

Guidelines for Researchers Using an Adapted Consensual Qualitative Research Approach in Management Research

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Abstract: This article offers an approach to conducting qualitative research in Management Studies by providing researchers with guidelines to apply Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). Although in the pursuit for structure, management researchers may be cautious of using qualitative research, CQR offers a structured qualitative research design option. The article explains how an adapted CQR design aligns well with most structured qualitative research methods. To describe an adapted CQR method, a research example based in Management Studies was used. This research example involved the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework that identified the various components of organisational reputation and reputation management and aimed at describing the role of social media within this framework. The primary research design of the research example consisted of two phases. The first phase comprised of an organisational policy document analysis. The second phase consisted of qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews with various departmental or divisional heads aimed at enriching the data collected using document analysis of specific policy documents. In both phases, a research team was employed as well as an auditing or verification system in keeping with the CQR method, where the research team considered the data codes, data coding, analysis and interpretation throughout the research process. This article further outlines the process followed and provides coding structures, which could be adopted for other similar studies. Ten CQR guidelines are proposed, which management researchers could apply when using document analysis in Management Studies as well as three guidelines for using interview transcripts from semi-structured interviews. The CQR research process foundation was the research team approach adopted when analysing, coding and reporting on data collected. The adoption of a method such as CQR, or a modified version thereof, allows for a team of researchers to institute a process of validation to the research process and the results by thoroughly examining their own individual understandings of the data.

Keywords: CQR, qualitative methods, management research, document analysis, semi-structured interviews

1. Introduction

Management researchers in general prefer to have structure in their research processes owing to the nature of their discipline which tends to involve procedure and organisation. As a result, this pursuit for structure may deter some researchers who prefer a more quantitative means of investigation from using qualitative research designs.

However, the rich value attributed to qualitative research is often placed in designs which are emergent in nature and developed relatively flexibly (Clissett, 2008, p.100) with a particular and ambiguous outcome rather than replicable and clearly-defined outcomes (Van Maanen, 1979, p.520) as with quantitative research methodologies. The value is thus attributed to the creation of new theory and knowledge in the discipline or topic and, therefore, could be of value in understanding emerging issues within the discipline of Management Studies, by providing an in-depth understanding into concerns related to people and organisations as well as their concepts and ideas.

Qualitative research can add value through rigorous, structured research designs. One such qualitative research design is Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), which aligns well with most structured qualitative methods. The model of introducing a step-by-step process to collecting, coding, analysing and rechecking the research data has a number of important advantages in relation to the philosophy behind research designs and bridges the gap between realism and relativism by satisfying the need for “partly-replicable, robust and cumulative” research by calling for quasi-statistics or numerical classification of results (Yeh and Inman, 2007, p.374).

In this article, an adapted approach to CQR is offered to management researchers by providing a more rigorous approach to conducting qualitative research and offers the researcher guidelines to apply CQR. The article uses a case study conducted in Management Studies and presents the general process applied for data collection, data coding and data analysis. Examples of documents and semi-structured interviews are used as tools for data collection. The important role of the research team in this process is also explained. The article

further develops an adapted CQR approach which is offered as a guideline that could be replicated in other Management Studies, both on its own as a pure qualitative study or as an addition to a quantitative study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Value of Qualitative Research in Management Studies

The value of qualitative research is to explain and recognise social phenomena in terms of the significance people bring to them. Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2015, p.174) identify that qualitative researchers are interested in the depth of human experience, including all the personal subjective peculiarities that are characteristic of individual experiences and meanings associated with the particular phenomena. Furthermore, qualitative researchers are engaged in scientific discovery as well as the creation of new theory and are not just testing theory (Dougherty, 2015, p.608).

Therefore, qualitative research could be the most appropriate method when the research being conducted attempts to explain the unexplained; where the nature of the research is broad and where previous theories do not exist, or are incomplete (Patton, 2002, p.22). This methodology provides management researchers with an added appeal by providing an in-depth understanding into concerns related to people and organisations as well as their concepts and ideas. As a result, qualitative methodology is instrumental in appreciating multifaceted interactions between individuals and their environment and how these phenomena influence outcomes (Anderson, Leahy, Delvalle, Sherman and Tansey, 2014, p.88). In addition, Kalou and Sadler-Smith (2015, p.629) explain that organisations need to be language-mediated domains of social interaction in which communication constructs organisational realities and produces organisational phenomena. Therefore, organisational researchers require methods for interpretive field studies (Kalou and Sadler-Smith, 2015, p.629).

