



Prifysgol Cymru
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University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Research Methods Workshop

Workshop / Session 4

Research Design

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



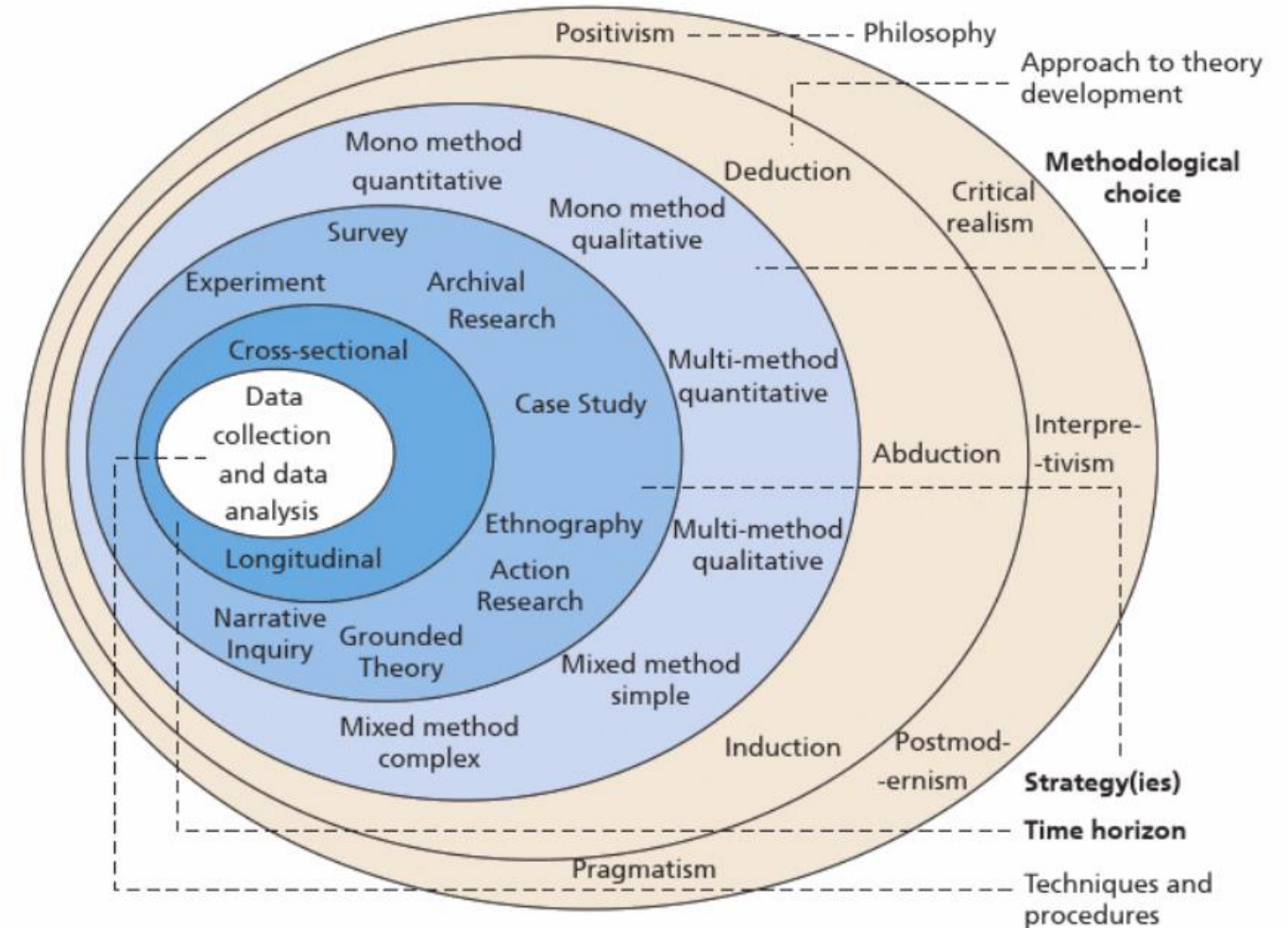
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This Session's **Aims**

- understand the differences between quantitative, qualitative & mixed methods research designs and choose between these.
But this workshop will be focussing on qualitative design
- understand the differences between exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and evaluative research
- identify the main research strategies and choose from among these to achieve coherence throughout your research design
- consider the implications of the time frames required for different research designs

Research Design

- general plan to HOW you will go about answering your research questions (your strategy)
- specifies your data sources, data collection and analysis method
- discusses benefits and constraints (access, time, location, costs) of your chosen approach
- is influenced by your research philosophy and approach to theory development



