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Abstract

The main objectives in the depth of this paper will be to explore and describe the current thought concerning qualitative research, to critically examine research on qualitative research against the general theories of Babbie, Creswell, and Strauss and to identify and describe specific qualitative research methodologies. To achieve this, the paper shall present a critical annotated bibliography of 16 journal articles together with literature review on research methods and especially qualitative research method. Quantitative research method will be critically analyzed. The analysis of these views shall present the perception of qualitative research from the views of the various authors as well as with the intention of giving an oversight and an in-depth understanding of qualitative research.

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Breadth

Theories of research methods: Qualitative research

Introduction

Research generally refers to the process of seeking knowledge. Funnell, (2010) referred to research as a scientific or systematic search for information on a particular issue or subject. Research is an art of investigation where people move from the known to the unknown in an effort to unravel the unknown and make it known. The move to research comes from the inquisitiveness that is in people. It is this inquisitiveness that drives people into finding out what is unknown or wanting to clarify what is already known (Turgo, 2010). The academic world has had an increasing demand for qualitative research even in places where quantitative research is dominant. In recent times, there has been an increased interest on qualitative research from organizations and academic institutions (Blair, 2010). In addition to that, policy and research of intervention have increased their interest in determining people's perspective and have embraced qualitative research. The current world is also experiencing rapid social change and as a result, life worlds are getting diversified, challenging social researchers with new perspectives and contexts. The perspectives and contexts have become so new that the traditional methodologies for deduction have failed because of the differentiation of objects (Taulke-Johnson, 2010). These traditional methodologies included deriving questions of research and hypotheses from models that are theoretical and testing them in opposition to empirical evidence. Therefore, qualitative research has greatly gathered momentum in its development in the current world of research. This paper shall study the various trends that exist in qualitative research.

Current thoughts Concerning Qualitative Research

A qualitative research should be capable of providing complex description of people's experience on a provided research topic. The research provides information on how people perceive the issue that the research topic has brought forth (Ilgen et al. 1993). This perception involves their beliefs, emotions, opinions, relationships as well as their differing behaviors. Other than these, qualitative methods help identify indefinable factors like ethnicity, gender roles, religion, socio-economic status and social norms; factors with no apparent role in the research issue (Köhler, 2010). Qualitative methods can be used together with quantitative methods to give an interpretation and a better understanding of the intricate reality of a specified situation. It is the role of a good qualitative research to gain a complex understanding of the exact social context (Köhler, 2010). Köhler (2010) further noted that qualitative research presents a way of understanding the world and does not have to test any hypotheses. In addition, it does not believe that researchers can have control over the aspects of the world that they are exploring.

According to Clark (2010), a good qualitative research should also serve the purpose of improving a social circumstance. Regardless of the circumstance, the findings of the qualitative research should help improve the situation under investigation. This can be achieved by the researchers seeking to get answers to their issues in the real world. They collect what they read, hear or see from events, places activities and people (Köhler, 2010). Unlike experiments done in laboratories, qualitative research is done in natural settings where the researcher engages the participants in the research. While carrying out their research, the researchers purpose to get knowledge on some aspect of the social world and to produce new understandings for use. The researchers then grow to be part of that process and they continually make choices, test assumptions and reshape their questions (Street, 2011). The researcher gets transformed as the process of inquiry grows from wonder, to knowledge

building and understanding. This transformation process rubs off to the participants too.

Taulke-Johnson (2010) notes that qualitative researchers are increasingly choosing to refer to the subjects as participants.

Features of qualitative research

According to Street (2011), the features of quantitative research include the researcher and the purpose of the research. The researcher is the means of conducting research and the purpose of the research is to investigate some aspect of the social world. Both features are useful to the learning view that presents the learner as the knowledge constructor rather than the receiver. From this view, the learner gathers data that is a representation of reality. Data from the research will then be transformed into knowledge by the learner through a process of analysis and interpretation (Turgo, 2010). The process of transforming data into knowledge is an active process of learning. This presents qualitative researchers as learners and qualitative inquiry gives detailed data for the learning process. The researcher will then make choices that will either shape or will get shaped by the materializing inquiry processes. This means that the purpose and process of the research are interrelated (Hannes, Lockwood, & Pearson, 2010).

