

**Course Outline: Research Methods PG/MA 2009/10 Eilish Dillon with Patrick Marren.**

**Course Aim**

The aim of this course in Research Methodologies is to provide an integrated training in methods appropriate for primary research in development.

**Course Objectives**

This course facilitates engagement with debates in social research as well as an introduction to research techniques. There is a strong emphasis on preparing participants to complete successful applied research within their chosen specialist area.

**Block 1 – Introduction to Research**

**Session 1 – Thurs 14th Oct - 2pm (as above)**

**Starting to Research**

Introduction to the Research Methodology Course  
Introduction to the Research Process  
Choosing a Research Topic

**Session 2 – Mon 13th Dec - 2pm**

**Different Approaches to Social Research – Qualitative and Quantitative Research etc**

Introduction to positivism and post-positivism and interpretative, critical theory, constructionism and post-modern approaches to social research.

**Session 3 – Tues 14th Dec - 9.30**

**Designing a Sampling Strategy**

Introduction to different approaches to sampling which may be applied in a research project.

**Session 4 – Wed 15th Dec - 2pm**

**Designing a Case Study – Refining a Research Topic**

In this session the key principles and practices associated with Case Studies will be explored. Guidelines on how to refine a research topic will be introduced, especially in relation to undertaking research of a manageable scale.

**Block 2 – Undertaking Qualitative Research – Data Collection and Participatory Methods**

**Session 5 – Mon 10th Jan - 2pm**

**Questionnaires and Surveys**

This session will include an introduction to different approaches to sampling, designing a questionnaire and implementing surveys.

**Session 6 – Tues 11th Jan - 9.30**

**Interviews and Focus Group Discussions**

The advantages and disadvantages of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews will be addressed, as will some of the ethical and practical issues related to planning and carrying out interview research. The method of organising focus group discussions will also be explored.

**Session 7 – Wed 12<sup>th</sup> Jan - 2pm**

**Emancipatory and Participatory Research**

In this session, different approaches to emancipatory and participatory research will be explored. Participatory and inclusive research techniques will be examined.

**Session 8 – Thurs 13th Jan - all day: 9.30 - 5pm**

**Participatory Workshop on Ethics in Social Research**

Various techniques of participatory research will be applied to a participatory workshop involving course participants which focuses on the theme of ethics in social research.

**Block 3 – Undertaking a Literature Review and Principles of Quantitative Research**

**Session 9 – Mon 7th Feb - 9.30**

**Undertaking a Literature Review and Writing a Research Proposal**

This session will address how to undertake a literature review, focusing on developing a conceptual and theoretical framework for research. Issues related to writing a research proposal will be addressed.

**Principles of Quantitative Research [Patrick Marren]**

*[See Chapter 14 and 15 in Sarantakos]*

**Session 10 – Tues 8th Feb - 2pm**

**Quantitative Data Gathering**

**Session 11 – Wed 9th Feb - 9.30**

**Data Presentation**

**Session 12 – Thurs 10th Feb - 9.30**

**Central Tendency and Dispersion**

**Block 4 – Working towards a Dissertation**

**Session 13 – Mon 21st Feb - 9.30**

**Analysing Qualitative Data**

Issues related to different types of documentary material, how to access information from documents etc. will be addressed. This session will also provide an introduction to different approaches to qualitative data analysis from different theoretical perspectives on research. The Participatory Workshop on Research Ethics will be used as an example.

**Session 14 – Tues 22nd Feb - 2pm**

**Review of Research Design and Proposal Preparation**

In this session, participants will be facilitated to consider their own research proposal in the light of the various approaches to research, data-gathering tools and ethical and practical issues.

**Session 15 – Thurs 24th Feb - 9.30**

**Presenting Information and Writing a Dissertation**

This session will be a practical guide to presenting a dissertation. It will offer guidelines on how to write a dissertation, including information about structure; argument; presenting findings, analysis and conclusions; supervision arrangements etc.

**Session 16 and 17 Thurs 10th Mar - all day: 9.30 - 5pm and Fri 11th Mar - 9.30**

### **Research Presentations**

Each course participant will present their research proposal to the group for discussion and comment.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Course participants will be able to undertake and present a piece of primary research in a specialist area related to development studies. This implies that:

Course participants will have a basic understanding of different approaches to social research

Course participants will have a familiarity with different data collection tools which can be applied in primary development research

Participants will have an understanding of ethical issues in relation to carrying out research in a development context

Participants will be familiar with different sampling strategies

Participants will be able to analyse primary research data

### **Formative or Continuous Assessment:**

#### **Description** of Continuous Assessment

There is no formative assessment for this course.

**Rationale** for using this form of assessment [in relation to the course learning outcomes]

**Criteria used** for grading the assessment [e.g. how do you know whether or not the relevant course learning outcomes have been achieved or not? How are you grading the level of achievement of the relevant learning outcomes?]

### **Summative or Final Assessment:**

#### **Description** of Assessment [200 marks]

Course participants present a research proposal of 4,500 words max. This is presented in written form and a summary presentation is made to the group and to lecturers.

