

Qualitative Research Methods: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Creswell (2014) noted that qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The article embodies a critical analysis of chapters one to twelve of Stake (2010). In chapter one, *Qualitative research: How things work* is seen as qualitative, is based on a comprehensive aim seeking to answer the questions why and how. It analyzes actions and interactions, taking into account the intentions of the actors. An analytic perspective on the interpretation of the Person as an instrument is the thrust of chapter two. Chapter three examines the experiential understanding: Most qualitative study is experiential, in this chapter stake (2010) discusses two common research approaches, qualitative and quantitative methods. Chapter four *Stating the Problem: Questioning How This Thing Works*. Chapter five deals with the *Methods-Gathering Data*, while chapter six illuminates the *Review of Literature: Zooming to See the Problem*. In chapter seven, the author implores the evidence: *Bolstering Judgment and Reconnoitering*. Chapter eight propels *Analysis and Synthesis: How Things Work*. Chapter nine acts as a mirror that invites the researcher to examine their action research and *Self-Evaluation: Finding our Own How our Place Works*. Finally, in chapters ten to twelve, the author compels *Storytelling: Illustrating How Things Work, Writing the Final Report: An Iterative Convergence, and Advocacy and Ethics: Making Things Work Better*. This work is expected to guide future researchers in developing their research in qualitative research.

Keywords-- Qualitative Research, The Thing, Review of Literature, Evidence, Triangulation, Bias

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Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York: A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc.

Editorial Team, 2021). Another author by the name of Allen (2017) mentioned that critical analysis referred to as critical discourse analysis or critical discourse studies, is an approach to research investigating the relationship between language and power by examining how every day "texts" create and reinforce social inequality and hierarchy. For the purpose of this paper an in-depth critical analysis of twelve (12) chapters of the book – as referenced above – has been carried out, using the guidelines of description or summary of Ideas, making meaning or interpretation, and making Judgements or evaluation. A general description will be given. "special attention" has been given to identifying the "various constructs/concepts that are dealt with" with the twelve chapters. The summary of the constructs or concepts within the select chapters will be presented separately. However, the interpretation, and subsequent evaluation sections will be done comprehensively. Please see below for the respective reflections.

Description

This description covers chapters One (1), to twelve (12) of the book "Qualitative Research: studying how things work" by Stake (2010). The selected chapters for this critical analysis explores "Qualitative Research: How Things Work, Interpretation: The Person as Instrument, Experiential Understanding: Most Qualitative Study Is Experiential, Stating the Problem: Questioning How This Thing Works, Methods: Gathering Data, Review of Literature: Zooming to See the Problem, Evidence: Bolstering Judgment and Reconnoitering, Analysis and Synthesis: How Things Work, Action Research and Self-Evaluation: Finding on Your Own How Your Place Works, Storytelling: Illustrating How Things Work, Writing the Final Report: An Iterative Convergence, Advocacy and Ethics: Making Things Work Better. These will be addressed separately in the section titled Summary of main ideas.

Summary of Main Ideas

This section gives summary of main ideas from various chapters.

I. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: HOW THINGS WORK

INTRODUCTION

IET (2021) defines critical analysis as the detailed examination and evaluation of another person's ideas or work. Additionally, they mentioned that It is subjective writing as it expresses the interpretation and analysis of the work by breaking down and studying its parts (Indeed

As cited in stake (2010, p.13) Research on how things work in the grand schemes of knowledge is both a quantitative and a qualitative task (Roth, 2008). Research is inquiry, deliberate study, a seeking to understand.

Stake (2010) states that “professional and clinical knowledge rely heavily on qualitative inquiry. However, refined the instruments used, it is expected that the choices of action will not be mechanically determined but will be reached through interpretation. Those interpretations will depend on the experience of the researcher, the experience of those being studied, and the experience of those to whom information will need to be conveyed. Professional knowledge relies heavily on personal experience, often in an organizational setting” (p. 14).

According to stake (2010, p.14) this book, “studying how things work” does not mean how all things work in general. This is a book on methods to study how human things work in particular situations. Sometimes, we generalize beyond the particular situation, but we concentrate on how things work in certain contexts, at certain times, and with certain people.

This book “is said how things work” More specifically, we consider how things work within the worlds of professional people: educators, trained caregivers, and organizational managers, for example. It is not that their reasoning powers differ from those of scientists and lay people but that the complexity and substance of their reasoning is shared among professional colleagues and not shared widely with many others” (p. 14).

Many people who do qualitative research want to improve how things work. And empathy and advocacy are and should be part of the lifestyle of each researcher. But focusing on doing good can interfere with understanding how things work and ultimately may weaken improvements by “blueprinting” the works too simply. Advocacy may endanger research by getting in the way of skepticism. (p. 14 – 16).

Chapter one gives definition for thing. Stake (2010, p. 26) notes that “The thing is what is being studied: a person, a family, a riot, a corporate merger”. A research project could have more than one thing, or none at all, but most qualitative studies will have a thing. (p.26).