Qualitative research is also reliant on sophisticated reasoning. This reasoning is iterative and multifaceted as it moves back and forth amid the parts of research and the whole research. By so doing, the work done by the research is thoroughly scrutinized to ensure that the information presented is reliable. In addition to this, qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. Its main focus is on describing, analyzing and interpreting the study (Noyes, 2010). The study has to be well interpreted before it is used to develop the knowledge on the area that was under study. Street (2011) further stated that qualitative research requires a conscious decision making. Since qualitative research is a systematic research, it involves a deliberate and conscious decision making process where the decisions have to be made on the

moves that have to be carried out by the researcher (Street, 2011). The decisions are made on the data, and they have to be explicated for others to understand how the investigation was carried out and assess the trustworthiness and adequacy of the study. This results in new information that can be used in improving human conditions. Qualitative research is thus a complex inquiry field which draws on several assumptions but embraces some common perspectives and characteristics (Ford, 2009).

Common characteristics of qualitative research

According to Funnell (2010), qualitative researchers are oriented to the empirical world where they can get information on the issues affecting the social world. Qualitative research was developed to help in understanding the lived experiences of people in the society. In carrying out their research, the researchers identify with people through various methods (Frost et al. 2010). These methods include interactive as well humanistic methods. This means that the researchers use primary techniques like observing, interviewing, examining culture, gathering documents and observing. Thirdly, the qualitative researchers maintain focus on the context that is essential to the work they are doing. Street (2011) noted that by doing this, it is assumed that exploring the complexities of human experience helps them gain a detailed understanding of the experience. Since qualitative researchers respect the context of the world, they develop a holistic look at the social world, viewing it as an interactive and complex system. The researchers then describe and interpret their findings based on what they gathered from their study (Blair, 2010).

The qualitative researcher is also perceived to be a critical part of the study. This makes the researchers reflect systematically on the effect they have on the flow of life and how the life affects them. The qualitative researchers value their distinctive perception as a source of understanding and not just something that can be cleansed from the investigation. The researchers do not force a rigid framework to the social world but want to get the

constituents of important questions from participants. They use a conceptual framework with guiding questions that can be modified or changed (Riley, 2010).

The nature of qualitative research

Qualitative research does not merely involve the application of the known research method; it also allows the researcher to identify issues from the view of the participants and understand the interpretations and meanings given by them with reference to objects, events and behavior. For the researcher to get information from the participants, the researcher should have an open mind, empathic and curious, flexible and should be able to listen to stories told by people (Blair, 2010). The researchers also study people's natural settings so as to determine how their context influences their behaviors and experiences. The context could be the social context, cultural, physical or economic context. Qualitative research seeks to understand the influences of context on issues of research (Blair, 2010).

According to Allan (2010), qualitative research faces a number of contemporary issues. Allan (2010) emphasizes that the theoretical concerns of qualitative research always have an unoriginal form. The paper took the old television programme format of the twenty questions in addressing the student's concerns for years. Some of the issues that face qualitative researcher include making the decision on the topic of choice and determining the research design. Allan (2010) supposes that the researcher should look into his area of interest carefully before selecting the topic. Further, the researcher should find the target market that will enable him to get the answers to the issues that he needs to address in the research.

Allan (2010) presented the various critical elements from the perspective of qualitative research. The research provides an in-depth understanding and description of human experience. It is also dynamic since there are several traditions that enlighten

qualitative research. Quite often the, researchers will come up with new questions and will try to explore new ways of tackling them. In qualitative research, there is no single way of carrying out research (Blair, 2010). Therefore, the approach taken by the researcher should not be fixed. In addition, current qualitative research should adopt an inductive way of thinking. This way, the research moves from the specifics to the abstract. The research should also be holistic where a situation is studied in entirety and not identification of variables that are specific (Clark, 2010). Clark (2010) also notes that the research should have a variety of data in the natural settings because it studies things that exist. The researcher should also have in mind that he/she plays an important role and should not in any way be biased. The way of thinking should not be linear but nonlinear and should have various beginning points (Frost et al 2010).

