

Qualitative Research

Paradigms in QR

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Research Paradigms

- A paradigm refers to the 'way things are done' in relation to a subject's development.
- Implies an acceptance by the discipline of some
 - basic beliefs (e.g. the world is round)
 - guidelines on how to approach problems (e.g. test hypothesis)
 - methods used (e.g. experiments)

Two overarching paradigms

- Positivist or Phenomenological

- Quantitative or Qualitative

- Quantitative

 - objectivist, rational scientific, experimentalist, traditionalist

- Qualitative

 - subjectivist, humanistic, interpretivist, through induction

Assumptions of the main paradigms

Quantitative

- ☐ the world is objective to the researcher
- ☐ only knowledge that is observable and measurable can be regarded as knowledge
- ☐ research is unattached from the researchers and phenomenon existed prior to and following their involvement.

Qualitative

- ☐ the world is socially constructed and understood by examining human experience or perception of it
- ☐ broader more complex approach to understanding a phenomenon
- ☐ Research involved in and influences understanding

Examples of QR paradigms

- * Phenomenology

 - * Action Research

 - * Case Studies

 - * Ethnography

 - * Grounded Theory

Phenomenology

- The meaning of a phenomenon for several individuals
- Primarily through interviews where researchers describe their re-lived experience of the phenomenon.
- Seeks to describe the 'essence' of the experience.
- Analysis of meaning from significant statements.

Action Research

- the research is an active participant in a socially changing world.
- Process of enquiry of acting, observing and reflection.
- To enter the research phenomenon, attempt to influence it and bring about some change.
- Collaboration between researcher and practitioner

Case Studies

- extensive examination of a single instance of a phenomenon
- focuses on examining the dynamics of the phenomenon. E.g. management worker relations.
- The gathering of detailed information (a rich account) from many sources and stakeholders
- Extensive quoting and textual analysis of interviews, documents, and recorded observations.

Ethnography

- Uses socially acquired and shared knowledge to understand and observe shared patterns
- Ethno – folk; graphy - writing
- Mainly involves observation, where the researcher becomes full member of the group under observation, over a long period of time, in a clearly defined location
- Seeks to interpret the social world in the way that the members of the group do.

Grounded Theory

- A systematic set of procedures to inductively derive a grounded theory of a phenomenon.
- Theory is built post study instead of being set out prior to study and tested
- To build practice which is likely to be useful to those in the situation
- Following inductive theory development, researcher departs and deductively through rational thinking, and then returns to test.
- Iterative re-modification continues

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Question :

What approach(es) would you take when exploring a qualitative phenomenon?