The crucial features of qualitative research can be identified as the appropriate choice of applicable methods and initial theories; the appreciation for and analysis of different perspectives; the researchers' reflections on their research as part of the process of knowledge production and the variety of approaches and methods that can be adopted (Flick, 2009, p.14). Qualitative researchers are presented with a number of options for conducting research (Creswell, Hanson and Clark, 2007, p.236). Creswell et al (2007, p.236) stress that the process of selection should begin with the "inquiry process, with the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and how they know what is known (epistemology), the inclusion of their values (axiology), the nature in which their research emerges (methodology) and their writing structures".

Within qualitative investigations, researchers characteristically identify with a specific epistemological paradigm, within which various theoretical frameworks exist and further include representative methods (Anderson, et al, 2014, p.88). Thus, for qualitative researchers, the ideal method to understand a specific phenomenon is to approach measurement within its own context and develop questions as the researcher becomes familiar with the research context (Krauss, 2005, p.759). However, Maree (2007, p.37) stresses that although the value of the data obtained in qualitative studies rests in its rich comprehensive detail, the results obtained from a qualitative investigation need to remain similar, even when they are obtained on different occasions or by different forms of the same assessment or measuring mechanism. Therefore, it is essential to facilitate quality assurance, namely, data verification. According to Cho and Trent (2006, p.322), in seeking trustworthiness for qualitative research, researchers need to attend to research credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Furthermore, qualitative researchers need to view research validity and reliability as a transactional process consisting of techniques or methods by which misunderstandings can be adjusted and thus fixed (Cho and Trent, 2006, p.322) leading to research trustworthiness. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2015, p.258) understand the rigorous process of coding qualitative data as imperative for obtaining research trustworthiness. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009, p.309-311) also stress the importance of coding and analysing qualitative data in eight stages, first, by preparing the data collected, followed by defining the coping unit to be analysed and developing categories and coding scheme or conceptual framework. The researcher then tests the coding schemes on sample data and follows with coding all the data. The data is then assessed and conclusions are drawn from the coded data. Finally, the researcher reports on the methods and findings.

2.2 Components of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)

The CQR method, used frequently as a qualitative inquiry method in counselling psychology research, was designed and used by Hill (2012) and Anderson et al (2014, p.89-90) who prescribed the use of semi-structured interviews. The basic premise behind this particular research method is highlighted by Barden and Cashwell (2014, p.45) as the use of “multiple researchers, reaching consensus as a team, and the systematic methodology of examining the representativeness of results across cases”.

Hill, Thompson and Williams (1997, p.523) describe the CQR process as involving three general steps:

1. Responses to open-ended questions from questionnaires or interviews for each individual case are divided into domains (or topic areas)
2. Core ideas (or abstracts or brief summaries) are constructed for all the material within each domain for each case
3. Cross-analysis, which involves developing categories to describe consistencies in the core ideas within domains across cases.

Therefore, according to Lee, Lee, Park and Lee (2017, p.508), basically each researcher develops domains and core ideas from the data collected from various interviews. These domains and topics are then used to group or cluster the data, and core ideas are summarised and reviewed by an auditor through the consensus process. Thus, CQR can be explained as a “data-driven qualitative methodology using a team consensus approach and includes a systematic evaluation of thematic representativeness across multiple cases” (Depner, Grant, Byrwa, Breier, Lodi-Smith, Kerry and Luczkiewicz, 2017, p.201).

For Hill et al (1997, p.519), CQR fits well within the tradition of qualitative research in that it shares several features in common with the methods used in qualitative research. The founding researchers elaborate further on this and align the CQR method with other qualitative research designs and identify the key components that apply to CQR. Some similarities across the two methods (qualitative research methodology and the CQR method) could include, inductive reasoning and conclusions being built on the data collected, the reliance on words to describe phenomena as opposed to numbers, identifying and studying a small number of cases intensely with the aim of appreciating the whole case to understand the specific parts, becomes the focus. An additional similarity would be to generally consider the open-ended questions so as not to restrict the responses of respondents. The composition of the research team and the process they follow in the gathering, analysing and presenting of data also offers some similarities. For example, all judgements are made by a primary team of researchers so that a variety of options are available about each decision. Consensus amongst the research team is required so that the best possible construction is developed for all the data and that auditors are used to check the consensus judgements to ensure that the primary team does not overlook important data. Finally, the primary research team continually goes back to the raw data to make sure that their results and conclusions are accurate and based on the data (Hill et al, 1997, p.520-521).