As cited in stake (2010, p.29) qualitative research is subjective. It is personalistic. Its contributions toward an improved and disciplined science are slow and tendentious. New questions emerge more frequently than new answers. The results pay off little in the advancement of social practice. The ethical risks are substantial. And the cost is high (see Silverman, 2000, p. 9).

According to stake (2010) whether we are looking at the real world through quantitative or qualitative eyes, we reconceive the world in terms of the concepts and relationships of our experience. There are times when each

researcher is going to be interpretive, holistic, naturalistic, and uninterested in cause, and at those times, by definition, he or she will be a qualitative researcher (see Glossary). But some of us, valuing the understandings potentially to be reached through qualitative study, will be qualitative inquirers most of the time. (p. 30).

As cited in stake (2010, p.31) qualitative research has moved social research away from an emphasis on cause-and-effect explanation and toward personal interpretation. Qualitative inquiry is distinguished by its emphasis on holistic treatment of phenomena (Silverman, 2000).

II. INTERPRETATION: THE PERSON AS INSTRUMENT

In qualitative research, the humans have a lot to do, planning the study, arranging for situations to observe, interviewing people, examining records, putting patches of ideas together, writing reports. When you think about using instruments in research, you need to include humans as some of the main instruments (Stake, 2010, p.36).

Interpretive Research

According to stake (2010) qualitative research is sometimes defined as interpretive research. All research requires interpretations, and, in fact, human behavior requires interpretation minute by minute. But interpretive research is investigation that relies heavily on observers defining and redefining the meanings of what they see and hear. If no one is hurt, something like a car crash may mean pretty much the same to people—just crush and crumple—but as they think about it, some see the crash as negligence, some as fate, and some as need for stricter laws. Their interpretations are not only what they think after they have stopped to think about it but are part of the seeing. The perceptions we have of objects and events and relationships are simultaneously interpretive. They get continuing reinterpretation. Qualitative research draws heavily on interpreting by researchers—and also on interpreting by the people they study and by the readers of the research reports (p. 36, 37).

As cited in stake (2010, p.37) the interpretations of qualitative research give emphasis to human values and experiences. Norman Denzin, an advocate of interpretive interactionism (a form of qualitative research) has said:

Interpretive interactionism attempts to make the meanings that circulate in the world of lived experience accessible to the reader. It endeavors to capture and represent the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied. The focus of interpretive research is on those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their experiences. (2001, p. 1).

So that is one way of doing qualitative research: finding the meanings of personal transformative experience. Figuring out the “Wow!” in a lifetime. (p. 38).

Empathy

Stake (2010) states that qualitative research is special in its personalistic orientation, relying on empathy with the humans and enterprises studied for understanding how things work. A dictionary will say that to empathize is to look at things closely, becoming sensitive to, even vicariously experiencing, the feelings, thoughts, and happenings (p.46).

We have learned that Empathy is different from sympathy, which is a feeling of personal closeness, endearment, and solace, a feeling of emotional accord. With empathy—which is a matter of perception more than emotion—it is easier, I think, to work for negotiation and problem solving. It is unlikely that empathy and sympathy will exist completely separately, but most qualitative researchers try to be empathic, less driven by sympathy. Empathy is a part of qualitative research, but to be sure, the writings of some researchers will reflect empathy more than those of others (p. 47).

According to Stake (2010) people of all personalities should be involved in qualitative research. It is not just a matter of equal opportunity; it is important to have data gathered by people with different psychological dispositions. Each will add something different to the understanding of a research question. Understanding shifts with the accomplishments of large numbers of people, even though a few may be in special ways more expert than the rest. And the accomplishments of the research community are measured in the accomplishments of all who study human processes (p. 53).

III. EXPERIENTIAL UNDERSTANDING: MOST QUALITATIVE STUDY IS EXPERIENTIAL

Cited in stake (2010, p.55). We learned that qualitative inquiry and quantitative inquiry sometimes look like each other, but they are separated fundamentally (if not always cleanly) by their aims. It is an epistemological distinction, one based on a perception of knowledge that is personally “constructed” versus the one of knowledge as “discovery” of what the world is. Climbing trees is personally constructed knowledge.

In essence we have learned that the important distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is not based on the distinction between verbal description and numerical data. It is a difference between the study of personal knowledge versus the study of objective measurements (p. 56).

Qualitative research tends to be an effort to generate descriptions and situational interpretations of

phenomena that the researcher can offer colleagues, students, and others for modifying their own understandings of phenomena (Stake and Trumbull, 1982). (p.57).

According to Stake (2010,p.62) qualitative research is experiential, using personal judgment as the main basis for assertions about how something works. Because personal judgment needs to be based partly on personal experience, experiential research places heavy reliance on examining the personal experience of people being studied—manager experience, prisoner experience, the experience of others, but also the experience of the researcher. When possible, experiential researchers work face-to-face with the activity, with the problems, with the expectations and ambiguities and contradictions—sometimes immersed in them.