Debates have been run on whether researchers are born or they can be made. This debate leads to the issue of the dispositions in qualitative research (Funnell, 2010). Funnell (2010) presented two sets of people; the calculator and the ponderer. Having defined the two categories of research, Funnell (2010) presented the distinctions of qualitative research. According to him, qualitative research answers many questions However, there are questions that qualitative research cannot answer. These include the “how many”, “what is the strength...” and “what are the causes” (Funnell, 2010). However, qualitative research can unravel the mechanisms that relate certain variables by examining the explanations provided by the involved. Qualitative research achieves excellence in identifying relationships between variables that are statistically significant, like health status and social class. It can also give diagrams that show the strength and distribution of the association between people at various points on the spectrum of the social class. There exists a relation between quantitative research and qualitative research. Nevertheless, employing qualitative research methods helps in understanding how people comprehend concepts, the trade-offs that people might make for

themselves while weighing up options and the decision on whether to choose their opinions or not (Ford, 2009).

At times, new scholars in qualitative research face challenges that are bound to social change. Blair (2010) purposed to give broad education to new scholars on this issue. Blair (2010) argues that reflective writing as well as focus on sited epistemology are two synergy points that present a path that can be used to prepare education for qualitative researchers and that these aspects may be overlooked in practical training that is focused on methods. Blair (2010) suggests that reflexive writing and epistemology are two related concepts that are critical to qualitative researchers' works. Epistemology is presented as understanding knowledge's nature, including its limits, grounds and the connections that exist between power and knowledge. It is suggested that epistemology is at the center stage when it comes to training the qualitative researchers (Turgo, 2010). In addition, reflexivity writing is presented as the mindfulness of the intersection of researchers' experiences and understanding with the research they are partaking at all levels. The article argues that qualitative researchers should have reflexivity as a significant competency that links epistemology questions to identity notions. This is rightly presented since it is vital the researcher reflects on what he is doing and how it is related to what he has experienced (Turgo, 2010).

Since qualitative research is an interactive technique that is based on the experience of people, understanding the knowledge that is being researched and reflecting on its relation to the researcher and the experience presented makes this article relevant to qualitative research (Hannes et al. 2010). For instance, according to Hannes, et al (2010), reflexive writing will push the researchers into taking perspective and gaining distance on their own interpretation and knowledge and as a result, helping them to clarify their goals, theoretical framework, design, analysis and epistemology. Further, by reflecting and by having the knowledge of the

people they are going to research from, they are able to handle the issues that may arise from social change (Hannes et al. 2010).

Social researchers usually negotiate how to use qualitative research methods in applied research, for instance, paying clients. Under such a research, the relationship between the client and the contractor is essential. From a study conducted by Brown (2010), the researchers it was revealed that these researchers described their orientation in various ways, including the ethnographic, critical, policy analysis and feminist. These researchers were found to adopt three approaches to the philosophy of social science. These include the committed approach, the pragmatic approach and the skeptical approach (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2009). The approaches chosen were not related to the length or security of their employment. The committed approach was used by those who were secured in their approach; for example, the critical realist and the critical feminist (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2009). Besides this, pragmatic researchers represented those committed to the representation of a particular group that was underrepresented. The last approach of skeptics included the researchers who considered an open philosophical approach to be unnecessary in providing constructive practical results (Brown, 2010).

For most researchers in the private sectors, qualitative research is reported to be their choice of research because it is more reliable and objective. This is because of the advantages of qualitative research in terms of what it can do. According to Brown (2010), the research provides explanations, understands the processes and the interplay between structures and agency and gives accounts of experiences and understandings. Qualitative research also allows the process of the research to evolve and generates richer data. Although the research may at times be criticized for not explaining assumptions, or selective use of evidence, it is still preferred because of its importance to knowledge. Brown (2010) further proposed the

criteria for determining the quality in a research. He proposed that it should be reliable, transparent and explanatory.