Hill (2012) points out that this collectivist approach to organising and processing of qualitative analysis has a number of important advantages in relation to philosophy and bridges the gap between realism and relativism by satisfying the call for “replicable, robust and cumulative” research by calling for quasi-statistics or numerical classification of results (Yeh and Inman, 2007, p.374). However, Stiles (1997, p.589) adds that Hill et al (1997) did not expect researchers using CQR to come to the same results when collecting and analysing data, but emphasises that the truth relies in the commonality of the different perspectives. Thus, the CQR approach allows the researchers to identify categories that encompass responses by all of the participants and advocates the reporting of the number or portion of the cases that fit each category.

3. Applying an adapted method of CQR in Management Studies

To explain the adapted method of CQR, a research example based in Management Studies was used. An overview of the research example is first provided before the process of using the CQR method is described.

3.1 Overview of the research example

Organisations increasingly measure their assets in terms of intangibles, such as knowledge, brand visibility and customer loyalty and not only by what the organisation makes or does, but how it is perceived (Money and Gardiner, 2005, p.43) through organisational reputation. Thus, organisational reputation is a result of the interactions between an organisation and its stakeholders and of stakeholder-stakeholder communication

(Deephouse, 2000, cited in Puncheva, 2008, p.282). Social media provide organisational stakeholders with tools for integral listening platforms that not only allow practitioners to monitor what is being said (McAllister, 2012, p.319), but also provide an interactive platform for stakeholders to share concerns and ideas about the organisation. Websites and new media technologies have had a revolutionary impact on the management of organisations and ultimately on the way organisations perceive and manage organisational reputation. Managing organisational risk with respect to organisational reputation and the concept of social media management through organisational policy development are important issues that assist organisations to avoid possible crises and maximise its potential. However, as a result of the “infancy level” of social media in the corporate world, little research has been done to investigate the adoption of social media and associated implementation models (Chikandiwa, Contogiannis and Jembere, 2013, p.367) in relation to organisational reputation management.

Social media platforms are emerging as an important part of the daily operations within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), notably universities, where they are being used as a significant tool for improved communication and enhancement of services, as with other organisations. HEIs can maximise this unique set of tools to the benefit of their students through improved service delivery as well as by assisting staff and students to develop their research and academic reputation, thus indirectly enhancing the institution’s reputation. At the same time, it implies maximising the benefit of social media as an organisational tool to assist in the operation of the organisation. When making the comparison between the corporate environment and HEIs, clients in the corporate environment are seen as external stakeholders only, while the students within the HEIs should be appreciated as both external and internal stakeholders. It is for this reason that HEIs are ethically required to protect their students from the possible harm that could be caused by the wrongful use of social media by regulating and educating students and staff about the power and legal issues arising from the irresponsible use of social media, while also being mindful of creating an environment for freedom of speech. In addition, universities have a keen interest in retaining contact with their Alumni stakeholders, and social media have become a key networking tool for this.

Therefore, understanding the unique dynamics of the use of social media within higher education becomes the corner stone in the provision of guidelines and policy development for the appropriate use of social media to achieve a desired organisational reputation. Against the background of reputation management theory and the use of social media, the primary objective of this research was to investigate organisational reputation management in South African Higher Education Institutions (SAHEIs) as manifested in the social media policies of the SAHEIs.

The research was built on a comprehensive theoretical framework that identifies the various components of organisational reputation and reputation management and aims at understanding the role of social media within this framework. This structure provided the foundation for analysing organisational social media policies and formulating an understanding of the development of such within SAHEIs by appreciating the advantages and potential risks associated with organisational social media use in organisational reputation management.

The most compelling reason for the research being set in the constructivist research paradigm is that it takes into context the framework and the setting, and ultimately searches for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, which is the role social media could play in the reputation management of HEIs in South Africa. There is scant evidence that a comprehensive systematic empirical analysis of the use of social media in support of reputation management at HEIs in South Africa has ever been conducted. Furthermore, the research was well-matched within the qualitative approach given the exploratory nature of investigation (Barden and Cashwell, 2014, p.45).

