

Supporting Methods with Theory:

“Chance favours the prepared mind” Pasteur, L. 1825-95

Why use theory

Examples

- RUFDATA
- Focus groups
- Delphie style case study
- Professional reflection
- Professional journals
- Types of sample
- Interface loops
- Twyman’s Law!



<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/index.php>

Why use theory?

- Supporting the method you have used with appropriate theory gives a report academic credence.
- Support from theory helps the evaluator understand more precisely how and why a method will work.
- Theoretical understanding can help you to choose a more appropriate method than one that you have used before.



The RUFDATA Framework

Reasons and purposes

Uses

Foci

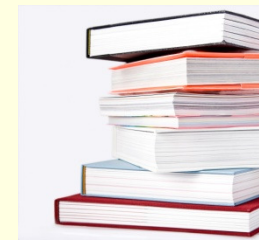
Data and evidence

Audience

Timing

Agency

Saunders, M. (2000) 'Beginning an evaluation with RUFDATA: theorising a practical approach to evaluation planning'. *Evaluation* Vol 6 No.1 pp7-21





Dialogic Interviewing

Using a dialogic approach to find out what people thought was meant by the term 'profession', Knight and Saunders reported:

- *'The dialogues which occurred between interviewer and interviewee did not **uncover** truths or meanings but **produced** them. Interviewees often reported to us that they had not thought of the term 'profession' much, even though they used, read and heard the word regularly. The interview, then, provided an opportunity for reflexive thinking during which the interviewee undertook a process of construction with the interviewer.'* (1999:148)

Knight & Saunders (1999) 'Understanding Teachers Professional Cultures', Evaluation and Research in Education Vol.13:3 pp144-156



Focus Groups

‘Focus Groups have their uses. They are a low cost way of getting a sense of the range of informants’ perspectives and of getting some tentative purchase on which groups of people hold them, how strongly and why.’ (Knight,2002:71)

**Knight,P (2002) *Small Scale Research*,
London: Sage**



Delphi Style Case Study

The written partner to the Nominal Group Technique is the Delphi Technique. This has the advantage that it does not require participants to meet together as a whole group. This is particularly useful in institutions where time is precious and where it is difficult to arrange a whole group meeting. The process of data collection [...] can be set out as a three stage process.’ (2000:238)

- *1st interviewees respond to a set of questions*
- *The results are used to compose the next level of questioning to the next group. (creating incremental knowledge)*
- *The results are used to compose the next level of questioning or observation. (enhancing the knowledge base further)*

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) *Research Methods in Education*, London: Routledge Falmer



Professional Reflection

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‘The unexamined life is not worth living’

(Socrates 470BC-399BC)

Wallace (2003:21) has suggested:

‘If we don’t examine our experiences and reflect on them in a constructive way, how will we learn from our successes and our mistakes.’



Wallace,S (2003) *Teaching and Supporting Learning in FE*, Exeter: Learning Matters

Boud (1997:30) notes:

‘Each experience is influenced by the unique past of the learner. Individual meaning is attached to events even though others may attempt to impose their definitions of it.’



Boud,D (1997) *Enhancing Learning through Self-Assessment*, London:Kogan Page

Professional Journals

‘...I have learned a great deal more about the management of information [...] through the process of thinking on paper in one place.’

**Moon, J (1999) *Learning Journals*,
London: Kogan Page**



Types of Sample

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Sample type	Description
Census	All members of the relevant population are included
Random	Sample members selected from the population randomly
Self-selected	Sample is selected when members of the population decide, for example, whether or not to complete a questionnaire
Stratified	Groups, or <i>strata</i> , within the population are identified (e.g. learners from different BME groups). Random samples are then taken from each group.
Judgemental/ purposive	Sample chosen based on evaluator's judgement of who can provide the most valuable information
Systematic	Selection of the nth member of a population or stratum

Source: *Evaluation Toolkit* Aimhigher Greater Merseyside^[1]
http://www.ahgtm.ac.uk/projects/?page_id=1191



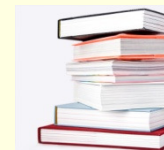
Working Together: What sort of Interface?