According to Stake (2010, p.65) The purpose of qualitative research is usually not to reach general social science understandings but understandings about a particular situation. By understanding better, the complexity of the situation, we should contribute to setting policy and professional practice.

IV. STATING THE PROBLEM: QUESTIONING HOW THIS THING WORKS

Chapter four of stake (2010) explores the theme of stating the problem within questioning how this thing works. We have learned a number of things about research question (p.77).

According to stake (2010, p.77) The research question helps you keep focus throughout a study. Still, it sometimes happens that you need to refine or even replace your research question during the study. That may be costly, but from what you learned in the previous pages, in qualitative research you may be wise to change the question. Even though brief, the research question tells better than the title of the report what you are going to do and, at the end, what you did. A research question or two or three may be among the important choices you will make in your academic lifetime (p.77).

We have learned that organization of a study should start with a research question, but sometimes it starts with an episode, or what Luisa Rosu (2009) calls a “workable,” a happening needing really deep thinking, needing microanalysis (p.77).

No matter which methods are used, research is about trying to make sense of important questions. The main question, the research question, seldom can be asked well in one sentence. When you propose research—for a contract, dissertation, or any other—you should take several paragraphs or several pages to explain your research question. Stake (2010, p. 87).

We have learned the first thing in the research is the question, then the methods. first, to ask what you need to know; then, how to go about finding it. Better to organize by content (p. 72).

The research question should be more important to you than your research method. What you are studying should be more important than how you are studying it. Of course, some of us, maybe all of us, enjoy particular ways of seeking understanding of how things work. But our understandings would be fragmented and context-bound if we organized our thoughts around our methods (Stake, 2010, p. 71).

V. METHODS - GATHERING DATA

According to stake (2010, p. 88) qualitative researchers seek data that represent personal experience in particular situations.

According to Hodder (1994) as cited in stake (2010, p. 89) qualitative researchers use all kinds of data: numerical measurements, photographs, indirect observation,¹ texting, for example; whatever clarifies the picture of what is going on. They review documents and gather artifacts.

Many qualitative researchers prefer observation data—information that can be seen directly by the researcher or heard or felt⁴—to other kinds. The eye sees a lot (and misses a lot), simultaneously noting who, what, when, where, and why (as newspaper people are supposed to do) and particularly relating them to the story or the assertions forthcoming— that is, to the research question (p.90).

According to stake (2010, p. 95) interviews are used for a number of purposes. For a qualitative researcher, perhaps the main purposes are:

1. Obtaining unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed
2. Collecting a numerical aggregation of information from many persons
3. Finding out about “a thing” that the researchers were unable to observe themselves

The first and the third are tailored to the individual person and often should be conversational, with the interviewer asking probing questions to clarify and refine the information and interpretation (p.95).

Methods for gathering data are selected to fit the research question and to fit the style of inquiry the researcher prefers. Some qualitative researchers give high priority to open-ended questions, minimizing categorical and yes–no questions, and these have value when it is the interviewee’s story or the program history that is needed. But many questions and views needed to develop a research question have to be composed by the researcher to get information (p.89 -90).

VI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE: ZOOMING TO SEE THE PROBLEM

Stake (2010, p. 104) states that the review of literature is considered evidence that the doctoral student has sufficiently examined the theoretical writing and research publications as a conceptual base for the proposed study.

Refining the Problem to be Studied

For describing the research, stake (2010) talks about the research question first, but the question would not exist without at least a scattering of “literature,” including ideas from the classroom, documentaries, personal experience—informal, as well as formal, literature. Often the patterns of ideas of various leaders, such as Albert Shanker, teachers’ union founder, and Peter Drucker, social ecologist, give shape to the early collection. But before that, the interest in a literature would not exist without an intellectual curiosity, without at least a small realization that something was worth studying. Similarly, with actual development of a review of literature, the researcher goes back and forth, thinking about the problem, taking note of what others have done, acknowledging the refinement of the research question during the study, and seeing new ties with the literature. It’s back and forth, iterative (p. 104 & 105).

A qualitative researcher needs to represent one or more main concepts, particularly for planning the study but also to assist interpretation along the way. Frequently a researcher fails to find relevant research literature in other disciplines because he or she has not sufficiently considered that other disciplines use different terms for the same concept. A concept map may be helpful in recognizing literature in alternative fields (Stake, 2010 p. 106).

According to stake (2010, p. 109) some literature reviews are undertaken to represent the field—the field (or fields) containing the research question—a topical field such as “return of dropouts to formal education” or “geriatric care in refugee camps.”

Kennedy (2007) as cited in Stake (2010, p. 109) an important distinction among literature reviews has been made between those called *systematic* and those called *conceptual* (Kennedy, 2007). Systematic is used to mean that an attempt has been made to find all the studies that examined a particular causal relationship.

