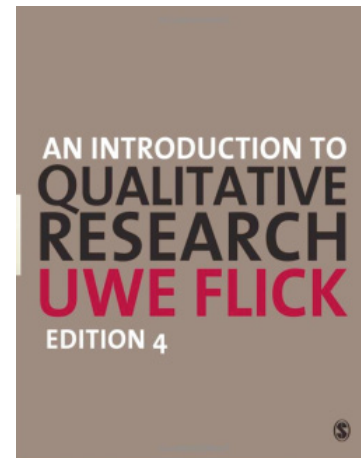




BOOK TITLE: AN INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Olga Castiblanco*, Diego Vizcaino**

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Introduction

This book is a good referential guide for both novice and experienced researchers because it gives detailed descriptions of qualitative research and offers information that leads to a deeper understanding of the subject.

Additionally, it is noted that the book introduces current issues, including ethics in qualitative research, the use of literature in qualitative research, the relationship between qualitative and quantitative research and qualitative online research, in relation

to each topic. In the final chapter, the author proposes the future of qualitative research as a combination of art and method.

1. Background

The author presents four moments that appear in the course of qualitative research: the presentation or derivation of the initial theory, the construction of the text, interpretation and the production of a new theory. We represent this idea in Figure 1.

* Degree in Physics from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas (Colombia); Master in Physics Teaching from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (Colombia); PhD in Science Education from UNESP (Brazil). She is currently a professor and researcher at the UDFJC in Didactics of Physics. E-mail: olcastiblancoa@udistrital.edu.co

** Doctor in Science Education, Colombia. E-mail: diegofabvizcaino@uan.edu.co

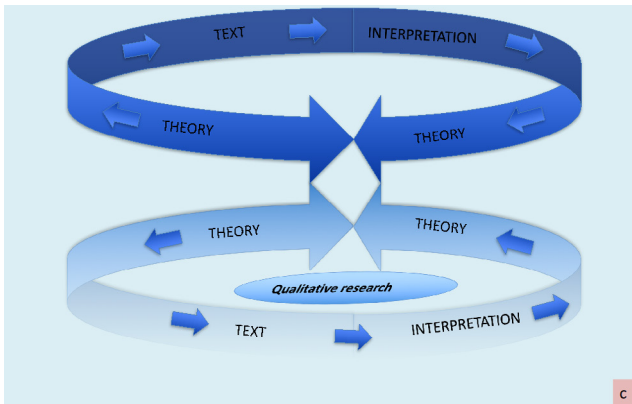


Figure 1. Interpretation of the cycle of qualitative research.

Source: review authors.

The initial theory is the basis for defining how the field of study is to be accessed. Once the researcher is already working on the topic a text should be constructed that arises from the data obtained. The choice of instruments for data collection and their use must be chosen with care because a new theory might be constructed from the interpretation of the text.

This text is constructed based on the systematization and organization of data as well as the measured codes and categories of the analysis, whether previously established or emerging from the process. The interpretation of the text corresponds to the study of data from the frame of reference that guides the investigation. This makes the formulation of inferences possible, which leads to the construction and reorganization of knowledge and ultimately to the production of new knowledge.

Although the author describes this process as a sequence of phases, it does not mean that all types of research must proceed in that order. The author explains why research must comply with these moments, even though they may occur as repetitive cycles, equally able to lead back or advance within the process. Finally, the author evidences that researchers must develop criteria to correlate the initial theory with the newly constructed one.

2. Critical assessment

Next, we present our interpretation of the book's contents, which does not follow the order in which

the chapters appear, but addresses relevant aspects for researchers, in particular the novices that require an overview of the components of qualitative research to be obtained.

We start by highlighting the author's presentation of the series of decisions that researchers must make in each of the research phases, which can define the investigation identity. For this, the author explains in detail why it is necessary to define the objectives and limits of the research as clearly as possible before approaching the field of study as well as explain the most appropriate methodology to study the topic in question. This enriches decision-making on the duration of the process, the persons and contexts involved and how the research subjects might be affected by becoming participants in the investigation. After all of these decisions, the investigator is able to select the field and consequently understand how the research cycle will begin and end. In Figure 2, we represent some aspects that characterize each phase of the research.

