

Qualitative methodology: creating a dynamic research process

Exploring / Comparing Instruments

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Abstract

The aim of this poster is to highlight what can be done using qualitative methodology in order to create a PhD thesis qualitative and dynamic research framework. It shows up the different steps and their reflexive links.



Introduction

Qualitative methods use a wide range of instruments that can be combined in order to gain different forms of knowledge and obtain complementary insights in between the participant and researcher interaction. Few researches on occupational health use qualitative methodology to understand the links between health perceptions and health problems related to work activity. At the crossing point of Qualitative Health Psychology and Occupational Psychology, the foreground of this presentation is a post-modern approach using a Constructivist paradigm.

Semi-structured Interviews

Phenomenological interview
Technique: Open-ended questions based upon interview guide
Authors: Giorgi, 1997; Smith, 1998, Santiago Delefosse, 2001
In depth exploration of the lived experience
Elicit individual's personal reaction to the phenomenon under exploration
Participant's freedom of expression
Avoid imposing the researcher's structures and assumptions
Can follow emotional pathways of thought

Limits

Participant's desire to make good impression
Influence of the interviewer's skills
Consistency of the answers
How data will be interpreted
Lack of developmental perspective

Focus groups

Technique: small group of participants "focused" on a specific topic to discuss (video, text or questions).
Authors: Giami, 2001; Duchesne & Haegel, 2004; Wilkinson, Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Markova, Grossen & al., 2007
Collective meaning-making and socially shared activity
Meanings construction in interaction with others
Opportunity to observe this construction of ideas, beliefs or opinions
Importance of the interactions between participants: group dynamic
Flexibility of the method
Generalisation possibility with data for researcher
Empowerment for participants

Limits

Moderation of the discussion flow
Turns of talk sharing
Difficulty of transcribing the group data
Lot of planning and preparation

To explore Nurses' health at work practices and experiences (my PhD thesis in progress), I developed a **specific dynamic research process** in order to observe:

- Health at work practices, experiences and representations for nurses.
- The individuals' strategies and resources to maintain a "good health" despite the stress and constraints of a hard and demanding workload.
- What does it mean to be sick or healthy at work?
- The links between the individual and collective representations of health at work.

Focus on activity Interviews

Technique: two-steps interview using the "tu" for the description of the exchange of workload
Authors: Oddone, Re, & Briante, 1981; Clot, 1999, 2001; Clot & Faïta, 2000; Scheller, 2001, 2003
Accurate description of the work activities
Insight upon how to make the job and not about why to do it
Meanings co-construction
Avoid generalities, resistances and researcher's assumptions

Limits

Complex technique
Specific to the world of work
Participant's desire to make a change
Inadequacy of "tu" in a health and sickness context

Results

Similar topics quality and quantity in Semi-structured interviews and Focus on activity interviews.
Richness of second step interviews: thoughts elaboration
Elicit individual's insight on focusing upon personal thoughts
Provide information on participant's motivation for changes and/or changes in progress
Relevance of generalization allowed by the focus groups.

Discussion

The dynamic of the new created process may elicit the participant's evolution in the way they would like to go on (empowerment of the research participants). Employing different instruments has clearly an advantage in maximising the validity of qualitative research because each single method can only provide limited knowledge. Yardley & Marks state that: "a combination of approaches may allow the researcher to elaborate, supplement, correct or modify the limited insights gained from each single method (2004, p. 14)."