The discovery of theory underpinning this research was conducted mainly through the analysis of secondary sources, namely, the social media policy documents of selected organisations, employing a document analysis tool. Document analysis is used as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents and is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods (Bowen, 2009, p.27-28). In addition, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key personnel were conducted to clarify and provide further insight into the situation. The document analysis tool asked questions about the way specific social media policy structures were deployed in the social construct of institutional management. This particular social construct provided insight into the unique situation that managers faced when investigating the potential advantages and risks of

social media distribution and usage within their organisation as a significant factor in institutional reputation management.

In an attempt to address the objectives of this research and to conduct the practical aspects of the research, a qualitative research design was used. Furthermore, the research was positioned within a social institutional construct as the study aimed to emphasise the processes and meanings of the phenomenon under examination (Noor, 2008, p.1602) and explain the unique situation that managers face when looking at reputation management within HEIs. In addition, the qualitative research methodology allowed for the framing of a context for the research, which ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of that particular situation, namely, the role that social media may play in organisational reputation management of HEIs in South Africa and the way in which this is managed by these organisations.

3.2 Process using the adapted CQR method

The primary research design of the study was presented in two main phases. The first phase comprised a document analysis of organisational policy documents. The second phase consisted of qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews with various departmental or divisional heads aimed at enriching the data collected by means of the document analysis (in this case, the policy documents). It also provided an opportunity to verify the findings of the analysis concluded in the former phase by either confirming or disputing them and providing further insight.

In both phases, a research team was employed as well as an auditing or verification system in keeping with the CQR method, where the research team considered the data codes, data coding, analysis and interpretation throughout the research process. A research team was established, consisting of the primary researcher, research assistant and a senior academic within Management Studies. Through the process of incorporating an adapted version of the CQR method, research trustworthiness and consistency in coding and analysis was achieved.

3.2.1 Phase One: Document analysis

To conduct a document analysis of organisational policy documents, the study reflected on three comparative sample groups, namely, an international sample (from the US and UK), a sample from a different sector but within the same country as the investigative sample (the SA financial sector) and the main sample under investigation (SAHEIs). Thus, the study reflected on policy documents from 30 international organisations, which was considered a comprehensive sample for presenting an accurate account of the international perspective (international sample). A total of nine organisational policy documents were consulted from a different sector within South Africa (for internal comparability purposes). A total of 23 policy documents were considered from 23 formally-established South African organisations, which formed the bases of the investigation.

As a starting point, a preliminary study (pilot) was undertaken to determine the existence and/or accessibility of the organisational policies (and other documents) available to the public on the Internet. Focus on the accessibility of the documents on which the analysis for this research was based were obtained primarily through the Google search engine. The search involved using a number of search strings, for example, 'social media policy HEI', 'Web 2.0 policy HEI' and 'Social networking policy HEI'. The pilot then produced the required results. The same process for gathering the policy documents was used for three different comparable sample groups of the study. The organisational policy documents that were not available via the Google search engine were obtained by means of a direct request to a staff member within the particular organisation. The documents considered were collected, printed and filed according to their respective groups.

The research team considered the data described in the documents and established the original set of coding themes from a pilot sample of the larger sample frame and the literature consulted. The research assistant and primary researcher established the original set of themes and categories, while the senior academic reviewed the process.

The initial theme identified the location, namely, where the documents were positioned within the organisations. Codes were allocated to three central policy location categories, and the documents were coded accordingly. A member of the research team allocated the codes to the documents and another

member of the team cross-checked the process followed and assigned the total number for each category. The senior researcher supervised the final process.

The documents were then categorised within the second theme level, which considered the document audience. Therefore, who were the intended “audiences” of the policy? Again, codes were allocated according to whom the policies were addressed. The documents were then categorised according to various stakeholders they aimed to address. A member of the research team would classify the documents and another research team member would verify the process followed and allocate totals to these codes. Finally, the senior researcher supervised the process.

