Qualitative Methods

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Writing and assessing qualitative research

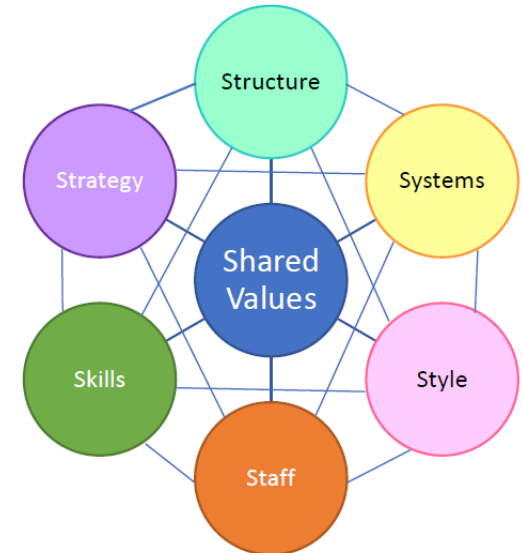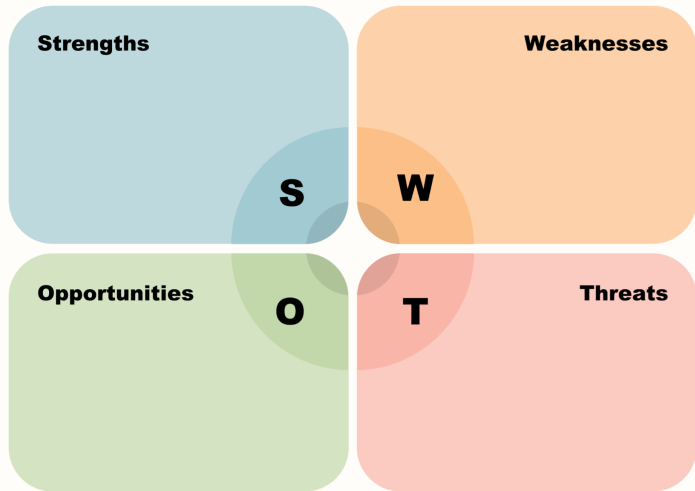Kathrin Sele

November 28, 2023

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Feedback assignment 2

Wide variety of quality – in many cases linked to the 'state' of the research question!

Today's Agenda

- **How to write?**

- **How to assess?**

- **Exercise: Improving interview guides**

- **Wrap-up**

Writing

Writing as a method of inquiry

Writing is much more than reporting at the end of the research process

- creation of research field and topic

- constructing reality

- learning and thinking

- testing of thoughts

- analysis and interpretation

- communication, interaction, dialogue

- dissemination knowledge

Researching is a process

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Make a vivid start

Is your title interesting and concrete enough?

- 'Recodifications of academic position and reiterations of desire: change but continuity in gendered subjectivities'

- 'The breastfeeding incidence: teaching and learning through transgression'

Is your starting paragraph inspiring?

- Telling a story or anecdote
- Posing an intriguing question
- Setting a scenario
- Evoking emotions
- Presenting an argument or definition
- Giving an apt citation
- Giving an example
- Describing an experience

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Source: Sword, 2009

Example 1 – Empirical

Mirc et al. (2023), Organization Studies

The project was to sell a new offer by combining the headhunting process of [the acquirer] and the candidate assessment process of [the target]. The aim was to build on our complementarities to enhance the product portfolio and the service quality. It looked like a great project, but now, two years in, we had to completely reconsider this as it turned out not to work. (partner, acquirer)

Synergy is the most important source of value creation in mergers and acquisitions (M&A) (Feldman & Hernandez, 2022). However, as the opening quote illustrates, realizing synergy through the combination of resources and processes is notoriously difficult (Zaheer, Castañer, &

Example 2 – Theoretical

Sele & Grand (2016), Organization Science

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Introduction

How are organizational routines an engine in innovation? Scholars have described organizational routines as repetitive, collective, and interdependent action patterns omnipresent in the everyday functioning of organizations (Becker 2004, Cyert and March 1963, Nelson and Winter 1982, Parmigiani and Howard-Grenville 2011). Yet, their role for innovation and specifically for innovation-in-the-making is less obvious and rarely studied. Routines have long been held responsible for inertia (Hannan and Freeman 1984) and mindlessness (Ashforth and Fried 1988). Consequently, many existing studies make a clear distinction between routine tasks and creative tasks in explaining an organization's ability to innovate and in identifying specific activities that would help bring new things into being. For example, Adler et al. (1999) point out the importance of a temporal separation of routine and creative tasks for achieving both higher efficiency and flexibility in an automotive plant. Obstfeld (2012, p. 1571) distinguishes between "how organizations get routine things done and how they pursue markedly new things through creative projects."

However, there is no empirical evidence supporting a general incompatibility between routines and innovation (Ohly et al. 2006, Pavitt 2002). On the contrary, already Nelson and Winter (1982) argued that we should study their relationship in more detail and that there exist firm-specific meta-routines or capabilities that support

Take a moment to write

Set an engaging title

Write an opening statement/paragraph

On your own for 5 minutes!

