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UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Qualitative Research Methods

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Agenda

II. Interpretation
III. Reporting Focus Group Results
IV. Guidelines for writing up
V. Quality Criteria for Qualitative Research Methods

II. Interpretation

- In interpretation one makes a construal – asks what something means, or grasps the sense of it.
- Metaphors (life is a journey) can be used.
- Interpretation is creative and subjective.
- Interpretation as understanding the meanings of others requires **immersion**.
- However, interpretation as seeking patterns in meanings (constructs) and as deciphering cultural codes represents a **distancing**.

III. Reporting Focus Group Results

1. Consider the audience

- For academia: Reports should focus on uncovering theories, principles, or truth to guide future research – to add to the existing body of knowledge.

- For those who make day-by-day decisions: Reports should serve the practical needs of given audiences – assist decision makers (should a new product be launched?).

2. Consider the writing style

- Emphasis on clarity and understanding.
- Formal and succinct.
- Quotations, illustrations, or examples of concepts are encouraged.
- Complex research procedures must be explained in an understandable way.
- Link sections or subsection with a phrase or sentence with what has gone before: Given the situation described in section…
- Briefly describe the argument to be made in the section at its beginning: Seven deficiencies in models found…
- End each section with a summary.

3. Arrange the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in a logical sequence.

4. Consider the style of the report

- The report must look attractive/professional
- Traditionally a narrative style – narrative report uses complete sentences and is augmented with quotes.
  An alternative is the bulleted or outline report, which uses key words and phrases to highlight the critical points (is gaining in popularity).
- **Structure of reports for practitioners**:
  - Cover Page: title, names of people receiving the report, names of the researchers, date of submission.
  - Summary: executive summary, why FG were conducted, major conclusions and recommendations.
  - Table of content
  - Statement of the problem, key questions, study methods
  - Results/findings
  - Limitations and alternative explanations
  - Recommendations
  - Appendix

- **Structure of reports for examiners or reviewers:**
  - Research problem
  - Delimitations of scope – confines and context of the research
  - Literature review – develops the research issues
  - Methods of data collection, justification of the methodology
  - Analysis of data
  - Interpretation/Discussion
  - Conclusions and implications

- **The key questions (big ideas) serve as the outline for the written report.**

  Three different styles:
  - Questions/idea followed by all participant comments (**raw data model**).
  - Summary description followed by illustrative quotes (**descriptive model**).
  - Summary description with illustrative quotes followed by an interpretation (**interpretative model**).

- **descriptive summary** - what was said.
- **analytical summary** - order of analytical thinking, clearly illustrate how you get to your result - procedures for collecting data.

IV. Guidelines for writing up

- Consider guideline for scientific working – available at the intranet!
- Use British English!
- Make paragraphs
- When using tables:
  - the following table summarises…
  - give tables a number and heading
- Consider writing style!
  - *we* observed – *it* was observed
  - We noticed – *it* was ….
  - We first read through the entire interview - …
  - We can state that the interview was conducted in a good way – *it can be stated that the interview…*
  - Concerning the 5 main problems in the labs –
- Bibliography vs. References

V. Quality Criteria for Qualitative Research Methods

1. Documentation of the Research Process

- research question and aim of the research (clear statement why the researcher has decided for this particular method)
- research methods and the context within which the method was applied (description of the method, indication of the interview situation)
- transcription rules applied
- the data (transcripts, documents used – Appendix)
- of the data analysis method (various steps of data analysis)
- description of the information sources (where does the information come from – observations, paraphrases, verbatim comments)
- decisions and problems encountered (which problems and contradictions did arise in data analysis – what could not be solved?)
- criteria applied
- reflexive documentation – self-reflexive analysis of the researcher in the research process

2. Literature Review

- Is the LR comprehensive?
- Are the main concepts identified, described and critically analysed?
- Does the student demonstrate adequate knowledge of the main theories?
- Were the pertinent sources quoted?

3. Indication of the Research Process

- Research question:
  - Are the methods applied adequate to answering the research question
  - Were the best/most suitable methods applied?
- Selection of methods:
  - Were different methods applied (triangulation)?
  - Indication of transcription rules
  - Indication of sampling strategy (who was not selected and why?)

- Data Collection, Analysis, Interpretation, Results:
  - Is it clear and reproducible how the researcher has analysed the data to get to his conclusions?
  - Is clearly demonstrated if the categories/themes were determined ex ante or if they derived from the data?
  - Is clearly demonstrated how categories were built (coding procedure)?
  - Were all data analysed?
  - Were answers compared/contrasted with other individuals/groups/contexts?
  - Is the applied data analysis procedure reliable? Were codified methods applied (grounded theory)? Was data analysis carried out systematically?
  - Were other groups involved in data analysis? (debriefing etc. – validation!)
  - Are the results reliable? Are interpretations coherent? Were arguments by the researcher critically reflected? (pro and cons). Were the results validated by the interviewees?

- Are quotations used to support theory building?
- Does the theory adds to the theoretical and practical problem solving which the research aims at?
- How relevant are the results for the industry/theory building?

– Coherence:
  - Are contradictions in the data brought into interpretations? How were deviant cases dealt with? Were deviant cases explicitly searched for?

– Implications and Limitations:
  - Are the results discussed in a wider context?
  - Are recommendations given?
  - Are limitations of generalisations highlighted?
  - Are weaknesses of the research design discussed?
  - Are unsolved problems and contradictions presented?

– Reflection on Subjectivity:
  - Is the bias brought in by the researcher discussed and critically reflected?

4. Ethics

- Are ethics in data collection considered and discussed adequately? Was the aim and content of the research explained adequately to the individuals/researched? Was confidentiality and anonymity guaranteed?