METHODOLOGICAL CHOICE

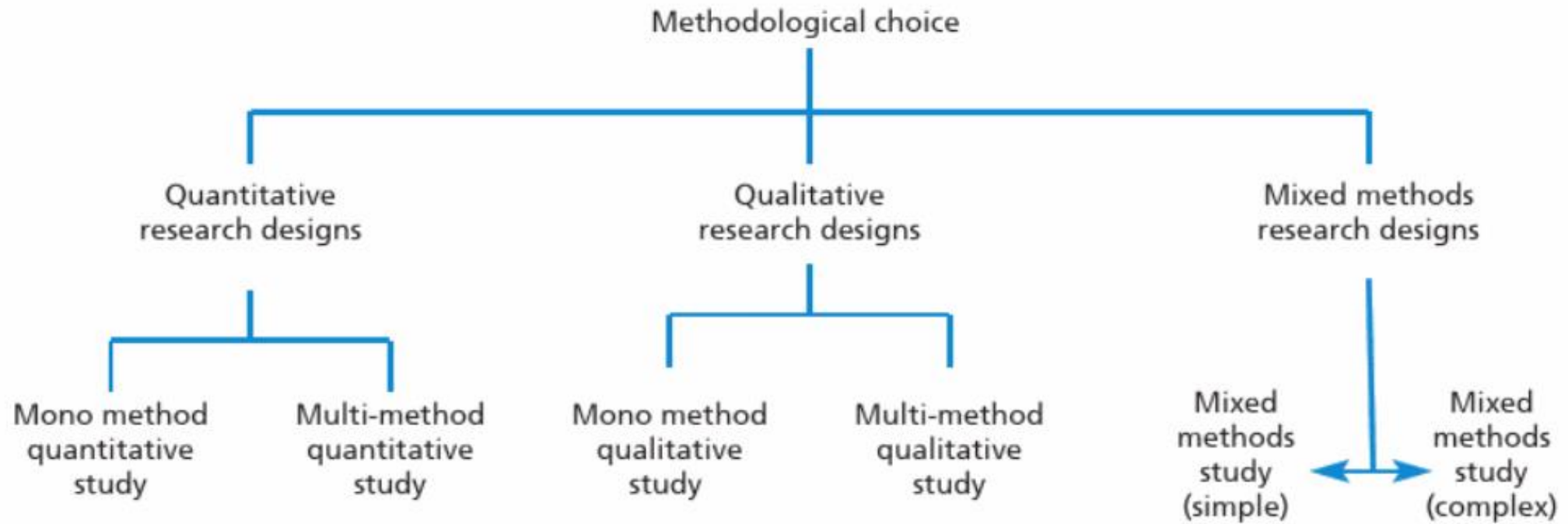


Figure 5.2 Methodological choice

Quantitative Research Designs

- mainly associated with positivism, but also fits to critical realism and pragmatism
- uses highly structured collection techniques, such as experiments and surveys
- examines relationships between variables which are measure numerically and analysed using statistics
- usually associated with deductive approaches (test hypotheses), but can also be used for induction (“let the data speak”)
- also used to analyse big secondary data sets (e.g. world bank data)

Qualitative Research Design

- mainly associated with interpretism, but also fits to critical realism and pragmatism
- uses unstructured or semi-structures collection techniques, such as interviews or diaries
- examines subjective opinions expressed by participants
- usually associated with inductive approaches (develop new or enrich existing theories)
- meaning is derived from words and images

Mixed-methods Research Design

- mainly associated with pragmatism and critical realism
- integrates the use of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis
- offers a pluralist view and flexibility
- can be used for deduction, induction, and abduction

RECOGNISING THE PURPOSE OF YOUR RESEARCH DESIGN

Explorative Studies

- aims to get a first idea about a topic (relatively unstructured)
- useful to clarify your understanding of an issue / problem
- done by reading the literature, talking to experts, and/or conduction focus group discussions
- it might show you that the research in it's current form is not worth pursuing / need adjustments
- it's a first step, needs to be done very early on

Descriptive Studies

- Aims to describe a situation or a series of event in accurate detail
- Answers questions: Who? What? Where? When? How?
- Is an extension of explorative studies
- However, be aware that it is only a intermediate step – just describing a topic is not enough to get a good mark
- You need to draw conclusions based on it!

Explanatory / Evaluative Studies

- aim to analyse relationships between variables in order to answer WHY something is as it is
- aim to analyse the efficiency of a policy / strategy
- can be qualitative - possibly compares different opinion of people with different characteristics
- can be quantitative - possibly calculates the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable
- is the final step of your research

CHOOSING A RESEARCH STRATEGY

Case Studies

- most of you will be working on a case study
- case studies research a topic within a specific setting and context
- a “case” can refer to a range of settings, such as a country, a city, an industry, or a company
- you can work on one case or compare different cases with each other
- in your dissertation, you need to describe the boundaries of the case and its characteristics
- you need to explain why the case(s) is(are) interesting to be investigated