The final process involved in analysing the documents considered the analytical themes and theoretical concepts inherent in the documents. The coding categories were developed from the literature related for the study. Together the research team consulted on the main themes outlined in the literature and developed codes that were designed as “questions” posed to the documents and varying “responses” were predetermined to provide the sub-categories. A rigorous process of joint consultation by the research team was employed to code the documents (data) to determine the number of documents allocated to the sub-categories. The same coding process was used for all three sample groups. Care was taken by the research team to code and verify the interpretation of the coding procedure while a senior researcher considered the overall activity.

Table 1 shows the coding structure and categories that were used to code and analyse the data obtained from the organisational policy documents from the selected sample groups.

Table 1: Coding structure for document analysis

<u>Coding Theme</u>	<u>Coding Category</u>
Theme Level 1: Categorises policies into three distinct category levels according to where policies are located/housed within the host organisation.	Category 1 Category 2 Category 3
Theme Level 2: Categorises documents according to their main audience.	Stakeholder 1 Stakeholder 1 Stakeholder 1 Stakeholder 1
Theme Level 3: Questions are developed from the literature and proposed to the documents.	Theme 1 identified from literature Theme 2 identified from literature Theme 3 identified from literature Theme 4 identified from literature Theme 5 identified from literature Theme 6 identified from literature

Source: Author’s own compilation

Table 1 outlines the coding structure and the coding details applied during for data analysis process for the organisational policy documents. Codes were then allocated to the themes, categories as well as subcategories and the documents were coded accordingly. The team of researchers performed a final check of the coded data and compared the coded data across the cases and tabulated the number of cases that fitted within the codes for reporting of the data.

3.2.2 Phase Two: Semi-structured interviews

In addition to the analysis of the organisational policy documents, the study made use of semi-structured interviews as an additional source of data, with the aim of providing further insight into the phenomenon being investigated. These interviews, with key informants, provided more detailed information on matters which would not have been available in the policy documents. It was important to note that interviews were only conducted with key organisational personnel from the main study sample group and not the comparative samples.

Purposive sampling was used and key employees were identified. This provided the study with further insight into the development of the organisational policy documents and how the main study sample implemented their organisational policies.

The interviews were conducted using a discussion guide generated from joint consultation with the research team and comprised of different sections pertaining to the research topic, problem or question under investigation, such as the development of a reputation management position and the use of social media within an institution. The guide contained five standardised open-ended questions, but allowed the researchers to deviate and ask further probing questions based on the respondents’ responses (Du Plooy, 2009, p.360).

All interviews were transcribed by the research team. A rigorous process of coding the interview documents was applied across all the transcribed documents. Broad categories of responses were developed according to the responses to the questions posed to the participants. The research team categorised the documents according to the themed responses and tabulated the replies across the samples. Once again, the senior researcher performed a verification process to ensure consistency was achieved. The same coding process was used for all interviews. Care was taken by the research team to code and verify the interpretation of the coding procedure, while a senior researcher considered the overall activity.

Table 2 illustrates an example of how the five questions posed to the participants relates to the broad coding structure that was used to code and analyse the data obtained from the transcribed interviews for this case.

Table 2: Coding structure for semi-structured interviews

Questions
<p>Question 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 1 - Theme 2 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 1 - Theme 3 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 1 - Deviations from the above themes
<p>Question 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 2 - Theme 2 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 2 - Theme 3 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 2 - Deviations from the above themes
<p>Question 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 3 - Theme 2 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 3 - Theme 3 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 3 - Deviations from the above themes
<p>Question 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 1 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 4 - Theme 2 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 4

Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme 3 – central concept identified/highlighted related to question 4 - Deviations from the above themes
Question 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Option to share additional information outside the prescribed questions