"Show, don't tell" (Caulley, 2008)

Tell:

"Simo was a stubborn fellow and did what he wanted"

Show:

"One Monday Simo brought an evening paper to the office. Virtanen said it was trash and threw it into the bin. Simo grabbed the paper from the bin, folded it, and put it into his briefcase. 'No it's not,' he said"

Writing in the third/first person

"This study examines factors that affect the process of commercializing innovations. The data has been collected by interviewing research and development staff in the chemical industry and it is analyzed thematically. The study demonstrates that…"

"In this study, I will examine factors that affect the process of commercializing innovations. I have collected the data by interviewing research and development staff in the chemical industry and analyzed it thematically. Through my thematic analysis, I will demonstrate…"

Consider the ending of your thesis

- Have you answered your research problem?

- Have you delivered what you promised?

- Do you want to summarize your key points once more?

- Do you want to inspire new questions?

- Do you want to encourage change?

- What is the state of mind you want to leave the reader in?

Evaluating

Validity questions

Validity of data
How well do the data represent the phenomena for which they stand

External validity
Whether causal relationships generalize across persons, settings, and times

Interpretive validity
Whether the presented account connects with the lived experiences of those studied

Validity of research
Extend to which the different parts of the study fit together

Internal validity
Whether conclusions drawn truly imply cause or whether there are alternative explanations

Contextual validity
Whether the account of the research is complete and thorough

quantitative

qualitative

The notion of trustworthiness

Validity –> credibility

- is the data sufficient, would someone else with your material come to similar conclusions

Reliability –> dependability

- is the researcher careful and consistent?

Generalizability –> transferability

- can the results be transferred to different contexts?

Objectivity –> confirmability

- Is the interpretation logical and nonprejudiced?

Source: Lincoln & Guba, 1985

10 min Break

Exercise

Improving interview guides

Work in groups of 3 (peer support) – see file on MyCourses

- Discuss the research question and the research design (5min)

- Provide feedback on the interview guide (10min)

- Jointly improve the guide (10min)

> 25 minutes/person (75 minutes total)

Wrap-up at 16.40 (take two small breaks)

Attendance

lastclass

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Reporting back

Struggles, challenges?

What kind of improvements were you able to make?

Open questions?

...

Working on your thesis (assignment 3)

Many of you struggle because your cases are not contextualized (you are not starting from a focused organizational/managerial problem/puzzle)

- micro-management

- leadership styles

Another issue are the very broad and at times quantitative RQ!

Comments, suggestions et al.

Please take 5 minutes to fill in the course evaluation survey!

Assignment 3

Focus on polishing the text – coherence, length!

- Importance of good language, transitions, and logical progression of the text > impacts grading

Familiarize yourself with the Turnitin report

- Correct text if needed!

- If the submitted text is plagiarized (directly copies text without referencing, copies text and references it without quotation marks) the paper will be failed

- Do not leave the submission to the last minute (you risk a fail!)

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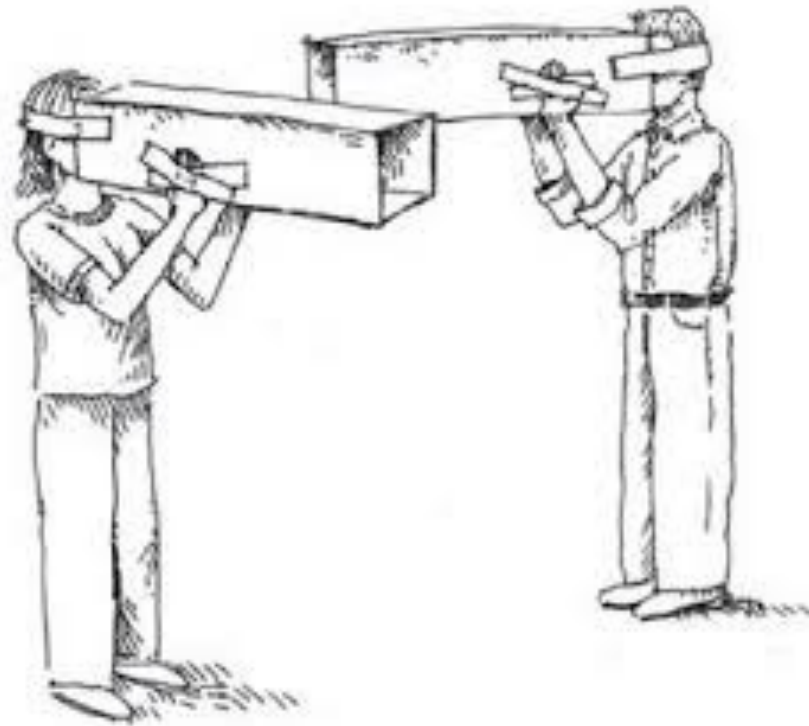Aalto-universitetet
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Tips for writing

- Start from something that feels easy

- If you get stuck, continue from somewhere else

- Do not aim for perfection in the beginning

- Be prepared to edit and develop your text along the way

- Learn to deal with revising (or deleting) your text

- Let others read your text and ask them for feedback

- Do not procrastinate!

KEEP
CALM
AND
ENJOY
WRITING

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Your questions?

Go and write your paper! Have fun!

Thank you!

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