Literature review is an attempt to bring together writings on diverse matters related to the coming study’s phenomena. It is a search for contextual relationships. It is the territory covered by a concept map. The conceptual review perhaps should be more concerned about extending understanding into different fields (such as politics, culture, and leadership) than in finding all past work examining a single causal function (Stake, 2010, p. 111).

Both conceptual and systematic reviews are challenging tasks, answering different questions. The systematic may offer greater contribution to researchers in a developed field of research. The conceptual may offer greater contribution to seeing the complexity of a professional problem. It seems important for those about to do dissertation reviews of literature to choose between emphases on being complete and on being broadly connected. Qualitative research is broadly connected across the contexts of human activity. Speaking to researchers about the 2008 financial crisis (a context), Saville Kushner said as cited in stake (2010, p.111):

Stake (2010) mentioned that the significance of contemporary change for us and our role has just intensified. This is not to say that as we work to our contracts trying to understand and report on health projects, curbside safety projects, regional development initiatives and the like, that we are bound to report on the origins and impact of the contemporary crisis. But we should keep a weather eye on changing relationships between state and professions, shifting public attitudes and tolerances, emergent ways of thinking about social investment and the moral obligations of government at all levels. This is the context to our work, and it is, at the least, prudent not to ignore it.

Finding the Literature

For research writing, it is clear that much of the relevant literature will also be research writing, mainly that in refereed journals. It used to be that the journals were printed on paper and available after publication in bound volumes at the library. And that seemed where to look (Stake, 2010, p. 115). For one searching for literature on a particular topic, it becomes apparent that there are reviews already done on many topics and that there are journals of reviews (p.115).

Stake (2010, p. 115) says a review of literature should draw not only from journals but also from other print and nonprint sources. Some of the search should be spent in dissertations, government and institutional reports, lecture series, and conference presentations, partly to gain a better understanding of communication that occurs in different venues.

It is possible to make reports of research appear more sophisticated than the research that occurred. And it is to be expected that the research that occurred was more complicated in some ways than the report portrays. Monitoring the quality of representation in reports is seldom considered of high importance in the research community. Some members acknowledge the slippage (p. 115).

Beyond slippage: Lying, cheating, plagiarism, and endangerment of human subjects—upon investigation—should result in professional censure. There are misrepresentations in research reporting that are

considered serious, such as failing to indicate personal relationships between researcher and supposedly independent interpreters. There are many omissions, hyperbolic descriptions, and careless editing of transcripts that are paid little heed. Not all researchers are saints. Stake (2010, p.115).

VII. EVIDENCE: BOLSTERING JUDGMENT AND RECONNOITERING

Chapter seven of Stake (2010) explores the theme of evidence not only for bolstering our assertions but for updating our design and refining our data collection (p.117).

We could say that all our planning and data gathering is to obtain good quality evidence. That probably draws too much attention to the evidence and not enough to the interpretation of the evidence, but it implies what we already know, that evidence can be of poor quality and evidence can be of good quality, and good is better. Stake (2010, p.117).

Stake (2010) found that quality of evidence is a concern for reasoning in general, in all human affairs, including the attainment of understanding, making priorities, and choosing a course of action. As humans, we reflect upon experience, we gather and analyze information, we ponder and put meanings together; in other words, we synthesize. As researchers, we become persuaded which assertions will be the more dependable, and we counsel others to help them choose confidently a course of action. We are preparing evidence and understanding for users of research, the practitioners and administrators and policy makers. As users, to act with caution is important, and to wait for confidence is very important. We need to think through what evidence means in terms of user confidence. (Stake, 2010, p. 118).

As cited in State (2010, p. 118 and 119) evidence is defined in Black (1990, p. 555) as “any species of proof, or probative matter, legally presented at the trial of an issue, by the act of the parties and through the medium of witnesses, records, documents, exhibits, concrete objects, etc. for the purpose of inducing belief in the mind of the court or jury as to their contention.” The interesting thing pointed out here is that the evidence itself does not resolve the issue but advances one belief over others in human minds. Evidence is presented to convince human juries and judges and guide their judgment. They then issue a verdict.

According to Stake (2010, p. 119) the evidence is unbearably light. In academia, in professional practice, and in business and government today, there is widespread advocacy for evidence-based decision making (Cook, 2006; Denzin and Giardina, 2008; Lipsey and Cordray, 2000). As cited in Stake (2010, p. 120). Continues in nothing That “advocacy honors technological thinking and

disdains intuitive thinking. One quickly understands that many of its advocates are speaking of evidence in the form of objective, science-driven, action- determining knowledge more than as material for user judgment”.

According to Stake (2010, p. 123) qualitative researchers triangulate their evidence. That is, to get the meanings straight, to be more confident that the evidence is good, they develop various habits called “triangulation.” The simplest, probably, is to “look again and again, several times.” Signs at railroad crossings used to say, “Stop, Look, and Listen.” Or, more important, look and listen from more than one vantage point. But triangulation also is to “member check”: to ask the woman quoted if that is what she said. It is more than being careful; it is being skeptical that they were seen or heard right and checking further.

