



Training Workshop on Qualitative Research for State OR Team

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A 4-day training workshop was held at Gusau, Zamfara State, for state OR teams from Jigawa, Katsina, Yobe and Zamfara States, on the qualitative approach to field research. The workshop was specifically designed to acquaint participants with the basic rudiments of the qualitative approach and equip them with the necessary skills and competences to be able to plan and implement research studies using qualitative research (QR) methodology.

The workshop was conducted using traditional classroom instruction, approached from an adult learning perspective with the aid of power point presentations and other hands-on practical reading and other instructional materials and manuals as used by international development research and donor agencies.

The scope of the course covered all relevant aspects of the qualitative approach and its distinctiveness, including its philosophy, uses, convergence with and divergence from the quantitative approach, and rationale. Other specific issues covered included the various methods and tools of qualitative research (such as interviews, observations, discussions, ethnographic/biographic studies), measurements and sampling in QR, the PRA philosophy, QR design issues, fieldwork and data collection issues and strategies, data management and data analysis (nature and characteristics of qualitative data, coding, concept formation, memo writing, etc.), techniques of data analysis (manual and computerized), and report writing. Also covered were ethical issues in research (including philosophical, socio-economic and political considerations, the many sides of confidentiality, deception, validity and reliability in research, involvement, power relations, etc.)

Throughout the course, it was emphasized that the best approach to mastering the QR methodology is through practical experiences. In part for this reason, participants were encouraged to contribute to discussions from their actual experiences and other observations. A practical exercise using actual data gathered from field experience in a previous

study (as well as an evaluation of same by the facilitator) then capped the course.

The workshop was clearly successful because at the end, it was apparent that participants, who had come with vast experience in the quantitative method, had mastered the basic features of the qualitative approach in a more organized and systematic way. The practical exercises had, however, proved a little challenging to all. This was not surprising given the short duration of the course and that the (QR) approach required much practice or hands-on experience. The participants were therefore encouraged to use resource materials and manuals distributed during the course for periodic review until such a time as they had developed mastery of the concepts and skills of the QR technique. This was particularly important with regard to data management, including concept formation, grand theory formulation, coding and report writing. They were also encouraged to see the QR method as a distinct but valid approach which could also complement the quantitative approach they were very familiar with.

Based on the experience, this reports recommends that the participants be encouraged, or even potentially required, to undertake field research using the QR approach to gain practical experience, be encouraged to periodically review the easy-to-use study materials distributed to them during the workshop (and listed herein) as this should aid their mastery of its necessary skills and competences. A 'top-up' course focusing on data management and analysis is also recommended.

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