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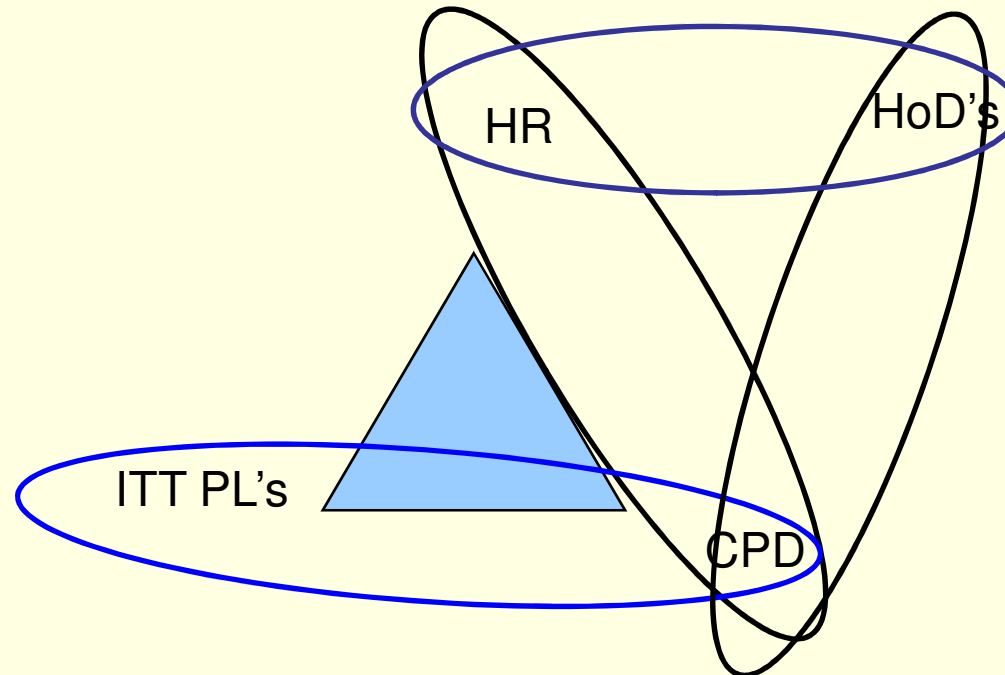
Networking	<i>contacts in the same general field of work</i>
Liaison	<i>occasional contact for specific work</i>
Co-operation	<i>different agencies working towards same ends</i>
Partnership	<i>united for longer term specific goals or activities</i>
Team Work	<i>regular co-operative partners in same field</i>
Collaboration	<i>shared understanding with mutual respect, reciprocation and acceptance of parity</i>



Adapted from: **Lacey, P (2001) *Support Partnerships: Collaboration in action*, London: David Fulton**



Interface Loops



- Who do people work with? (*is this strategically managed?*)
- What sort of interface is it? (*do both parties agree?*)
- Is there a way to work more purposefully with others?



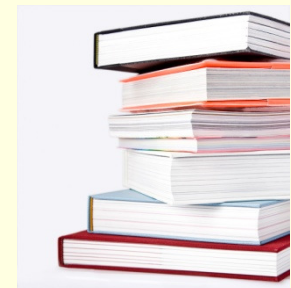
**Morgan, L (2005) 'Everyone has their own story':
DfES ITT/PDP Project**

Twyman's Law

Twyman's Law suggests that if [quantitative/statistical] data starts to look interesting – it's because you have done something wrong!

'The more unusual or interesting the data, the more likely it is to have been the result of an error of one kind or another.' p35

**Marsh, (1988) *Exploring Data*,
Cambridge: Polity Press**



Why use Literature



Remember literature helps to:

- make decisions about your research
- explain your decisions
- place your research into a context
- provide ideas about what and how to collect data
- Offer analytical frameworks to aid your analysis of the data

**This presentation only includes a few illustrations
check the ECB websites for future references.**

Evaluation Capacity Building in Widening Participation Practice



ECB Toolkit Website:

www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/index.php

The Team:

Paul Davies, Ann-Marie Houghton,
Lesleyann Morgan, Murray Saunders
Deena Jayousi, Rebecca Marsden, Shealagh Whytock