

Chapter 5: Case Studies

Case Study – Coding and ‘Memoing’

Data:

‘Pain relief is a major problem when you have arthritis. Sometimes, the pain is worse than other times, but when it gets really bad, whew! It hurts so bad, you don’t want to get out of bed. You don’t feel like doing anything. Any relief you get from drugs that you take is only temporary or partial.’

‘Memoing’:

‘One thing that is being discussed here is PAIN. One of the properties of pain is INTENSITY: it varies from a little to a lot. (When is it a lot and when is it little?) When it hurts a lot, there are consequences: don’t want to get out of bed, don’t feel like doing things (what are other things you don’t do when in pain?). In order to solve this problem, you need PAIN RELIEF. One AGENT OF PAIN RELIEF is drugs (what are other members of this category?). Pain relief has a certain DURATION (could be temporary), and EFFECTIVENESS (could be partial).’

Source: Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 78.

Case Study – Ben Sets Out His Theoretical Standpoint: 'Distinguishing those facts that will shape the future is much easier said than done.'

Levin refers to this phenomenon (using Dror's phrase) as fuzzy gambling (Levin, 2001). At the same time Broadfoot challenges the assertion that education practice can be proved to impact directly upon subsequent economic performance (Broadfoot, 2000). Hargreaves meanwhile challenges the focus of some policy initiatives aimed at promoting the knowledge economy and/or knowledge society (Hargreaves, 2003). In his view these are often misguided in their attempts to educate children in the knowledge and skills for a particular kind of economy. Instead he argues that such initiatives should be aimed at developing a population's capacity for learning in order to be able to adapt and respond quickly and flexibly to economic change.

Levin's model is characterized by 4 phases in the process of policymaking and reform. The first is described as origins and centres on the ideas and beliefs that lie behind changes in policy. The second stage of adoption focuses upon the evolution and development of a policy between its original conception and its final incarnation, examining the events and factors that led to these changes and developments. The third stage, implementation, concentrates on the difficulties of translating policy changes into practice and seeks to identify what Levin refers to as the policy levers involved. Finally the model considers outcomes. Any policy may result in a range of outcomes both intended and unintended. Levin cautions the reader against assuming that the origin of government policy is entirely rational and objective due to the limits of human capacity to understand and solve problems (Levin, 2001).

Like all stage theories, Levin's model implies a logical progression from A to B, or in this case from origins to outcomes, which can belie the complexities involved. Levin himself acknowledges this fact, stating that the use of such models should not blind the researcher to the fact that in reality the stages overlap and interact with one another in subtle and complex ways rather than constituting distinct and discrete phases. In spite of this complication, such a model can be helpful in illuminating the messiness of policy to practice. This dissertation will apply Levin's four stage model of educational policy making to the development of the Labour Government's City Academies.'

Chapter 5: Points to Think About

Points to Think About – Four Levels of Understanding

Porter describes research as being founded on four levels of understanding:

Level 1: Ontology – What is the nature of reality?

Level 2: Epistemology – What counts as knowledge of the real world?

Level 3: Methodology – How can we gain an understanding of reality?

Level 4: Methods – How can we collect evidence about reality?

Source: Porter, 1996, pp. 113–22.

Points to Think About – Key Questions for Would-be Ethnographic Researchers

- Can a research methodology or approach ever be free of values?
- Can the methods or tools used in carrying out your research be separated from your values, feelings and emotions?
- What should be declared and in how much detail? How does a researcher's 'positionality' impact upon her/his research and how, and to what extent, should it be made explicit?
- Where and how should 'reflexivity' (see Chapter 5) work within your research design, data collection, data analysis, writing and reporting?

Source: BERA, 2004.

Chapter 5: Recommended Reading and Further Sources of Information

- Bryman, A. (2016, 5th edition), *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011, 7th edition), *Research Methods in Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Cresswell, J. (2013, 3rd edition), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Paperback). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crotty, M. (1998), *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2014, 4th edition), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Robson, C. and McKarten, K. (2011, 4th edition), *Real World Research*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Silverman, D. (2013), *Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chapter 5: Reflective Tasks

Consider some questions about how you see the world:

- 1** Do you think we can study people in the same way that we can study things?
In what ways might this be possible, in what ways not?
- 2** Has everything always been there, just not yet discovered – or does the presence of people give new meanings?

Look at previous research which uses specific methodological approaches;

- 1** Why do you think this approach was taken?
- 2** Would other approaches have been possible?
- 3** Would another approach have led to different outcomes?

Chapter 5: Summary of Key Points

- It is important to be clear about the distinction between methodology and methods. Your methodology is the framework around which your project is structured and is informed by your views on reality and knowledge. Your methods are the techniques and procedures used to gather data.
- Broadly speaking methodologies can be positivist, interpretivist, transformatory or pragmatic in nature.
- Any methodology has its strengths and shortcomings and you will need to demonstrate that you understand these in your dissertation and can justify your eventual choice.
- Methodology is not just an issue for students involved in primary data collection. Literature-based and other secondary-data projects also present you with methodological considerations.

Chapter 5: Checklist

Checklist – Recording and Managing Your Reading

Reference	
Relevant chapter(s)/page numbers	
Main points/claims	
Author position/perspective	
Links to other sources	
Key quotes	
Comments/thoughts	