#### **This proposal is based on the following assumptions:**

- It is a small piece of primary research in the development studies field.
- It is designed as a piece of academic research, i.e. it is not a project evaluation.
- The timescale for the research is 5 months only. Of this, there are 6 weeks to carry out the literature review and background preparation; 5 weeks to carry out primary research; 6 weeks to present and analyse findings and 4 weeks to complete the research report.
- The budget range for the research is €1,000 – €3,000 (depending on travel and accommodation needs etc. - self-financing)

#### **The Research Proposal should include the following elements:**

***Introduction [700 words]***

- 1.1. Brief introduction to the Topic
- 1.2. Rationale for choice of topic [e.g., related to your work; the need for research in the area; the need for a different approach to thinking in the area or for policy development]
- 1.3. Outline of Research Questions or Hypothesis or Objectives

***Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Context [1,000 words]***

- 2.1. Identify key concepts/variables – why are you using these concepts?
- 2.2. Explore a few debates which relate to the topic with reference to the literature on development
- 2.3. Explain the different elements related to these concepts which are relevant to the topic and identify relevant questions for data gathering in the literature you have read so far.

***Identification of literature to be reviewed [800 words]***

- 3.1. Using the concepts and conceptual elements outlined above, identify and discuss the relevance of a selection of readings which will be reviewed in the research.

You may attach a reference list of possible readings in an appendix, but please offer a brief discussion of why you have chosen those readings and what you expect to learn there about your research topic. A detailed bibliography is not required at this stage, but debates and themes to be explored and the relevant key sources should be identified.

Please differentiate between ‘background’ literature (e.g. government reports; socio-political history of a country etc) and ‘theoretical’ literature (e.g. literature that addresses aspects of your topic in a different context or from a specific point of view)

- 3.2. Explain how the topic relates to current debates in development literature

***Initial design of structure [100 words]***

Offer brief headings of the structure of the proposed research report

***Identification of methodology [1,800 words]***

- 5.1. Explain the overall approach to research to be used with reference to the literature on research
- 5.2. Discuss the sampling strategy to be used with reference to the literature on research
- 5.3. Discuss the methods/tools of data gathering (Highlight the specific advantages of them in terms of the research topic, the questions raised and in the light of the literature on research)
- 5.4. Describe the processes involved in this research (Include discussion of: sampling method; access to sources; time-scale; etc. Please give details of where, when, how and with whom etc the research would be carried out)

5.5. Discuss the limitations of the methodology chosen (Focus here on the limitations of the approach to research as well as the limitations of the methods used, e.g. representativeness of the study; likelihood of low response rates; limited sources etc.)

5.6. Discuss any ethical issues which may arise

5.7. Explain and defend how data will be analysed

**Conclusion [100 words]**

**Rationale** for using this form of assessment [in relation to the course learning outcomes]

This assessment addresses each of the learning outcomes for the course and is designed to help learners in their preparation for their primary research. It assesses:

LO1 – their understanding of their own specialist research area

LO2 - their understanding of different approaches to social research

LO3 – their familiarity with different data collection tools which can be applied in primary development research

LO4 – their understanding of ethical issues in relation to carrying out research in a development context

LO5 – their familiarity with different sampling strategies

LO6 – their understanding of how they might analyse primary research data

**Criteria used** for grading the assessment [e.g. how do you know whether or not the relevant course learning outcomes have been achieved or not? How are you grading the level of achievement of the relevant learning outcomes?]

The following specific grading criteria apply to the marking of the research proposal:

How feasible is it? (Has the learner thought through questions of negotiating access, time required, etc? Is the research too ambitious?)

Are the methods appropriate for the topic? (Is the learner using observation for something that is likely to be only apparent from people stating their views? Are surveys or semi-structured interviews more appropriate?)

Is it systematic and open-minded? (Does it suggest a rigorous approach to research and an open-mindedness to surprising information?)

Does it show a clear understanding of the research process and its limitations?

Is it sufficiently related to development studies?

In addition, the general grading criteria are used in order to assess the content (understanding, familiarity etc), structure and presentation as well as analysis that is evident in the proposal.

**General Reading List for Research Methods Course 2010 Eilish Dillon**

**General Texts**

Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research – 3e*, Sage, London.

**Desai, V. and Potter, R.B. (2006) *Doing Development Research*, Sage, London. [Available on Moodle]**

Flick, U. (2002) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research, Second Edition*, Sage, London.

Gilbert, N. (Ed.) (2001) *Researching Social Life, Second Edition*, Sage, London.

Hart, C. (1996) *Doing a Literature Search: A Comprehensive Guide for the Social Sciences*, Sage, London.

Jupp, V. (2006) *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, Sage for Open University, London.

**Kane, E. and O'Reilly-de Brun, M. (2001) *Doing your own Research: Second Edition*, Marion Boyers, London.**

**Laws, S. with Harper, C. and Marcus, R. (2003) *Research for Development: A Practical Guide*, Sage and Save the Children, London.**

May, T. (2001) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

McNeill, P. and Chapman, S. (2005) *Research Methods*, Routledge, London.

