

## BOOK REVIEW

Review by *Neeta M. Khandpekar\**

### QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES

**AUTHOR: Marilyn Lichtman**

**SAGE, USA, 2014, pp. 418**

**Price: US \$ 60**

The Book under review is a precious gem for scholars interested in pursuing qualitative research in the field of social sciences. This book tries to show how many disciplines of social sciences have been using some kind of qualitative research as a complement to quantitative research fitting into the larger domain of social science. The author, a retired Professor of educational research and evaluation from Virginia Tech shares her new ideas and ways of doing things. Since many of her students came from varied social sciences disciplines, the book has many diverse and new examples covering social sciences from almost a new point of view. The book has fourteen chapters in all, concluding with Epilogue, Glossary and Index.

It begins with Introduction wherein the author stresses on the use of qualitative research (QR) for inquiring into a variety of new ways for asking and answering questions about the world in which we live. QR can be used in many innovative ways. Researchers can take advantage of access to news events as these are happening and as these become available through YouTube, Facebook and other Apps. Others use technology such as smart phones or tablets as an alternative way of collecting data. In this process, insight into newer ideas as what to study and how to study appear almost daily. It also highlights how QR fits into realm of journalism, urban studies, social work or behavioral sciences as well as other areas. The second chapter focuses on the researcher adopting self-reflective mode to collect data. For example going to the field by leaving the classroom. Formulation of research questions has also been tabulated (p. 29). Interesting examples appear on recently published research topics like use of fictional narratives in social and educational research, live experiences of students doing phenomenology etc. Chapter Three systematically explores Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research beginning with ethical behavior and ethical conduct. Illustrations of misconduct, concerns of qualitative researchers involved in the study of vulnerable groups

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makes reading interesting. Chapter Four covers conceptualization approaches towards research. The combination between Quantitative Research (QN) and Qualitative Research (QR) has been explained in some depth. ‘Purpose’ in the research approach is deemed to be significant for example, use of Purpose to describe a phenomenon, explain a culture, explain a case, search for an emerging theory, understand a lived experience or take action to change an established system. Chapter Five includes five popular approaches to QR namely Ethnography, Grounded theory, Phenomenology, Case Study, with a unique table shown (p.126), and narrative. A detailed examination of common approaches for examining history and meaning, distinguishing features together with special issues have been highlighted. Examples from the field, blogs and beyond and words of caution find their place in this chapter.

Chapter Six deals with additional research approaches which are incredibly diverse, for example, QR with aesthetic concerns and techniques of narrative fiction. Two common forms namely poetry-based research, in which data are used for original poetry, and ethno-drama, which combines ethnography with theatrical writing and performance have been included. Also use of Auto-ethnography exploring personal experiences of life has been explained. A relevant table (p.153) shows comparison of research approaches. Pragmatic ways of combining information gained in qualitative and quantitative ways has been explained. How to select a particular research approach has also been highlighted. Chapter Seven is on Planning and conceptualizing a Qualitative Research Study. Perspectives from researchers working in different social science disciplines covering a range of locations in order to think out-of-box is included in this chapter. Use of photographs and figures has made this chapter more appealing. Chapter Eight covers advances in social media, internet technology and hardware demonstrating enormous creativity in use of technology. The digital age brings instant news making us to witness the events in fraction of seconds before our eyes. The author tries to explain how this technology can be harnessed in order to understand the world and make it safer place for all to live in freedom and security. The digital age thus brings information in vastly different ways. Use of popular social networking sites is discussed. Chapter Nine briefly presents reviews of research literature. Critical steps in conducting a review like identifying a topic, to determine search terms, search for information, to select relevant information, review critically, modify your topic, keep track of things are included in the explanation.

Qualitative reviewing is one of the basic technique researchers have used to gather data. Chapter Ten is hence entitled Interviewing. Individual interviewing as one of the most powerful tools available to the qualitative researcher has been discussed. A table showing questioning strategies like elaboration, probing, using stimuli, neutrality, single question, wait time and other specific areas of concern makes it stimulating read. The next chapter stresses upon gathering data, focus- group interviewing, online interviewing, observations, using visuals/images, using media and technology and using written material. A note of caution on the issues with each of these methods to be considered by researchers is highlighted. There is a scope of unlimited possibilities that may have to be considered by the researcher before planning to gather data. Chapter Twelve deals with drawing meaning from the data. This is explained with figures of the 3 Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories and Concepts. It is further stated that some of the approaches are specific while others are general. Chapter

Thirteen on communicating your ideas discuss about a writer's engagement with a reader. This is something special. The reader stays with it- even into the wee hours of the night. It is more than just the story that grabs the reader. It is the way the story is told. Qualitative researchers have been experimenting with alternative ways of presenting information.

The final chapter is on judging the research process and product. A chart shows key issues with evaluating qualitative research prior to 1990 (p. 378). In the Epilogue, the author elaborates how between 1990-2000, 2000-2010, 2011 and beyond, shows remarkable difference in research approaches. While prior to 1990 objectivity, reliability and internal validity was evaluated but now the importance lies in diverse views, different types of validity and self-criticism. Summary, check you, key discussions and useful references have been included at the end of each chapter.

This entire book is welcome as a piece of significant addition to scholarly writing on QR giving a fresh insight to the scholars who want to pursue serious research in field of social science.