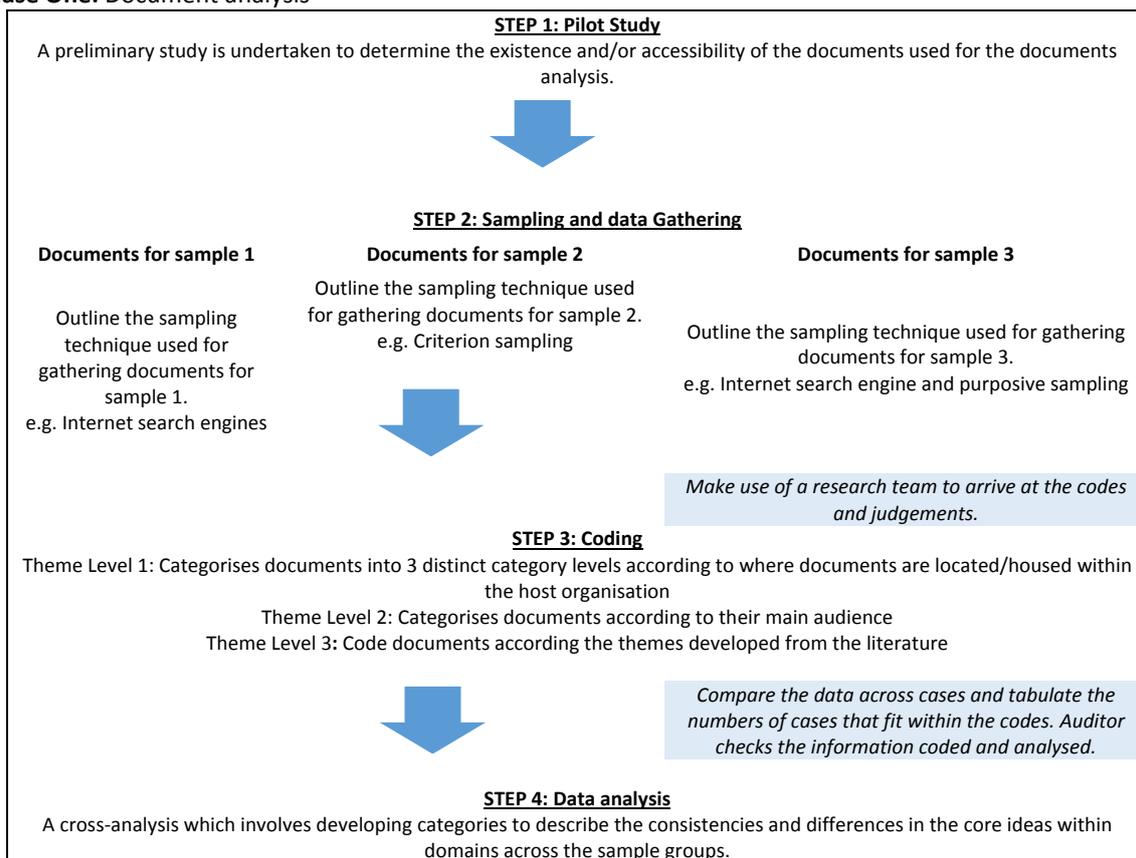
Source: Author’s own compilation

Table 2 outlines the coding structure and the coding details applied during the data analysis process for this case. The team of researchers compared the coded data across the all cases and tabulated the number of cases that fitted within the codes and themes developed from the codes. Careful consideration was taken not to exclude distinct points raised by respondents. The senior researcher audited the process by checking the coding and validating the categorisation.

3.2.3 Reporting the research

To provide consistency and uniformity across the three sample groups, the reporting process provided the same coding and analysis process for each sample group. In addition, interviews were conducted with key personnel to gauge their views and provide supporting information to the document analysis. Figure 1 outlines the process followed in both phase one and two of the study and reveals the input of CQR in the process.

Phase One: Document analysis



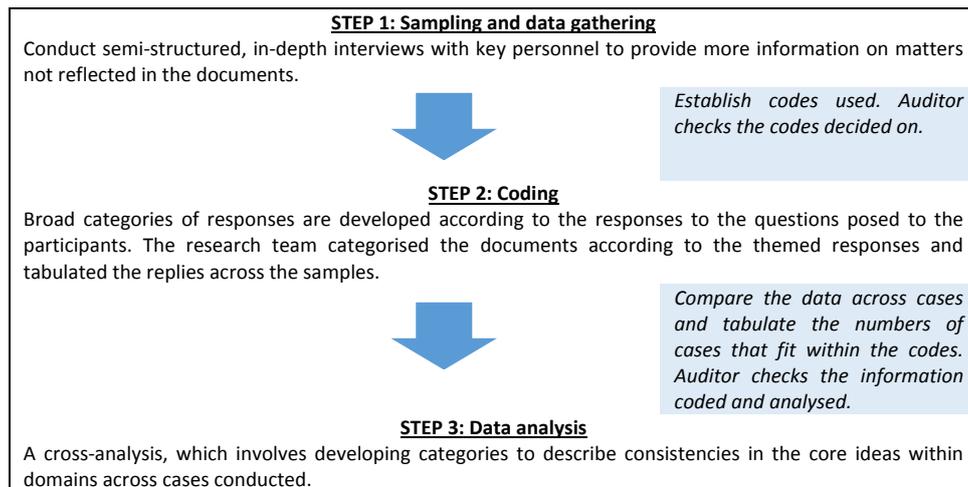
Phase Two: In-depth, semi-structured interviews**Figure 1:** Research design using an adapted method of CQR**Source: Author's own compilation**

