2 Collecting your data: qualitative

- Developing a topic guide (interview schedule)
  - o Activity
- Interview tips
  - o (Extra: focus group tips)
- Choosing a sample
- From audio to text:
  - o Transcription?
  - o "Writing up" your interviews: response grid

Developing a topic guide

Key issue: relationship between your research questions and your interview questions

- Interview questions give you data
- You analyse that data in order to answer your research questions

- In some cases, your research questions and interview questions will be the same, but in most cases not
- Imagine trying to find out from your child how school is going.

Research questions: example 1

Main research question:

What are older people's perspectives on ageing?

Interview questions (different aspects of ageing):
1. *Health:* On a scale of poor to excellent, how would you rate your health? Why?
2. *Family*: How often do you see your children / grandchildren?
3. *Planning / worries:* Do you think you will keep living in this house in the future?

Research questions: example 2

Main research question:

How can we increase the participation of workplace literacy trainers in ongoing professional development?

Research sub-questions:

1. What professional development opportunities are available? *(What could they do?)*
2. What professional development opportunities do trainers participate in? *(What do they do?)*
3. What are the factors influencing that participation in? *(Why do they do what they do? Why do they not do other PD?)*
   a. Incentives / disincentives
   b. Supports / barriers

Map research questions to interview questions

Research questions	Interview questions (or other ways of collecting this data)
	These questions seek to elicit the data you need to address your research questions
What professional development opportunities are available?	• Review of policy documents • Personal knowledge • Interview question
What professional development opportunities do trainers participate in?	• What CPD have you done? • *Probe: When did it* • Do you have any CPD planned? *(Why not?)*
What are the factors influencing participation in professional development activities?	• Do you receive paid time off for professional development? Why / why not? • Do you do any unpaid professional development? Why / why not?

Activity 1: map your interview questions to your research questions
12-15 minutes

- Think about your research question(s) and any sub-questions
- Think about the interview questions you would ask (as in previous slides)
- If you are working with others right now, discuss as a group
- Please take your research questions and draft interview questions to your peer working group meeting – you can discuss more then

- Remember: the goal of the interview questions is to generate data
- You then analyse that data in order to answer your research question(s)

Interview tips

- Some interviewees might launch into detailed answers covering lots of related issues, especially if it is on a topic that is very important to them
- If they are addressing the issues you are concerned with, that is great – if not you will need to make efforts to bring them back to your focus
- If someone addresses Question 3 when answering Question 1, that is great. When you get to Question 3, just ask them if they have anything to add
- Don't ask too many questions – probably no more than 6-8 substantive questions (not including probes)
- Think about starting with a question that gets them talking, even if it's not strictly relevant to your research question(s). E.g. "Can you tell me how you got into teaching?"
- Plus a few background questions?

Interview tips

Background questions

- E.g. what level of course they teach, how long they have been teaching, how happy they are in the profession
- Factors that may be relevant to their answers

Pilot interview & question changes

- Piloting allows you to test your questions
- Lets you practice your **interview technique**
- Even a tiny bit of piloting is better than none – on anyone
- You can use pilot material if it's from your sample
- You can change/amend interview questions – iterative process
- In your paper, state clearly what you changes you make and why

Interview tips

- Two recorders if possible
- If one is an iPhone, don't set it near a standard audio recorder – you may get interference
- How honest are your interviewees? Can't take everything the say at face value
  - The answer to this question influences your topic guide development
- Don't lead them
- **The more you hear your voice on the recording, the worse the interview**.
  - This is an interview, not a conversation
  - Establish rapport: yes. But with as few words/interjections as possible
  - There are ethical issues here as well – guiding and steering interviewees
- Silence, probes and follow-up questions
- Ethical issues, e.g. anonymity

Focus groups

Advantages

- Effective way of collecting a large amount of data quickly (**efficient** use of researcher time)
  - E.g. Family Homework project: not enough time/money to do 1-to-1 interviews, but we needed a broad range of opinion from a range of programme stakeholders (e.g. pupils, parents, teachers, SLT) at 5 different schools
- **Cross-fertilisation**: interaction between participants generates new perspectives that may not arise from individual interviews
  - This can stimulate thinking that might not occur in 1-to-1 interviews
    - E.g. Family Homework project: realization that schools weren't sharing with each other
- Data may be **cumulative and elaborative** (responses may build on each other, add to each other)

Focus groups

Disadvantages

- Can be difficult to **manage** – groups are more challenging than individuals
    - Especially if you have more than 6-8 participants
- Number of questions has to be limited (typically no more than 7-8 in one hour, if you have a group of 6-8)
- "**Group think**" – some individuals may dominate the discussion and dictate (consciously or unconsciously) the expressed views of the group
- **Conflicts** can be helpful, but may be unhelpful
- Some participants may be **too quiet** – may not contribute enough
- Multiple participants **talk at the same time** – how to get responses clear on tape or in notes? How to keep people from talking over each other? (Family Homework example)

Choosing a sample

- How many people do you need to interview?
- Who will you interview? Why?
    - Same issue from different angles, e.g. trainer/manager?
    - Purposive sample? Representative?
    - If interviewing more people, probably narrow your topic
- When writing your paper, state your sampling strategy and rational
- Acknowledge sampling limitations, but don't need to apologise for them

Organising and reducing your data: from audio to text

- Transcription?

Response grid

Interviewee	Favourite teaching strategies	What do you struggle with? Why?	A good teacher is …
AA	Small group work 4:00	Too broad ability range. Not enough time/support for good differentiation 11:45	Manages to meet full range of student needs even if managers only care about test results Vg quote 14:00
JC			
DP			
SH			

Organising and reducing your data: from audio to text

Response grid 2

Research question	Interview question	Responses	Key Themes
What is the current approach to PD and Learning for the WPL Trainers?	What types of learning opportunities are available to you at your college?	Trainer 3: Mostly course briefings Blackboard training "Some other courses but they were really not relevant so it's waste of my time doing that."	Available "training" focuses on providing information or technical software skills, doesn't help develop pedagogical practice *Great quote 27:45*