Managing the Study

EDCP 585
Susanne Freitag

Why manage the inquiry study (well)?

- Bad management can result in:
  - Delays
  - Low quality of data
  - Weak data analysis

- can cast doubt about the authenticity, integrity, and trustworthiness of the inquiry project
What is there to manage?

- Schedules and processes
  - Planning and organizing
  - Timelines
- Data collection and analysis
  - Quality of data and data analysis
  - Ethical handling of accounts
  - Organization of storage and data retrieval
- Researcher’s behaviour

General questions to ask

- How much time is needed to complete the study?
- When is the optimal time to collect data?
- What data sources are available?
- Do I have the skills to analyze the data?
- Can the study be done in phases? Where will I start and how will I know when I am finished?
- What other obligations do I have during the study and can they be temporarily reassigned?
Contextual considerations

- Inquiry as Weakness
- Risk of the unknown
- Social norms
- Criticism
- Conflicts with others
**Contextual questions**

- How long will it take for my request to do the study to be approved?
- Will there be release time to support the study? If so, how will other teachers react?
- What administrative support will I need?
- Who can support me as a critical friend?
- How will other uninvolved teachers react to my project?
- How can I keep participant involvement anonymous and information confidential?

**Intrusions**

- Audio and video recordings
- The presence of the researcher
- Interviews
- Observations (esp. in other teacher’s classrooms)
Suggestions for interviews

- Involve participants
- Time & location
- 30-40 minutes
- Not in classroom
- Too many potential interruptions
- Put participants at ease
- Anonymity
- Confidentiality
- Give possibility to pass or discontinue (never force answers)

Questions when observing

- What will I observe and for how long?
- What role will I take in the observation (remain silent, sit unacknowledged)?
- Will my presence give the appearance of judging and evaluating?
- How will I capture and record my descriptive accounts (draw maps, use checklists, frequency counts, write down times)?
Ensuring emic perspectives

Viewpoints from the perspective of the subject, the insider

Suggestions for interviews

- **Involve participants**
  - Time & location

- **Time limit**
  - 30-40 minutes

- **Not in classroom**
  - Too many potential interruptions

- **Put participants at ease**
  - Anonymity
  - Confidentiality
  - Give possibility to pass or discontinue (never force answers)

- **Behavior of interviewer**
  - Handle silence well
  - Give time to respond
  - Avoid leading questions
  - Be an active listener
  - Use expanders like “Go on.”
**Member checking**

- Participant feedback on the accuracy of inferences and conclusions made by the researcher
- Means of quality control
- Potential challenges:
  - Which data analyses to validate
  - Risk of misinterpretations
  - Defensive reactions, painful memories
  - Participants may change their minds or become overly anxious with what they said

**Written discourses**
Management of written discourses

Data collection instruments

Transcriptions

Notes and logs

Communication with participants

Data collection instruments

- Surveys and interview questions, ...
- Value-free, no leading questions, clear questions and aligned to the problem statement
- Piloting with a smaller group advisable
- First questions should put interviewee at ease
- Surveys: when to conduct, how to return, anonymity and confidentiality, token of appreciation, send reminder
**Transcriptions**

- Video or audio recordings, texts from journals, observation records, field notes, historical documents, ...
- Transcribing is time-consuming, may not be necessary or can just be done partially
- Decide how to handle repetitive utterances (um, well, you know), silences, punctuation

**Notes and logs**

- Field notes:
  - qualitative notes recorded by researchers in the course of field research, during or after their observation of a specific phenomenon they are studying
  - allow the researcher to access the subject and record what they observe in an unobtrusive manner
  - usually not planned or structured
  - provide insight into motives and intentions of the participant
  - Contain e.g. the ease of the participant, distractions that distorted responses, body language, ...
Notes and logs

• Field text:
  – The raw form of field notes
  – descriptions of actions and conversations in detail, written while watching
  – only capture the spoken aspects; lack context, body language and the general feel

• Reflective diaries

Technology assistance
Technology assistance for Management

• Distribution or administering of questionnaires
• Locating participants
• Direct transcription of recordings
• Safeguarding data, storage needs
• Software for computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
• Web-based surveys can be useful