

Methodological Challenges and Opportunities for Applied Qualitative Research

Government departments are in some cases more open to commissioning qualitative research for applied purposes (eg National Institutes for Health in the USA and the Cabinet Office in the UK). Yet qualitative social science research that seeks to integrate rigour and relevance in health, education, social work and elsewhere is still often seen as a methodological poor relation. This session will explore methodological opportunities and challenges for such research. It will explore themes such as:

- How do diverse applied ‘active contexts’ variously talk back to and drive methodological strategies?
- The relationship between participatory and justice-based research (which confronts the realization that ‘what passes for social reality stands in immediate relation to the distribution of power’, Giddens), and qualitative rigour.
- Drawing generalizable policy and practice inferences.
- Qualitative practitioner research and the apparent dissonance invoked by the social dependence of knowledge claims in the face of contextual demands to ‘get it right’ or ‘find out what’s really going on’.
- The causality problem in applied qualitative research.
- The contribution of qualitative methodologies to applied research, eg ethnographies, case studies, visual methods, written texts, simulations, and life histories.
- Research ethics in applied qualitative research.
- Are mixed methods necessarily more powerful or relevant than qualitative methods?

Submission

An abstract of maximum 250 words + name(s), e-mail address(es), affiliation, and three keywords to be e-mailed to the session organizer, Ian Shaw ifs2@york.ac.uk by no later than February 17, 2008.

Session facilitator

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