The qualitative research cycle

According to Cutcliffe and Harder (2009), qualitative research cycle involves three cycles that are interlinked. They include the design cycle, the ethnographic cycle and the analytic cycle. The design cycle is the first of the qualitative research cycle and consists of some tasks viz: forming the research question, reviewing of literature and integrating theory, developing the conceptual study framework and choosing the right approach for fieldwork (Cutcliffe & Harder 2009). The ethnographic cycle describes the critical tasks in qualitative collection of data, that is, the design of the instrument for research, recruiting of participants, collection of data and making inferences that are inductive (Cutcliffe & Harder, (2009). Finally, the analytic cycle comprises the significant tasks of qualitative analysis of data. These include development of codes, describing and comparing, categorizing data, conceptualizing data and developing the theory. The tasks are closely interconnected and are repeated throughout the process of analysis. This tasks are done simultaneously at various points during the analysis (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2009).

Why people carry out qualitative research

Qualitative research is not entirely the solution to research, but there are several reasons as to why people take on qualitative research. Clark (2010) presented some of the reasons through examination of researchers' understanding of the supporting mechanisms which facilitate and motivate engagement in research (Clark, 2010). The supporting mechanisms stated include curiosity, subjective interest, social comparison, economic interest, material interest, introspective interest, enjoyment and subjective interest. Other mechanisms include political empowerment, representation and informing change (Clark, (2010). These exist at a collective level. By engaging in qualitative research, the researchers

get an opportunity to express themselves, get satisfied from sharing the important events that happen in their lives, they satisfy their curiosity, and they get led to useful and helpful insights (Ford, 2009).

In addition, the motivating factors for engagement in the research were suggested to be the need to develop research skills, the drive to promote research mindedness and the desire to assist service development (Ford, 2009). However, these need more empirical investigation to boost their grounds. This is because the motivations for different researchers differ. The mechanisms and drivers of research engagement help in supporting the relationships of research in the field. According to Ford (2009), most research works are carried out to contribute to the career of the researcher, to avoid negative outcomes by managing risk, and to accomplish the prerequisites of funding agencies. However, these alone do not support the continual engagement for the researchers.

Ford (2009) presented more benefits of qualitative methods and suggested that the role played by context can be investigated and used in interpretation of findings. Ford (2009) argues that the result of this interpretation is that a specific, relevant and explanatory theory is produced by qualitative research. The role that is played by context in qualitative building of theory was stated to be the examination of the prevailing circumstances and the interpretation of findings. This helps qualitative research to produce theory that is explanatory, more specific and relevant. While carrying out the research, it is important for the researcher to look into the issues that had been researched previously since it helps the attention of the researcher to be turned to different issues and this results into new insights on the phenomena of interest (Ford, 2009).

Cutcliffe (2009) states that data that are full of context helps the readers to determine the relevance of the data and the theory that is presented. The exercise of building theory requires rich description. The richness of the description comes from the anecdote. Most

organizations seek to use qualitative research because it has the ability to generate explanations on the existence of relationships (Cutcliffe, 2009). The descriptions that are generated by qualitative research allow people to think concretely on new concepts and to work creatively with the concepts. The relevance of context rich data comes from its ability to generate theory that is significant. Qualitative research assumes that the informants have excellent judgment on the issues that are being examined. This means that the informants should be allowed to set the agenda and underline their perspectives. This generates theory that is based upon the data that has been linked to the participants' experiences (Ford, 2009, pp3).

The concept of parsimony in qualitative research

Various issues are concerned with parsimony as related to qualitative research. This is because parsimony is the simplest explanation given on something, and this is important to research since it enhances the understanding of the research (Cutcliffe, 2009). Cutcliffe (2009) argues that it would be inappropriate to use the notions of parsimony from the quantitative perspective; but the epistemological functions, the ideas and principles held by parsimony, can be applied to the concept of qualitative research. This advances the argument that a relationship exists between elegance and the degree of parsimony. Other factors that are thought to have a relationship with the degree of parsimony were said to be the researcher's level of expertise, the quality of the interview during data collection, straightforwardness and accessibility (Cutcliffe, 2009). Parsimony is important in research because the qualitative findings that do not have parsimony are liable to major implications (Cutcliffe, 2009). Further, parsimony can be used to improve qualitative research.