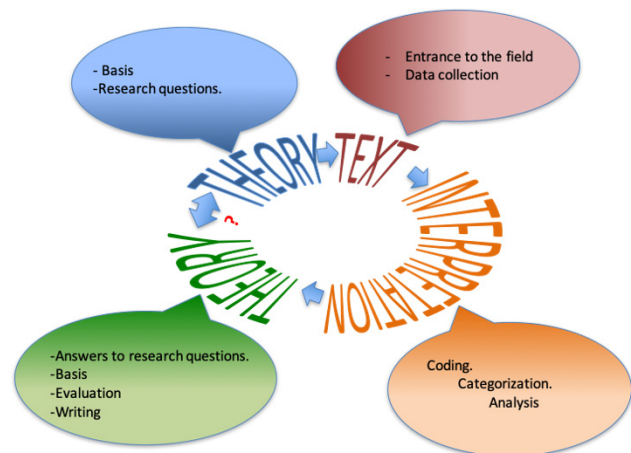


Figure 2. Characteristic aspects of each research phase.

Source: review authors.

Subsequently, the decision-making regarding the preparation to enter the field comes, which implies considering a series of factors to guarantee the seriousness and reliability of the investigation, depending on how the interaction between actors of the research occurs, whether the data will be reliable or will be possible to study them properly. It

can happen, for example, that the data obtained are too few or too many, or that they cause perplexity. In all of these cases, it will be extremely difficult to draw conclusions from the research. For this reason, it is extremely important to carefully choose data collection instruments and the ways to apply them, always seeking relevance to the field and reliability for the information obtained. In Figure 3, we describe strategies that can be used to select the target field.

Then, the data are processed to constitute a text, after which the need to make decisions on the coding methodology arises. To accomplish this, the researcher must know how to properly identify units of analysis and criteria to organize them to consolidate categories of analysis. These can be around words, phrases, documents, events, speeches, people or groups from which an appropriate set of evidence can be organized to address the research questions.

The researcher must make decisions about the criteria for use to treat the categories of analysis. It should be clear from the outset whether the study will proceed from the general to the particular or

vice versa. The researcher should also be clear about how the categories should be related to each other to make sense of the answers found. Similarly, the researcher must decide what approach should be used to determine the problem under study, keeping in mind the level of depth achieved. In Figure 4, we represent the process of data analysis, beginning with the initial text and passing from codification to categorisation.

It is important to note that not all interpretations are grounds for a valid theory, so it is necessary to ensure that what is chosen can guarantee the reliability of the data analysis. One strategy proposed by the author to achieve reliable interpretations is the use of triangulation methods because these promote comparative studies that exhibit reduced subjectivity or bias in the analysis.

Flick suggests four possible methods of triangulation, basically presenting it as a comparison between data or between methods of data collection, applied to achieve greater objectivity and accuracy for the construction of the text. Hence, the researcher

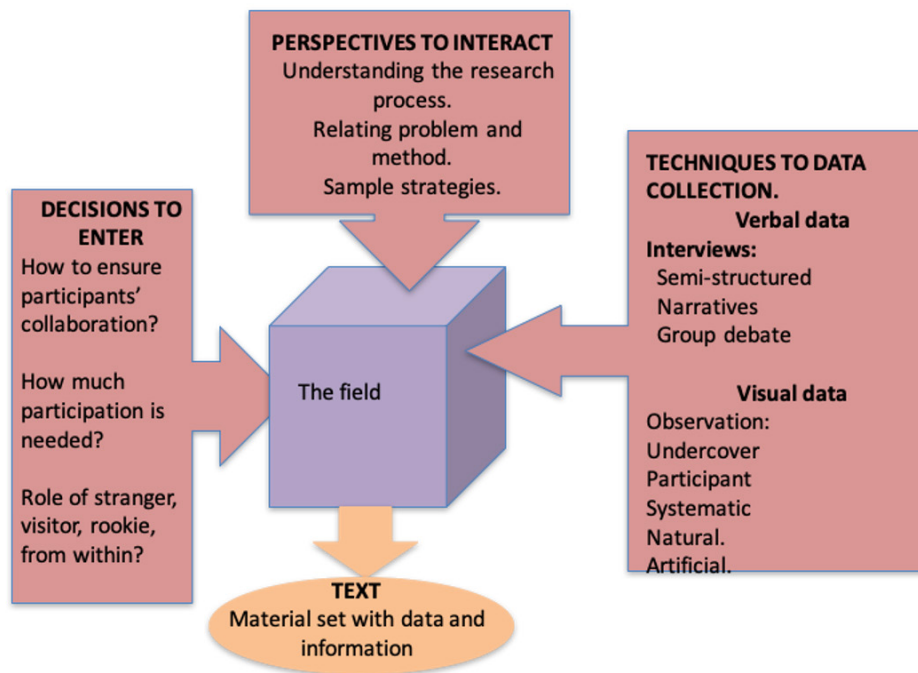


Figure 3. Strategies for choosing a field and how to approach it.