Mixed Methods and Confidence

One of the habits of qualitative researchers is using multiple methods. The primary reason for mixing the methods, of course, is to improve the quality of the evidence (Stake 2010, p. 125).

Qualitative researchers have good ways of increasing the level of confidence in their findings but lack a numerical scale for stating that confidence. They do know they can increase confidence by triangulating with mixed methods, member checking, and using review panels (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2006, pp. 1–7; Johnson and Christensen, 2008, p. 439). As cited in Stake (2010, p. 126).

VIII. ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS: HOW THINGS WORK

Chapter eight of Stake (2010) states that: research involves both analysis (the taking things apart) and synthesis (the putting things together). We gather data. We increase our experience. We look closely at the patches of collected data, the parts of our experience; that is, we analyze. And we put the parts together, often in different ways than before. We synthesize. (p. 133).

According to Stake (2010, p. 137) Research is not only aimed at the substantive assertions to be produced but is also about coming to understand your own particular inquiry better (Becker, 1998). What I mean to say is that, during research, analysis and synthesis are ongoing, interactive, habituated inquiry processes. In qualitative research, analysis is seldom a formal set of calculations at a certain phase between data gathering and interpretation. Analysis and synthesis continue from the beginning of interest in the topic and continue still into the hours at the keyboard writing up the final report.

Interpretation and Sorting

According to Stake (2010, p. 151), coding (classifying, sorting) is a common feature of micro

research and all qualitative analysis and synthesis. Coding is sorting all data sets according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study. Coding is for interpretation and storage more than for organizing the final report. It can be structured by the research question, by a concept map, and by the clusters of patches developing. It can start early or be held back until most of the data are collected. The code categories are progressively focused, changing as the research question takes on new meanings and as the fieldwork turns up new stories and relationships. But those changes mean that data already coded may have to be recoded. Coding classifies all data. The data most worth including in the final report are identified as patches. The April boxes will usually look like the coding plan.

The qualitative researcher makes much of his or her interpretations from personal experience with the people studied. The data would be different, the analysis and the grounds for interpretation would be different from those collected from large-scale surveys. In the qualitative report, fewer would be the tables, more would be the dialogues and vignettes. Often stories are told in a way that helps readers. Stake (2010, p. 151).

If you are likely to use conventional chapter titles for a dissertation, you can enter them, something like: “Abstract,” “Research Question,” “Review of Literature,” “Methods,” “Fieldwork,” “Analysis,” “Interpretation,” and “Conclusions.” (I do not like headings that fail to tell anything substantive about the dissertation, but the choice is up to you and your superiors.) Chances are there will be 5–10 chapters. Some of the chapters need subdivision. make their own interpretations. Stake (2010, p. 154).

IX. ACTION RESEARCH AND SELF-EVALUATION: FINDING ON YOUR OWN

According to Stake (2010, p. 158) action research usually starts with a practitioner realizing things could be better and setting out to look carefully in the mirror. The practitioner could be a technician, a nurse, perhaps a coach. Managers and leaders study themselves too. Often, it is one person acting alone. Often, participatory action research is carried out by one person, working with other people. It could be a team or family looking at itself. Sometimes they get the help of a more experienced person or a trainer. Many action researches, worked alone, never get known about. In many organizations, the “human resources” people encourage individual staff members to get into action research, with or without associates. Of course, it does not matter much whether or not it is called “action research.”

Research involves information and knowledge, but most often it is coming together with others in a social milieu to better understand how something works (p.159).

The social interdependency, Kemmis and McTaggart (2006) as cited in Stake (2010, p. 159) called it “participatory action research.” Action research is the study of action, often with the intent to lead to better action, but it is special in that it is carried out by the people directly responsible for the action. That could be a social worker, or it could be the White House staff. It is self-study, with emphasis less on philosophizing than on performing. Asking: What am I doing? What should we be doing differently?

Self-study is to be found everywhere. Accreditation of institutions and programs sometimes includes a form of self-study. Before the accrediting agency takes up the reapplication and records available, it sometimes asks the institution staff to do a self-study Stake (2010, p.159). According to Stake (2010, p. 159) Action research is self-evaluation.

Studying Your Own Place

According to Stake (2010, p. 163) It is quite appropriate for researchers to study their own places. A lot sometimes is needed to establish confidence in the findings of a self-study or the evaluation of a unit supervised by the researcher. Better design, longer study, more triangulation are part of what is needed.

The greatest concern people on the outside have about self-study is that it will be self-serving, self-protecting, promotional, advocating the home point of view. And much internal and institutional research is just that, and the institutional, corporate ethic of the modern world fails to condemn brash self-promotional research. (It is common also for a client to expect researchers to avoid raising questions that might embarrass them.) (Stake, 2010, p. 163).

