

## Qualitative methods: the essentials.

Remember: in qualitative research, results tell you about people's perceptions, not 'reality'. You are responsible for the protection of the people involved in your research and the information they provide to you - consider ethics.

### Research strategies.

A research strategy is a general plan which sets out a systematic approach to your research. These strategies can be used together e.g. a mixed method case study.

### Mixed methods:

Using two or more of the below methods and combining the information you collect; can be multi-stage research, i.e. different methods at different points.

### Ethnography:

A long(ish) period of time participating in a particular group or community; using observations, interviews, document or object analysis, etc.; can be virtual or in real life (work or social contexts).

### Insider research:

Research in a setting where you already have a role.

### Action research:

A cycle where the point of the research is to identify and try to solve the problem, and evaluate attempted solutions.

### Case study:

One or two examples (context, place, individual person or small group of people) explored in depth.

### Longitudinal or snapshot:

Duration of the research: Longitudinal means over a long period of time; snapshot means once.

## Qualitative data collection techniques.

### Interviews:

Intended to get direct information by talking to the people who know most about it.

### Survey:

Open-ended questionnaires ('how', 'why', 'describe', 'tell me about'), to collect information about opinions, beliefs and feelings from more people than is possible through interviews.

### Observations:

Watch people engaging in a particular behaviour or in a particular context, and note what you see.

## **Learning Development**

### **Text, document or image analysis:**

Systematic analysis of text or image using a particular technique e.g. discourse or content analysis.

### **Policy analysis:**

Examining the trajectory, implementation, creation process, changes, content or effectiveness of particular policy, or policy area.

### **Systematic literature review:**

Treat the literature as data, and your searching as your method of data collection (i.e. search terms and databases). Results are the studies that you found.

### **Secondary data analysis or Archival data:**

New analysis of raw data collected by someone else.

Refer to the Qualitative Methods Full Guide for more information.