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Book Review

Yin, Robert. 2011. *Doing Qualitative Research From Start to Finish*. New York: Guilford Press

Doing Qualitative Research From Start to Finish is an important contribution which provides a framework for students and novice researchers to experience steps of qualitative research. The author has used a friendly diction with many examples helping the audience with smooth reading and understanding the concepts. Jargons have not been used excessively and the text, rather than playing with words, aims to put the reader in the atmosphere of actual qualitative inquiry. A key stated concern of the author is that the best way to learn more about a qualitative research is to acquire it in action, that is, when an actual qualitative research study is conducted. The book comprises 12 chapters organized in four main parts: Understanding qualitative research, focusing on fundamental issues and concepts; Doing qualitative research, addressing the practice of dealing with the data; Presenting the results from qualitative research, discussing issues of displaying and writing qualitative research reports; and Taking qualitative research one step further, placing it within the broader realm of social science research. On the whole, the volume

illustrates from scratch what a qualitative study involves and, as the title implies, presents an A to Z of qualitative research in an admirable manner.

The first part includes three chapters illustrating some general images of what qualitative research is and how it can be initiated. First, Yin introduces qualitative inquiry and talks about various topics that can be studied through such an approach, and elaborates on features of qualitative studies. He points out that for doing a qualitative project, researchers need to be equipped and to be competent, that is, to have enough ability, as well as authority to manage and direct the study. One main point, which the author mentions, is that the best way to learn more about qualitative research is when you actually carry out a qualitative research study. So, one should learn through practicing. He explains how to take the initial steps in research, how to tackle the challenges of starting a qualitative study, and how to develop a study bank, which refers to a selection and collection of appropriate journals for qualitative studies. An important fea-

ture of this volume in discussing the basic issues in qualitative research is a focus on explaining what qualitative approaches involve rather than overly comparing and contrasting them with quantitative trends, although the differences are briefly discussed. A further concern in the first part of the book and among the main fundamental issues is an emphasis on bringing a strong sense of ethics in studies.

Part two deals with the practice of conducting qualitative research. In chapter four, Yin elaborates on design (making a plan for different steps of research) and centrally argues that qualitative research design is to serve as a *logical* plan rather than a *logistic* one. Like some other scholars (e.g., Maxwell 2005), Yin highlights the important consideration that the design of qualitative research is not a linear plan in which one follows some predetermined steps. Rather, it is an *interactive* process in which the researcher moves back and forth and may change some steps. Chapters in this part also discuss different types of sampling and associated challenges: purposive, convenience, snowball, and random sampling. Yin argues that qualitative research is *particularistic* in the sense that understanding the nuances and patterns of social behavior only results from studying specific situations, complemented by attending carefully to specific contextual conditions. In his view, generalization has a limited role in doing qualitative research, but it is not impossible. The main difference is that in quantitative research, statistical generalization is the concern, but what matters in qualitative, is *analytic generalization*.

Among the major considerations in part two are issues of fieldwork in qualitative inquiry, field settings with people in their real life roles, and how researchers can enter a field. The author explains different ways of gathering data (interview, observation, collecting and examining materials, etc.). Another main concern of the book is analyzing the data, which is dealt with in two chapters. According to Robert Yin, qualitative data analysis involves five phases of: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. However, the novice researcher reading about these steps needs to bear in mind that although following the steps at hand may help in managing large bodies of qualitative data, the steps are not the end of the route. Researchers need to go through a further crucial phase of *interpreting*, which may hardly be viewed as detached from the analytical process. The author believes that there is no firm definition for determining good interpretation, but generally, interpretation may be understood as “explaining how or why events came about, or alternatively how or why people were able to pursue particular courses of action” (p. 216). Following the interpreting endeavor, the qualitative researcher needs to appreciate the perspective that the main conclusions lie along the lines of what the researcher still does not know. Dealing with qualitative data in the chapters of this part of the book is also considered in the context of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis that can be used to assist the entire analytical process, with the caution that whether researchers decide to use software or not, *analytic decisions* must be made by the researcher.

Part three of this book shows researchers how to narrate data of their studies. The key point is that “qualitative data are more alphabetic than numeric” (p. 233). So, researchers can narrate the data in the exact words of participants or through different tables, graphs, pictures, et cetera. The author explains how to report the findings and conclusions of the study in an attractive and comprehensive manner, which shapes one of the most difficult steps for many researchers. Yin’s stories about his personal experience with qualitative research are intriguingly informative for researchers, and may well help them with exploring small corners of the qualitative research challenge. Finally, the last part of the book, which consists of one chapter, focuses on a major contrast between qualitative and non-qualitative research in terms of being located within the larger landscape of understanding that aspects of social life and research may contribute to creating understandings beyond the confinements of academia.

Some other features of the book include starting each chapter with a brief abstract and giving the audience a general view of the chapter, and ending each chapter with a recap of the terms and concepts explained. Moreover, the book ends with a glossary of special terms used in qualitative research. According to Yin, this book is the result of his 30-year experience of working on more than 200 qualitative studies. Therefore, expectedly, it is a helpful source for those who are setting out their journey with qualitative approaches. With a critical look, one might observe that not all aspects of qualitative research are comprehensively covered in terms of their practice, but the book does have its considerable merits. Robert Yin’s book has used an easy-to-understand language with many real examples that help novice researchers understand qualitative research. The book may therefore be confidently recommended as a supplemental reading for courses of qualitative research methodology in different fields of social sciences and humanities

References

Maxwell, Joseph A. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. London: Sage.

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