Assertions

I have learned according to Stake (2010, p. 167) The conclusion of a qualitative research paper usually will feature an assertion (possibly several) about a key issue, probably closely related to the original research question. Often it is more narrow than the original question, but it could be broader. There may be mention of different perceptions or interpretations of the issue. Usually the researcher will concentrate here on the interpretation he or she finds most logical or useful or original or elegant. It cannot help but be influenced by some of the writer’s bias, but it can be stated so as to invite other interpretation.

Assertions are not summaries of the whole study but a sharp statement of an issue or condition that sums up one part of the study, perhaps summarizing what the researcher has concluded about the research question. These statements have been developed from objective and subjective data. They have had their meanings challenged through member checking, formal reviewers, and critical friends. They represent what can best be said in a qualitative voice. Stake (2010, p. 169).

X. STORYTELLING: ILLUSTRATING HOW THINGS WORK

Some qualitative study is fundamentally the capture of a story. Not only the story of a person or group, but also the story of an organization or social movement. The recording and publication of oral history is such a venture. The story or history is seen to exist, and the researcher’s job is to dig it out, interpret it, and make it available to others. Musicology, particularly ethnomusicology, sometimes uses a story form for presentation of its findings. Stake (2010, p. 170).

Vignettes

Sometimes our stories will be brief, a snippet in time, contributing little to experiential knowledge but bringing to life an issue central to the research or one that illustrates the complexity. Some of us call these snippets “vignettes. (p. 171).

As illustrated by anthropologist Frederick Erickson (1963), as cited in stake (2010, p. 172) qualitative research assertions are sometimes illuminated with vignettes. A vignette is a verbal illustration of response to a research question, not necessarily generalizable, sometimes poignant. It can be a wisp of dialogue. Sometimes it grows beyond anecdote to something of a short story, such as the bubble gum experiment, but usually it is short. It may be but the trace of action, such as the shadow of lipstick on a photo on the piano. Momentarily it is “figure,” but shades into the “ground” of a larger issue.

Elements of Story

The traditional form of story is, first, an introduction of characters and context, then the revelation of problems that stir apprehension, increasingly complexifying, and ending in good or bad resolution of the problems. It is a chronology, as if going from “Once upon a time” to “And they lived happily ever after,” with an occasional flashback. That format, of course, is quite different from the traditional research format that goes from statement of the problem through review of literature, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The story form is an alternative presentation, preferred in some research places. But even in the most traditional places, a story usually can be used within some sections of a report. (p. 174).

According to Stake (2010, p. 174) qualitative research is holistic research, detailed, rounded, contextual. We would like to tell the whole story. But we cannot tell what exceeds page limits and audience patience. (If you are a tree in the forest, you know that what isn’t read wasn’t written.) And there is always more story than anyone knows.

We have learned that “Managing the research project will be facilitated by keeping in mind a selection of

patches: key observations, photographs, vignettes, and interviews, the ones most likely to appear in detail in the final report. (p. 180).

XI. WRITING THE FINAL REPORT: AN ITERATIVE CONVERGENCE

According to Stake (2010, p. 183), people have different styles of writing, and yours is probably good for you. Content is more important than style in the final report. He found that the task of organizing the content is important in preparation for the final writing. At least in your mind, you have, in some ways, been organizing the content as you gathered data, made preliminary interpretations, considered its value as evidence, and stored it away. Perhaps you have boxes and have allocated pages. Some of your patches are ready for the first draft of the final report. Your intuition is at work. This is enough for some people to sit down at the keyboard and begin the final writing should not be primarily a matter of presenting them all, in order of importance or in clusters, but reaching some new, composite, integrated understandings by considering all the ideas together. We do something like that in ordinary thinking, intuitively contemplating, for example, the whole of a conference, an emergency room, or a vacation. But intuition can be supported by a formal iterative strategy. And that is what the following iterative procedure is supposed to do. (p.184).

XII. ADVOCACY AND ETHICS: MAKING THINGS WORK BETTER

According to Stake (2010, p. 206), rules of ethics give inadequate protection against violation of ethics. Just to continue being the nice people we are gives inadequate protection. Review boards are too far removed from the research to give adequate protection. The people being researched cannot be counted on to protect themselves. It is the researchers themselves who provide the bulwark of protection. Through empathy, intuition, intelligence, and experience, we ourselves have to see the dangers emerging.

Stake (2010) mentioned that in social research the dangers are almost never physical. They are mental. They are the dangers of exposure, humiliation, embarrassment, loss of respect and self-respect, loss of standing at work or in the group. The probability of hurt may seem so low that researchers contend that the potential good of the research to society outweighs those small dangers. Some have spoken even of a "right to know." It is important to find out how things work. (p. 206).

