

A Companion to Qualitative Research

Bhanu Timseena

Editors: Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff and Ines Steinke. 2004 (English edition) **Companion to Qualitative Research**. Sage Publications: London: Thousands oaks. Total 369 pp. excluding reference, index, cover page, table of contents, notes on editors and contributors, preface and acknowledgements.

Original publication in the series "Rowohits Enzyklopadie" under the title *Qualitative Forschung-Ein Handbuch* 2000.

Translated by Bryan Jenner

ISBN 0 7619 7374 5

ISBN 0 7619 7375 3 (pbk)

A 'Companion to Qualitative Research' is a collection of articles, and research papers published in books, journals and Internet. The compilation of scattered literature on qualitative research by the editors is a great work for the university researchers, students of social sciences and the professional academicians. Originally, the book was published in German language and later it was translated into English.

The book looks beautiful and well designed and has fine printing in a good quality paper. The whole text is divided into seven parts. Part One is **Introduction**; Part Two **Qualitative Research in Action: Paradigmatic Research Styles**; Part Three **The Theory of Qualitative Research**; Part Four **Methodology and Qualitative Research**; Part Five **Doing Qualitative Research**; Part Six **Qualitative Research in Context**; Part Seven **Literature and Resources of Qualitative Research**. Each part contains number of unique articles.

Part One contains the introduction of qualitative research, its characteristics and its importance in the anthropological and sociological research in modern world. Part Two contains the qualitative research in action with paradigms and styles. The focus of this chapter is historical qualitative research trend in anthropology and sociology. The application of qualitative dimensions in anthropological and sociological research is inferred from the symbolic interactionism of Anselm Strauss in a grounded theory. Second is Erving Goffman's naturalistic observation of face-to-face interaction of people in a real life to understand culture and collect qualitative data, which articulates "naturalism" and "empiricism" through participant observation. The third chapter is the interpretation of Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology. Garfinkel

applied the qualitative research technique to trace out the historical background of certain action of a cultural group. The fourth chapter is by Paul Willis who applied this method in contemporary cultural studies, focusing on the profane culture as a research paradigm that was a deep interpretation of an individual culture rather than interpreting a subordinate culture comparing two and more cultures. Fifth chapter is an analysis of Paul Parin, Fritz Morgenthaler and Goldy Parin-Matthey's ethno-psychological perspective. Clifford Geertz's thick description of Bali culture, and Norman K. Denzin's observation on the process of disciplinary transition from classical sociology to post modern performances are illustrated. Maria Jahoda focused on the absence of narrow mindedness in research, collecting data from the field through case study method.

Part Three contains the theory of qualitative research. In this part, altogether 12 contributors have furnished their views. This part is further divided into sub-groups A and B sub-group. A is related to background theories and B is related to research programs. The sub-group A consists of the phenomenological life-world system contributed by Ronald Hitzler and Thomas S. Eberle. The authors focused on the meaning of phenomenon given by the people to make easy understanding of native culture by the others. Ethnomethodological contribution of Jorg Bergmann analyzed the behavior of everyday life of the people to obtain qualitative data. Analysis of symbolic interactionism of Norman K. Denzin explored a new perspective to look at gender. Denzin says that gender is not only the social matter rather it is a symbol, interactive, racial and performative and non-heterosexual factor. He coined a new word "racial gender" which is exemplified to the dark skinned people as they belong to the lower strata of society in comparison to the white skinned people in the American society. This discrimination is due to the quality of life and unequal life chances among white and black people. Uwe Flick argues qualitative research is constructive method in research and theory building and Hans-Georg Soeffner says that it is scientific hermeneutic.

Sub-group B of Part Three concerns with the research program. In this sub-group, Winfried Marotzki's biographical research emphasizes on the self-writing in research by the respondent, meaning the researcher must experience the same as the respondent feels in everyday life. Heinz Bude stressed on generation research, which is a reconstruction rather than cohort. Anne Honer is of the opinion that qualitative research is wider range ethnographic study, which helps to analyze native perspective and reconstructs the social construct. Rainer Winter said that qualitative research helps to conduct the cultural study from the very historical period. Regine Gildemeister applied qualitative research on gender study. Lutz von Rosenstiel and Ernst von Kardorff's article helps to apply qualitative research on the evaluation of development programs.