**Mikkelsen, B. (2005) *Methods for Development Work and Research: A New Guide for Practitioners 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Sage, London.**

Nelson, N. and Wright, S. (Eds) (1995) *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

**Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research: Second Edition*, Blackwell, Oxford.**

**Sarantakos, S. (2005) *Social Research: Third Edition*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire.**

**Scheyvens, R. and Storey, D. (2003) *Development Fieldwork*, Sage, London. [Available on Moodle]**

Silverman, D. (Ed.) (1997) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, Sage, London. [Not available as a book in library, but chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7 are photocopied and in the Library]

**Sudan-American Foundation for Education Inc. and the Ahfad University for Women (no date available) *Methods for Social Researchers in Developing Countries*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.srmdc.net/> [Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2010] [Available on Moodle]**

Walliman, N. and Bousmacha, B. (2001) *Your research project: a step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher*, Sage, London.

### **Types of Research (Various)**

Barker, C. and Galasinski, D. (2001) *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A Dialogue on Language and Identity*, Sage, London.

Byrne, A. and Lentin, R. (Eds) (2000) *Researching Women: Feminist Research Methodologies in the Social Sciences in Ireland*, Institute for Public Administration, Dublin.

Fals Borda, O. and Rahman, A. (Eds) (1991) *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action-research*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

Feldstein, H. S. and Jiggins, J. (Eds) (1994) *Tools for the Field: Methodologies Handbook for Gender Analysis in Agriculture*, Intermediate Publications, London.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. L. (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*, Aldine, New York.

Jones, G. (1998) Analysing Institutional Accounts. In Thomas, A, Chataway, J and Wuyts, M (Eds) *Finding out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*, Sage, London.

Mayer, S. (1998) Critical Issues in Using Data. In Thomas, A., Chataway, J. and Wuyts, M. (Eds) *Finding out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*, Sage, London.

Mukherjee, C. and White, H. (1998) *Econometrics and data analysis for developing countries*, Routledge, London.

Nichols, P. (1991) *Social survey methods: A fieldguide for development workers*, Oxfam, Oxford.

Nunan, D. (1993) *Introducing Discourse Analysis*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

O'Laughlin, B. (1998) Interpreting Institutional Discourses. In Thomas, A, Chataway, J and Wuyts, M (Eds) *Finding out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*, Sage, London.

Roche, C. (1998) Organizational Assessment and Institutional Footprints. In Thomas, A, Chataway, J and Wuyts, M (Eds) *Finding out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*, Sage, London.

Silverman, D. (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, Sage, London.

Uwe, F. (2002) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Sage, London.

### **Types of Research (Participatory)**

**Greenwood, D.J., and Levin, M. (2007) *Introduction to Action Research*, Sage, London. [Available on Moodle]**

Holland, J. and Blackburn, J. (1998) *Whose Voice? Participatory Research and Policy Change*, Intermediate Technology, London.

McNiff, J. and Whitehead, J. (2006) *All you need to know about Action Research*, Sage, London.

Salmen, L.F. and Kane, E. (2006) *Bridging Diversity: Participatory Learning for Responsive Development*, World Bank, Washington.

Schrijvers, J. (1995) Participation and Power: a transformative feminist research perspective. In Nelson, N and Wright, S (Eds) *Power and Participatory Development: theory and practice*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

Smith, S. and Williams, D. (Eds) (1007) *Nurtured by knowledge: learning to do participatory action-research*, Apex press for IDRC, Ottawa.

Rahman, A. (1993) *Peoples Self Development: Perspectives on participatory action research: a journey through experience*, Zed Books, London.

Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (2001) *Handbook of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice*, Sage, London.

Wright, S. and Nelson, N. (1995) Participatory research and participant observation: two incompatible approaches. In Nelson, N and Wright, S (Eds) *Power and Participatory Development: Theory and Practice*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

### **Development-Related Research**

Abbot, D. (1998) Dilemmas of Researching Poverty. In Thomas, A, Chataway, J and Wuyts, M (Eds) *Finding out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*, Sage, London.

Boahane, K. (1995) Doing primary research in a developing economy. *Development in Practice*, Vol. 5, No.3, 259 – 63.

Booth, D. (Ed.) (1994) *Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research and Practice*, Longman, London.

Bulmer, M. and Warwick, D. P. (Eds) (1994) *Social research in developing countries: Surveys and censuses in the Third World*, UCL Press, London.

Holland, J. and Campbell, J. (2005) *Methods in Development Research: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, ITDG, Rugby.

Pratt, B. and Loizos, P. (1992) *Choosing Research Methods: Data Collection for Development Workers*, Oxfam, Oxford.

Scheyvens, R. and Storey, D. (2003) *Development Fieldwork: A Practical Guide*, Sage, London.

Thomas, A., Chataway, J. and Wuyts, M. (Eds) (1998) *Finding out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*, Sage, London.

**End.**