Approaches to carrying out qualitative research: Pluralism

Qualitative research should not be carried out by following one approach. Various benefits can be obtained from integrating a variety of qualitative approaches. Frost et al

(2010) suggested that each of the approaches is useful, but one must choose the one that is most appropriate to them. In addition, they suggested that combining the approaches is important because it clears the doubt on what the other approach would have presented. Therefore, the pluralistic approach is proposed as an important approach. Before considering the use and combination of the approaches, it is important to consider whether the paradigm of the qualitative research can illustrate how the expectations and assumptions of the researcher can be understood, applied and presented. Choosing a pluralistic approach implies that various layers of interpretation will be presented and this gives a collection of perspectives on the accounts and experiences of the participants. In addition, the approach also helps to increase the transparency of research by understanding the contributions made by various researchers. In fact, if the pluralistic approach is not chosen, questions arise as to whether the researchers have used all the information that is available to them (Frost et al. 2010).

In the study by Frost et al (2010), they employed four approaches in investigating how the pluralistic approach can be used in qualitative research. One of these approaches includes the grounded theory. In this case, the theories are generated to account for behavioral patterns and social processes which are relevant to the involved actors. Another approach is the Foucauldian discourse analysis where examination is done on how two objects and subjects can be constructed in discourse and how to explore their effects. In addition, there is the narrative analysis where stories of people are used to make sense out of their world. The last approach is the interpretative phenomenological analysis where examination is done on the experiences of the lives of individuals.

Qualitative methods

Methods include the exact practical measures and tools that are employed to access and to create data through the use of different forms of interaction with people being studied.

Funnell (2010) suggested that this should not be confused with the methodology since methodology is a general discussion on the assumptions that underpin various methods and the challenges. There also exists limitations and implications of the choice of processes for conducting the research. The sources include documentary and visual sources together with observational fieldwork. Other sources include interviews as well as enhanced case records (Funnell, 2010). These sources include case study research and conversation together with discourse analysis. The methods stated are criticized for concentrating on the “micro” and excluded the “macro” (Funnell, 2010).

Riley (2010) points out that interviewing method in qualitative research has been widely used. Riley (2010) stated that the interview in research is a form of conversation that is specific. The interview in qualitative research has to describe and understand the vital themes that are experienced by the subjects. Usually, the topic is introduced by the interviewer, but it is the subject who chooses the instance of learning from the experience had from day to day experiences. In addition, the interview in qualitative research is usually oriented to the theme. Various aspects are related to the qualitative research interview. To begin with, the interview has to be linked to the life world. It should also seek the meaning of the key theme from the life of the subject to ensure that there is consistency in the final results. Further, it should also be qualitative and should obtain descriptions of various aspects of the life of the subject. The interview should also be specific and should provide specific situations together with the elicited sequences of the action. (Street, 2011).

Street (2011) stated that qualitative research interviews differed in their length, style, participant numbers and questioning. Essentially, they differed in their methodological features. Another way in which they differed was in their epistemological distinctions. Realist approaches on one end assumed that the participants’ accounts during interviews had a direct relationship with their real experiences beyond the interview. On the other end, the radical

constructionist approaches viewed the account as a text that was produced in the setting of the interview for analysis during the interview (Street, 2011).

The work by Street (2011) further outlined that acknowledging the underlying beliefs on knowledge and research was important in the practice of research. In addition, it is suggested that there exists a political context in conducting and disseminating research. Another important finding was that critical appraisal was an integral part of training and practice in research. Critical appraisal of the practice of research can operate within several domains, viz; the appraisal of methodological practices, acknowledging and reflecting on the epistemological commitments and recognizing the influence that the researchers' disciplinary backgrounds have on the knowledge that they produce (Street, 2011).

