduct an unstructured, open-ended interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe it.
- Conduct a semi-structured interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe it.
- Conduct a focus group interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe it.
- Conduct different types of interviews: email face-to-face, focus group, online focus group, telephone interviews.

Documents

- Keep a journal during the research study.
- Have a participant keep a journal or diary during the research study.
- Collect personal letters from participants.
- Analyze public documents (e.g., official memos, minutes, records, archival materials).
- Examine autobiographies and biographies.
- Have participants take photographs or videotapes (i.e., photo elicitation).
- Chart audits.
- Medical records.

Audio-visual Materials

- Examine the physical trace evidence (e.g., footprints in the snow).
- Videotape or film a social situation or an individual or group.
- Examine photographs or videotapes.
- Collect sounds (e.g., musical sounds, a child's laughter, etc).
- Collect e-mail messages.
- Collect cell phone text messages.
- Examine possessions or ritual objects.
- Collect sounds, smells, tastes, or any stimuli of the senses.

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Data Recording Procedures

- Use a protocol for recording observational data. Researchers use an observational protocol for recording information while observing.
- Use an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview.
- Researchers record information from interviews by asking hand-written notes, by audiotaping, or by videotaping.
- The recording of documents and visual materials can be based on the researcher's structure for taking notes.

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References used for this lesson

- Bruce L. Berg, “Qualitative Research Methods For The Social Sciences” 2001, A Pearson Education Company.
- John W. Cresswell, “ Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches”, 2014, Sage Publications.
- Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, “Doing Development Research”, 2006, Sage Publications.
- Britha Mikkelsen, “Methods For Development Work And Research, A New Guide For Practioners, 2005, Sage Publications.

For a comprehensive literature on the topics covered in this lecture it is also suggested that students go through the reference list of the above cited papers.

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