Part Four is the collection of articles related to methodologies. Uwe Flick's article is related to research design. Werner Meinefeld's article is related to hypotheses and literature review. Jo Reichertz focused on abduction, deduction and induction in qualitative research. The paper under methodological theme focuses that qualitative and quantitative methods can go together such as the sampling and case construction.

Part Five is concerned with the process and technique of qualitative research. Stephan Wolf concerns on fieldwork. Christel Hopf, Harry Hermanns and many more authors agreed on interview, focus group, ethnography and observation, photography, film videos as sources of qualitative research. All these techniques are used not only in ethnographic study but also in market research and the film videos and photography helps to analyze image of the social constructions like family relations. The photographic analysis is a visual sociology. This part also deals with the analysis of data collected by any tool mentioned above. The analysis contains electronic data analysis through documentation, transcription of conversation, which reflects the feature of behavior (verbal, prosodic, paralinguistic and extra linguistic). Analysis of semi-structured interviews, biographical interviews, qualitative content analysis and text analysis are the important issues for ethnographic study and to obtain historical data. The qualitative data are also analyzed through computer support, which can be helpful to look at the similarities, differences and relationships between passage of text, development of typologies of theories and testing of theories. Instruction on the analysis part is beautifully presented in this book. Every type of data can be analyzed qualitatively along with the quantitative methods. The qualitative analysis mostly qualifies the quantitative data to reach the reality. Analysis of written documents, conversation, genre analysis, discourse analysis, hermeneutics, and verbal data are the part of qualitative analysis. The beauty of qualitative analysis is interpreted by Christiane Schmidt, Gabriele Rosenthal and Wolffarm, Philipp Mayring, Andreas Bohm, Udo Kelle, Stephan Wolff, Jo Reichertz, Jorg R. Bergmann, Hubert Knoblauch and Thomas Luckmann, Ian Parker, and Hans-Dieter Konig. They have given the deep analysis of varieties of data analysis and opened the wider field of multidisciplinary analysis of qualitative data without limiting to ethnographic study. Their analysis proved possibility of qualitative analysis beginning from ethnographic study to developmental project analysis, psychological analysis and even for the reconstruction of existing theories. Heinz Bude has applied the abductive inference by presenting a beautiful interpretation of interview.

Part Six A contains qualitative research context, in which Christel Hopf focuses on the code of research ethics. Uwe Flick and Martin Bauer write on teaching qualitative research to make justified choice of research methods, evaluate data to understand the underlying principles of different research procedures,

and to orient students in professional activities and empirical investigation. Utilization of qualitative research written by Ernst von Kardorf gives ideas about the social-scientific knowledge and its utilization in relating theories, concepts, and methods and procedures that have come to be used in different fields.

Part Six B is concerned with future prospects and challenges in qualitative research. The writing of Hubert Knoblauch indicates that the qualitative research is a hybrid methodology, which needs a heavy work to separate this method from being a supplementary method of quantitative aspect of research. Qualitative research method still faces challenge to become a concrete and standardized method in the postmodern research context. Christian Luders' analysis on the challenges of qualitative research indicates the open methodological questions because of the nature of longitudinal qualitative studies. Alexandre Metraux's worry is on the theory construction in qualitative research. He is of the opinion that there is deficit of theories in qualitative methods but still there is a room to replace old and already existing methods.

Part Seven is related to resources for qualitative researchers: this part contains the annotated bibliography of published text books and handbooks, journals and book series, classic studies and articles, internal sources (web sites and bibliographies), software programs, and university teaching and post graduate education programs. The reference section contains a total of 40 pages and finally the author index and subject index is attached separately.

Thus, the book "A Companion to Qualitative Research" is properly compiled and edited and an attempt is made to explain the meaning and historical development of qualitative research, its areas of application, scope, importance and modern practices, method of data collection, interpretation and analysis, and felt challenges and future prospects. Majority of contributors have expressed their ideas to justify their research work comparing with and inferring from the works of ethnographers and conventional sociologists and anthropologists. The felt challenge is found to be the limited availability of computer software for the qualitative data analysis. Qualitative method has been a hybrid methodology which has tried to develop as a distinct methodology to acquire knowledge and develop theories in social sciences.

In spite of the tremendous value of this book, it is not free from its shortcomings. The book is, indeed, of rudimentary nature and therefore, it lacks the in-depth analysis of the theoretical sophistications needed for the advanced studies in the regime of qualitative studies. The book also lacks the substantive examples for clarifying the theoretical underpinnings of the qualitative research.