Source: review authors.

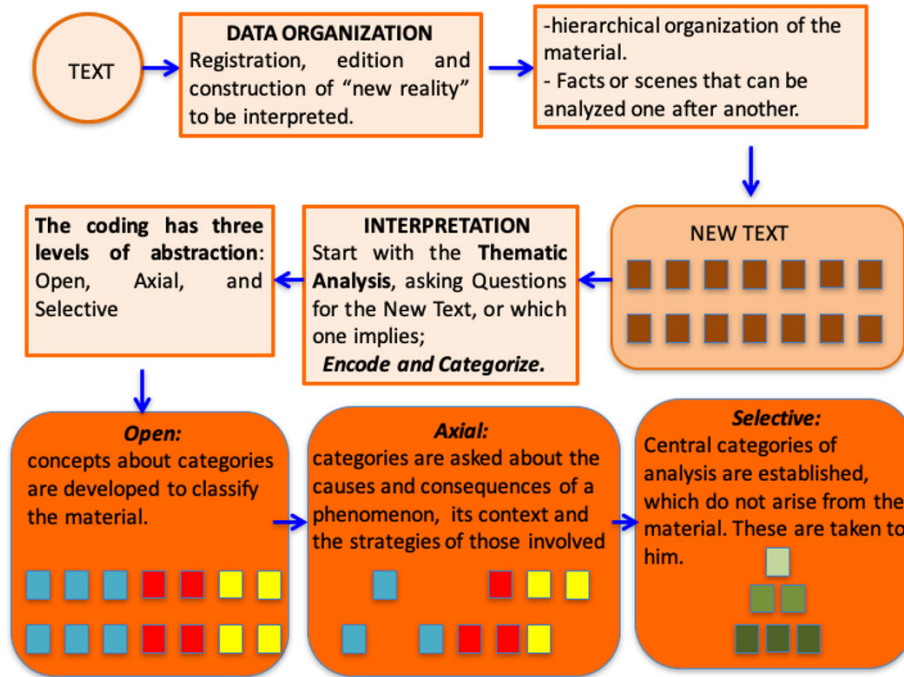


Figure 4. Data analysis beginning with the initial text and passing through codification to categorisation.

Source: review authors.

must decide which method or set of methods is more suitable for the work. These methods are: 1) triangulation of theory, 2) triangulation of data, 3) triangulation of researchers and 4) methodological triangulation.

Triangulation of theory consists of analysis on the same data considering multiple hypotheses and perspectives to expand the possibilities of knowledge production. Researcher triangulation is not a division of labour among researchers, but a systematic comparison of the vision of different researchers of the same data. The triangulation of data relates to obtaining information at different times, or from different actors in the same process, which can be integrated to construct answers to the research question. Methodological triangulation is to define the use of subscales to measure an item within a method or the use of different methods to obtain the same data.

Another interesting aspect to highlight in this work is that besides developing the foundations and techniques for each moment in qualitative research,

the book indicates why the research process advances by cycles around the interpretation, what guides decision-making and the character that will take the final product. Ultimately, qualitative research is not a linear process but a complex one that requires rigour.

The author also describes the characteristics of the researcher. We found this fact of great interest because beyond the importance of mastering theories that define qualitative research, the researcher must assume as a responsible person who is aware of the value that a subject can have that can influence the quality of the results. The following characteristics are presented:

- Honest discussion of the relationship between the results found and the information presented, with the greatest transparency about the process;
- Clarity regarding the different relationships that operate within the research process, that is, understanding their role in the context under study;
- A broad and well-founded view on the presentation of a phenomenon and the development of

appropriate inferences and analysis. This implies the ability to think flexibly to be able to interact with “what is new” and with constantly changing realities while not manipulating one’s data to imply something in particular has occurred in one’s study;

- Knowledge of both qualitative and quantitative research, without overvaluing either, seeing them as different ways of presenting results properly and
- Necessary skills to organize new networks and structures.

