Qualitative research in the field of Information Literacy in the second decade of the XXI century

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The main goal of this study has been to identify qualitative approaches, methods and techniques actually used in empirical research on information literacy in years 2011-2014.

Methodology 1

- My study has been descriptive and exploratory in nature.

- The critical literature review with elements of qualitative content analysis have been the leading methods.

- The time period 2011-2014 was chosen to capture the most contemporary methodological attitudes and trends in the IL research.

Methodology 2

- EBSCO's specialized database LISTA was searched to find articles reporting empirical research on different dimensions of information literacy.
  - The query "DE INFORMATION literacy – Research", with limiters (publication dates 2011-2014 and peer-reviewed journals only), retrieved 102 works (in June 2014).

- All of the 102 retrieved texts were looked through in order to select those utilizing the qualitative research design.

Methodology 3

- Out of 102 articles examined only about one fourth occurred to be relevant for the present study.

    – These have been publications utilizing qualitative or "at least" mixed methods research design and reporting actually carried out empirical studies.

- Next, the 27 relevant articles were read in depth to identify main methodological approaches, as well as qualitative research methods, data sources, data analysis techniques and conceptual frameworks – declared and actually used.

    – These analytic categories had been created a priori, basing on general qualitative-oriented literature.

Methodology 4

- Only those methodological perspectives and procedures that were explicitly and "consciously" stated in the examined 27 publications were taken into account.
  - Explicit naming someone's own methodological stance is one of the basic signs of research being scholarly.

- An interesting spin-off of the present endeavor has also been a tentative identification of selected relations between some areas of IL research and preferred methodological approaches.

Methodological approaches identified in the selected set of 27 IL articles

- In years 2011-2014, as in the previous periods, the three methodologies (paradigms, research designs), namely the qualitative (interpretative), quantitative (positivist), and mixed methods (MMR) have been used in the information literacy research.

Qualitative research design in the IL domain – general features

- The qualitative design is essentially iterative, the research phases do not make a linear sequence in time, on the contrary, all they co-exist from the beginning of any qualitative project, are intertwined and constantly re-shape each other.

- Qualitative research, exactly as any other research, to be considered scholarly has to possess so-called intersubjective verifiability, meaning that any member of the academic community is able to check where the ways of collecting and analyzing data and reasoning have been proper and follow the scholarly rules.

Research methods

explicitly named in the analyzed 27 IL articles

- Action Research
- Autoethnography
- Case study
- Critical literature review (where this method was a leading one, not assistant, like in most works),
- Ethnography
- Longitudinal studies
- Qualitative meta-synthesis

Qualitative data sources
in the analyzed 27 IL articles

- Conversations (recorded),

- Documents, texts (assessment tests, booklets, books, brochures, leaflets), graphics/pictures, and video-recordings ,

- Focus group,

- Interviews, In-depth interviews, Semi-structured face-to-face interviews,

- Reflective journals,

- Research diary,

- Think-aloud technique.

Sampling in the analyzed 27 IL articles

- Purposeful sampling, criterion sampling
- Snowball sampling

Conceptual/theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives
explicitly named in the 27 IL articles

- Bystrom's theory of information activity,
- The constructionist framework and positioning theory,
- The Dunning-Kruger effect ,
- Ethnography,
- The imposed-query model,
- The information practice concept, the people-in-practice perspective,
- Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (ISP) model,
- Phenomenography,
- The qualitative constructivist grounded theory approach of Charmaz,
- Socio-cultural theories.

Closing remarks 1

- The "pure" qualitative research in the IL domain in years 2011-2014 has usually been connected with everyday life information literacy, in particular with the health-related issues.

- The mixed methodology, more frequently used, has mainly been applied to information literacy in the context of formal education, from primary schools to doctorate courses, trainings offered by academic libraries, information skills instructions, etc.

Closing remarks 2

- In the studied period no research method may be distinguished as the most popular or leading one.

- The preferred qualitative data sources have been the focus group and individual interviews.

- As for conceptual frameworks, the information practice or people-in-practice as well as socio-cultural perspectives seem to be catching the attention of the IL researchers.