Figure 1 shows an adapted module of CQR and the input of the research team as well as the auditor in each step of the research process related to both the document analysis and interview phases.

As this was a qualitative study, the concepts expressed in the documents as well as the underlying approach and direct responses from the participants were used as the primary focus when analysing and reporting on findings. However, the analysis approach and reporting provided further explanation, through numbers, as a complementary process to qualitative information presented, and was not meant to be a generalisation of a larger sample. Maxwell (2010:478) argues that the use of numbers in conjunction with qualitative methods and data does not make a study one of mixed-method research. Using numbers in the sense of simple counting of items are legitimate and an important type of data for qualitative research.

The research team and auditing process was fundamental in reporting the findings and selecting the most appropriate citations to report on the themes and categories to provide an in-depth understanding of the case. The accuracy related to the numerical reporting was checked and rechecked by the research team and validated by the auditing member. Thus, allowing for both an overview of the data results and the detailed reporting of the findings.

4. Guidelines to employ an adapted CQR method in Management Studies

The following guidelines could be proposed based on the research example using document analysis:

1. Print and file all documents according to the sample groups.
2. Use a research team (researcher and senior academic in Management) to determine original set of coding through a small sample of the larger sample group.
3. Identify the location of where the documents were obtained by using an open coding process.
4. Allocate codes to these categories and code the documents accordingly.
5. Categorise the documents within a second level of coding and classify according the selected codes identified by the research team.
6. Allocate codes to these categories and code the documents accordingly.
7. Identify the central themes or theoretical codes from the documents. The coding themes are developed from the literature, which were designed as actual questions posed to the documents and varying "responses" are then predetermined to provide the sub-categories.
8. Identify classifications emerging from the main themes applied to the documents within the study.
9. Allocate codes to these themes and code the documents accordingly.
10. Compare the coded data across the cases and tabulate the number of cases that fit within the codes with team of researchers.

Guidelines for interview transcripts from semi-structured interviews include:

1. Transcribe all interviews and write-up the responses provided according to the questions asked.
2. Categorise each response according to the questions asked and coded.
3. Compare the coded data across the cases and tabulate the number of cases that fit within the codes and themes developed by team of researchers, but careful consideration should be taken not to exclude distinct points raised by participants.

5. Conclusion

The article demonstrates, through a research example, the opportunities offered when using a qualitative methodology in a management study. The rich, contextual data extracted and analysed from using collection methods such as document analysis, focus groups and interviews can provide new opportunities and understandings in the area of management studies. As in the case of the example provided, these collection methods, namely, document analysis and selected interviews, were fundamental tools to explore the significance of the contextual and developmental nature of the organisational policy documents sampled.

However, establishing a replicable method or process to facilitate such qualitative studies provides a value to knowledge generation and knowledge development that aligns itself with the replicable nature offered in reliability, which is often associated with quantitative research methodologies. Thus, the adoption of a method such as CQR, or a modified version thereof, allows for a research team to institute a process of validation to the research process and results through examining their own individual understanding of the data. This could be done through individual effort, and then consulting with the research team who consider the final codes and categories, as proposed by Hill et al (1997). It could also include a process which requires teamwork with initial consultation on the process to be followed. The primary procedure of using a research team and the consulting of an independent auditor to authenticate the results by checking the results continually should become the foundation to the research process. The article thus offers clear guidelines that can be applied to other such Management Studies where similar collection tools are used.

The additional benefit of implementing such a process-based approach, provides a disciplinary study, such as Management Studies and other disciplines closely-aligned to qualitative methodologies, with an alternative to the traditional positivistic/realist paradigm that is familiar to these disciplines. Furthermore, the inclusion of such inquiry methods into management research will offer rich contextual information and the development of new knowledge.

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