Quantitative Strategies - Experiments

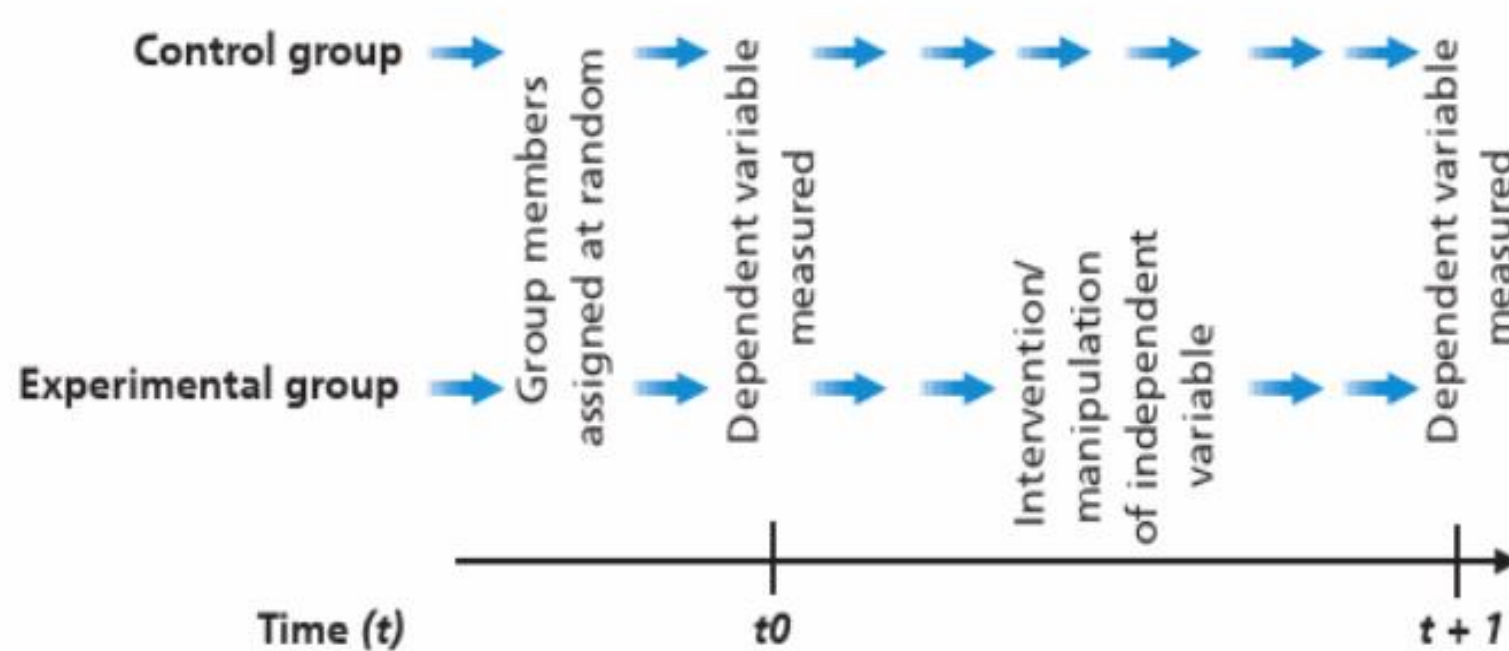


Figure 5.4 A classical experiment strategy

Quantitative Strategies - Surveys

HARP Statements							
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Your views on the nature of reality (ontology)							
1	Organisations are real, just like physical objects.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Events in organisations are caused by deeper, underlying mechanisms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	The social world we inhabit is a world of multiple meanings, interpretations and realities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	'Organisation' is not a solid and static thing but a flux of collective processes and practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	'Real' aspects of organisations are those that impact on organisational practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Qualitative Strategies – Document Analysis

- communications between individuals or within groups such as email, letters, social media and blog postings;
- individual records such as diaries, electronic calendars and notes;
- organisational documents such as administrative records, agendas and minutes of meetings, agreements, contracts, memos, personnel records, plans, policy statements, press releases, reports and strategy statements;
- government documents such as publications, reports and national statistics data sets;
- media documents including printed and online articles and other data.

Qualitative Strategies – Grounded Theory

- based on interview transcripts
- requires you to develop codes, which help to analyse the transcripts
- codes are created based on the main factors of interest
- requires you to write memos, highlighting what the codes mean, how they are used, and how they are related

CHOOSING A TIME HORIZON

Cross-Sectional vs. Longitudinal Studies

Cross-Sectional Studies

- study a particular phenomenon at a given point in time
- analyses difference among observations (e.g. skills of employees)
- takes less time to collect the data

Longitudinal Studies

- study change in a particular phenomenon over time
- analyses differences in change among observations (e.g. evolution of skills of employees)
- requires to survey/interview the same observations at different point in time
- takes more time to collect the data
- however, there is a huge amount of secondary data you can use

Final Points to highlight

- be aware that you need to achieve methodological coherence throughout your research design
- be aware that you always have to justify WHY you have chosen a specific research design
- be aware that you have to describe all aspects of your research design (e.g. sample size, variables, location of the data collection)
- be aware that, if you work on a case study, you need to describe the case in detail

Research Activity

Have a look at page 222 of Saunders et al. (2019). Go through the different steps that are listed there. Based on these steps, formulate the research design you want to use for your dissertation.

Write down a reflection of this decision (Which method have you chosen and why?)