According to Stake (2010), human-subjects review boards operate differently from country to country,

even from campus to campus. Each country and institution and research team should follow strong review procedures for conducting human research. Uniform procedures have been officially adopted in the United States, but so far, in my view, they have been inappropriate for qualitative research and ineffective in protecting human subjects. Norman Denzin (2002) has evaluated the situation well in his chapter on "Performance Ethics" in Pedagogy, Politics, and Ethics, noting both orientation of IRBs to biomedical research and their overreliance on "informed consent." By requiring full planning in advance, the American IRBs interfere with the evolving nature of action research, case study, and participatory evaluation. Ethical conduct of interpersonal research depends not so much on letters of informed consent but on deliberated and collaborative caution by the researcher, invoking a demand for help from critical friends (McIntosh and Morse, 2008). As cited in Stake (2010, p. 206 – 207) these review board problems can be fixed, but until they are, we need to obey the law while we heed our own higher standards.

Subjective Nature of the Human Experience

Subjective data are those perceptions that can be "modified or affected by personal views, experience, or background...or identified by means of one's perception of one's own states and processes" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2010). Interviews of study participants were conducted utilizing a semi structured technique. According to Nieswiadomy (2008), semi-structured interviews include a variety of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Typically, interviewers in a semi-structured format are required to ask a specific number of certain questions, but also encourage probing into other subject areas. Data gathered during the individual interview process is then compared to the responses of all participants.

Researchers must utilize the process of bracketing to adequately recognize and set aside personal beliefs before conducting studies (Nieswiadomy, 2008). In this study, the lead researcher recognized possible biases that could change the outcome.

Making Meaning/Interpretation

Evidence within triangulation, progressive focusing, and mixed methods has been identified as the meaning concepts in chapter seven. Evidence is an important concept also in establishing a rationale or potential for action. Here there is no single criterion but multiple criteria: A training policy should be based on many factors, on evidence of many kinds. An education is good only if broad. A debate is argued in terms of several implications, with evidence presented not just to establish facts but to make an integrated case. A rationale needs to be pertinent to the action to be taken. The pieces of evidence should be interrelated. Stake (2010, p. 120).

Whether practitioners or administrators, whether examiners or examinees, decision makers need facts *and* rationales for possible action. They need good evidence “to apply to their claims,” as Anthony Kelly and Robert Yin (2007) as cited in Stake (2010, p. 120) put it. Evidence builds the confidence needed for good decision making.

We value the theme triangulation in chapter seven. According to Flick (2002) as cited in Stake (2010, p. 123) triangulation is a form of confirmation and validation, but when we started giving more respect to multiple points of view, we saw that triangulation may be a form of differentiation. It may make us more confident that we have the meaning right, or it may make us more confident that we need to examine differences to see important multiple meanings.

According to Stake (2010, p. 126) one of the habits of qualitative researchers is using multiple methods.

It must be noted that the book is excellently structured. Each chapter of the book presents an introduction.

We have identified the meaningful concepts in chapters two, four, five, and Eight as: Interpretive research, Stating the problem, methods Gathering data, review of literature, analysis and synthesis.

Qualitative research is sometimes defined as interpretive research. All research requires interpretations, and, in fact, human behavior requires interpretation minute by minute. But interpretive research is investigation that relies heavily on observers defining and redefining the meanings of what they see and hear. If no one is hurt, something like a car crash may mean pretty much the same to people—just crush and crumple—but as they think about it, some see the crash as negligence, some as fate, and some as need for stricter laws. Their interpretations are not only what they think after they have stopped to think about it but are part of the seeing. The perceptions we have of objects and events and relationships are simultaneously interpretive. They get continuing reinterpretation. Qualitative research draws heavily on interpreting by researchers—and also on interpreting by the people they study and by the readers of the research reports. Stake (2010, p. 36 & 37).

Stake (2010, p. 37) continues in nothing that “Interpretations can be faulty. Part of learning how to do qualitative research is learning how to minimize the flaws in our observations and assertions. We will “triangulate” our data in order to increase confidence that we have correctly interpreted how things work. Sometimes our views are faulty because they are too simplistic. A car crash has multiple causes. So does a scolding. How things work can be more complicated than they seem at first. Triangulation will help us recognize that things need more explanation than we at first thought”.

We value the fact that to start to investigate a problem we should start with the question first, then the methods because based of my knowledge the scientific method starts when you ask a question about something that you observe: How, what, when, who, which, why or where? The question can be first, or observation depends on the investigation.

We see in the chapter four most of us, most of the time, the research problem should have first priority—but a question cannot be conceptualized without some thought of method and place of study. One cannot think deeply about the content of research without thinking of its meanings as studied one way or another. Also, according to Stake (2010) the reality of studying it one place rather than others quickly forms in our minds. In other words, first conceptualization of the study happens pretty much all together, the focus shifting from question to method to place and back to question, each time hopefully refining the idea. And the refining will continue well into the time you are gathering data and writing up patches for the report.

According to Stake (2010) The review of literature is considered evidence that the doctoral student has sufficiently examined the theoretical writing and research publications as a conceptual base for the proposed study. Many advisors have considered this literature review more as a “qualifying examination” than as the beginning of a study of a particular research question.