Online Qualitative Research

The internet has shown great power with its ability to reach people. It has also grown in its ability to communicate to people. Köhler (2010) points out that various modes can be used for communication in the internet. These include chatting and emails. Some perspective of the internet can be used for qualitative research. Köhler (2010) stated that the internet consists of many social contexts which present opportunities that can be utilized in qualitative research. Since qualitative researchers use various methods to gather rich, descriptive and contextually situated data to understand the human experience, the internet can help facilitate this. Köhler (2010) further stated that research on the internet is not concerned with online study of behavior only but also concerned with the use of computer based tools and populations that are accessible to the internet to study the behavior of humans in general. In the field of internet communication and qualitative research, internet is not just seen as a technological tool but also as a fully new and constructed environment that has its own practice codes (Köhler, 2010).

While conducting research on the internet, the email may be used where questions are sent from the researcher to the respondent. The respondent, after answering the question, sends the answers back to the researcher (Köhler, 2010). Focus group facilities can also be used where the researcher uses professionally focused group companies that are designed to conduct research. Usenet newsgroups can also be used. These can be reacted to mailing lists where various emails are contacted through one email. However, the Usenet newsgroups do not take place via mail (Köhler, 2010).

Most qualitative researchers agree that analyzing textual data can be done effectively and reliably when the whole interview is available. This ensures that no information is left out. Köhler (2010) revealed that the thoughts of participants are usually embodied in their words. Therefore, substituting the paraphrased or summaries words of participants implies substituting the consciousness of the researcher with that of the participant (Köhler, 2010). In cases where transcription of verbal interviews is required, a lot of cost is incurred. The use of script that is generated digitally would be appropriate since the script is usually complete and is available for analysis immediately (Frost et al. 2010).

Use of online research has also been appraised for its easier data handling. Qualitative research projects require proper data organization. In addition, it is of paramount concern that field notes on ideas during the research and management of the collected data during or before the research be done carefully to ensure that the outcome is accurate. The use of online research for qualitative research has its own challenges. For instance, it requires technical knowledge of the computer. It also requires that researchers and participants working on real time chat be very fast with typing on the keyboard. In addition, it requires that the researcher makes contact with the participants and recruits them (Frost et al. 2010). This can be achieved through email and sometimes calls for advertisement of the research topic in a manner that will attract the attention of internet users.

Information from online publications can be obtained from the Cochrane library. Owing to the increasing importance of qualitative research, the Cochrane collaboration formed a Cochrane qualitative research methods group tasked with advising the collaboration on how to develop methods that can be used in integrating qualitative evidence into reviews of Cochrane intervention (Noyes, 2010). In his work, Noyes (2010) reported the significant development that was brought about when the Cochrane intervention was reviewed during its evolution. Use of the Cochrane methods has greatly advanced the collection of information from online publications. This has further advanced the use of the internet for qualitative research.

Collecting data

According to Turgo (2010), most studies on qualitative research involve asking questions to respondents and making observations while in the field. Turgo (2010) purported that data collection was more than just a technical exercise. Most interviews that are conducted around the world, for instance through radios, TVs are usually open ended (Noyes, 2010). This is the format that most interviews in qualitative research take. Before conducting the interview, the researcher should define the research problem. Since many research interviews seek to investigate the perception of various people, the interview could give direct access to the experience (Noyes, 2010). This calls for a positivist research model like survey researchers. Although, in cases where the emphasis is laid on elicitation of feelings, use of an emotionalist model is appropriate. The emotionalist or positivist ways can be used to define the research problem (Turgo, 2010).

The general guide given by Turgo (2010) suggests that the research question should not be given directly to the respondent. This is because the responses may be affected by the knowledge of your intentions. It could also result in lazy research where the careful analysis of data is replaced by reporting of what the researcher was told (Taulke-Johnson, 2010). It is

also important that the researcher carries out a pilot study. This will help them familiarize with the context and the environment with which they will carry out their research.