I value the concept MAPPING in chapter six because according to Stake (2010) a qualitative researcher needs to represent one or more main concepts, particularly for planning the study but also to assist interpretation along the way. Frequently a researcher fails to find relevant research literature in other disciplines because he or she has not sufficiently considered that other disciplines use different terms for the same concept. A concept map may be helpful in recognizing literature in alternative fields.

In the chapter Seven we see educational experiences of Quality of evidence in social and educational fields is a personal matter as much as a statistical matter. It should not be thought that evidence-based research depends mainly on measurement. Evidence-based research should enable people to attain a deeper conviction of how the thing works and what to do about it. As it has ever been, personal confidence will lay the foundation for professional practice and national policy (Erickson, 2008) as cited in Stake (2010, p. 123).

According to Stake (2010, p. 123) qualitative researchers triangulate their evidence. That is, to get the meanings straight, to be more confident that the evidence is good, they develop various habits called “triangulation.” The simplest, probably, is to “look again and again, several times.” Signs at railroad crossings used to say, “Stop, Look, and Listen.” Or, more important, look and listen

from more than one vantage point. But triangulation also is to “member check”: to ask the woman quoted if that is what she said. It is more than being careful; it is being skeptical that they were seen or heard right and checking further.

We have identified the meaningful concepts in chapter nine as the action research, Bias. Because Action research is self-evaluation and Bias is ubiquitous and sometimes undesirable. Underrepresenting student achievement, seeing management as essentially conspiratorial, and failing to recognize racial discrimination are examples of undesirable researcher bias. Becoming a researcher, especially for a person doing qualitative research, is partly a matter of learning how to deal with bias. All researchers have biases, all people have biases, all reports have biases, and most researchers work hard to recognize and constrain hurtful biases. They discipline themselves, they set up traps to catch their biases; and the best researchers help their clients and readers to be alert to those biases, too. Stake (2010).

We have identified the meaningful concepts in chapter twelve protection of human subjects because participants need protection from physical and psychological harm, privacy and confidentiality, and prevention of deception. And also, always consult the IRB for guidance and work with them to come to mutually agreeable solutions to protect the participants as well as the integrity of your research process.

According to Stake (2010, p. 206), Rules of ethics give inadequate protection against violation of ethics. Just to continue being the nice people we are gives inadequate protection. Review boards are too far removed from the research to give adequate protection. The people being researched cannot be counted on to protect themselves. It is the researchers themselves who provide the bulwark of protection. Through empathy, intuition, intelligence, and experience, we ourselves have to see the dangers emerging.

XIII. CONCLUSION / MAKING JUDGMENTS / EVALUATION

Chapter twelve of Stake (2010) explore the theme of Advocacy and Ethics. The plan especially well is to be open to new ways of interpreting things. Being able to sketch it out. Being able to talk it through. Bringing in new interpretations that tie in with economic, political, and communication developments may be the best right answer. Stake (2010, p. 2015).

Chapter nine deals with action research and self – evaluation. We have learned that action research is the study of action, often with the intent to lead to better action, but it is special in that it is carried out by the people directly responsible for the action. It is self - study, with

emphasis less on philosophizing than on performing. Stake (2010, p. 159).

I agreed qualitative research studies provide an invaluable perspective that concentrates on participants’ own personal perspectives and experiences.

Qualitative research studies provide an invaluable perspective that concentrates on participants’ own personal perspectives and experiences. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research variables cannot be manipulated to enter into a hypothesis or theory (Nieswiadomy, 2008).

I agree with the way the book is presented. It is a very good book that gives the details with the case studies as example in each chapter. In my opinion, these twelve chapters were indeed scholastic and allowed us the opportunity to engage in deep thoughts as plan to start our dissertation proposal. This assignment made me more comfortable to do qualitative research. Finally, I can make meaningful interpretations. Which will bear fruitage as I continue in my journey of research.

I agreed with the fact that Interviews are used for several purposes. For a qualitative researcher, perhaps the main purposes are:

1. Obtaining unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed
2. Collecting a numerical aggregation of information from many persons
3. Finding out about “a thing” that the researchers were unable to observe themselves.

I disagreed with, many qualitative researchers prefer observation data information that can be seen directly by the researcher or heard.

I believe that I have more knowledge about the qualitative research. However, overall, I found the book useful and I enjoyed the book. I learned a lot as well as I enjoyed the content of this book, in fact I learned more than I expected, I will try my best to practice these concepts in my real life.

We agreed with the way in which each concept was individually addressed for understanding and clarity in our research and study. It is tough to disagree with facts that were so plain and simple to explore.

We must confess that most of the concepts and content were thoroughly researched by researchers. They aided in our understanding and learning.

Finally, we can make meaningful interpretations. we recognize that the research question helps you keep focus throughout a study. Also, I agreed in qualitative research you may be wise to change the question. Even though brief, the research question tells better than the little of the report what you are going to do and, at the end, what you did. A research question or two or three may be among the importance choices you will make in your academic lifetime.

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