Conducting qualitative research by educators

In most cases, questions arise on the best way of conducting research by educators. Taulke-Johnson (2010) suggested that the answer to this was straight forward. He argued that the scientific approach was the best approach. In this method, the hypothesis is tested, and the cause and effect are determined. Several basic steps are involved in this method. These include developing the question, identifying the related research, developing a hypothesis, designing the experiment, analyzing the data to test the hypothesis and then presenting the results (Taulke-Johnson, 2010). An important characteristic with this approach is that the data and methods used are quantitative. This method is heavily reliant on figures and statistics. Various terms can be used interchangeably to refer to the scientific approach. These include the traditional paradigm, experimental research or positivism (Clark, 2010). Traditional research paradigms usually make some assumptions about the world. They usually assume that there is some objective reality that researchers should try unveil during their research. They also assume that the researcher's role is neutral and the purpose of the researcher is to give the description of an objective reality (Cutcliffe & Harder, 2009).

Evaluation of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been appraised for being trustworthy; even so, it still has to be evaluated to determine its worthiness. Hannes et al (2010) investigated the concept of validity as a vital component in the appraisal exercises of evaluating quantitative studies' methodological quality. A further examination was done on whether validity can be useful in qualitative research together with the criteria that can be used to differentiate articles of high quality from other articles (Brown, 2010). Their article compared the ability of three critical instruments that can be used for appraisal so as to assist in validity assessment. The use of the

CASP (critical appraisal skills program) tool by many users in completing their exercise of critical appraisal was said to be less sensitive as compared to the ETQS (evaluation tool for qualitative studies) and JBI (Joanna Briggs Institute) tools. The ETQS tool gives detailed instructions on the procedure to be followed. On the contrary, the JBI tool is stated to be the most consistent tool because it focuses on congruity.

The tool for choice depends on the use of the qualitative research. For instance, when the qualitative research is used to support a practice that is evidence based, the tool chosen should be more sensitive and should provide the details as required (Brown, 2010).

During the early 1980s, research on performance appraisal was shifted from issues that are related to developing rating scales that are psychometrically sound to those that involve cognitive rater processes. The principles of evaluation have been shifting from social cognition and psychology that is cognitive to the specific conditions of appraisal systems that are formal in organizations that are work-oriented (Ilgen et al. 1993). Ilgen et al (1993) reviewed empirical research in the 1980s, focusing on the processes of performance appraisal. In their view, appraising performance was presented as a process where information is cognitively processed so as to make judgments that are linked to others (Ilgen et al. 1993). The operations involved acquiring, organizing and storing the information. The process also entails retrieving and integrating the information in a way that would enhance the recording of an assessment of the individual to be appraised.

The factors that affect this process have been clustered in the paper into four categories. They include rates, raters, nature of scales and the appraisal settings. After the review, evaluation of the research is done by assessing its contribution to quality improvement of systems that are used by organizations for appraisal. The work by Ilgen et al (1993) traces past research on performance appraisal and then investigates the changes that were made. It further gives details on the reviews that occurred after the changes were made.

These changes include the translation of principles from social and psychological cognition to certain conditions of appraisal systems that are formal and are used in organizations that are work oriented (Köhler, 2010).

Conclusion

Qualitative research is a systematic research that involves a deliberate and conscious decision making process. The decisions are made on the data, and they have to be explicated for others to understand how the investigation was carried out and assess the trustworthiness and adequacy of the study. This results in new information that can be used in improving human conditions. Qualitative research is seen to be a complex inquiry field which draws on several assumptions but embraces some common perspectives and characteristics. In qualitative research, the researches investigate things in natural settings and try to get the sense out of them. They try to interpret phenomena in the way people bring meaning to it. To conduct qualitative research, one needs to learn the methods and internalize the assumptions and concepts that qualitative research underlies. While carrying out the exercise, the research has to go out to the people and seek their opinion by listening to them. This will give the researcher the view of the people on the subject that is being researched. The most appropriate way of gathering information in qualitative research has been reported to be use of interviews. By interviewing, the researcher gets the information from the respondents on a direct face to face mode. However, the researcher should use a careful approach so as not to influence the responses given. At times, the internet could be used in carrying out the research. Through this, the researcher and the respondent need not meet, but they can contact each other via the various internet communication modes. The data gathered can be evaluated using various techniques and then the information can be presented. This will be an increase in the knowledge of the topic that was researched.

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