

Qualitative Research

Course instructor

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Application procedure

Goal and target audience

The seminar is mainly targeted at doctoral students from the TUM School of Management, who are in the beginning of their studies and who intend to employ qualitative designs and methods in their research. Doctoral students from other TUM schools and universities are also welcome to attend if space is available.

Application process

Since the doctoral seminar is interactive, it is limited to 15 participants. If you are interested, send a short letter of motivation and CV to Prof. Dr. Frank-Martin Belz by **26 November 2023** (email: frank.belz@tum.de).

Course aims

What this course is

Qualitative research has become an established method of inquiry in human and social sciences, including management and related fields. Qualitative papers are published in leading management journals (e.g. Academy of Management Journal). In this seminar, you will learn about: the notion of methodological fit; ontological and epistemological assumptions; qualitative research designs; research methods for qualitative data collection; and research methods for qualitative data analysis.

What this course is not

This course is not about quantitative research.

Course objectives

At the end of the seminar, you will be able to:

- Make an informed decision, why, when and how to employ qualitative research;
- Understand the ontological and epistemological assumptions of qualitative research;
- Carefully develop a qualitative research design;
- Skilfully employ research methods for qualitative data collection and analysis;
- Craft a qualitative research paper proposal.

Schedule

Date	Place	Contents
15.01.2024 (9:15-17:00)	TUM Munich (room tba)	Introduction to Qualitative Research: Theory, Ontology and Epistemology Variance Theory vs. Process Theory
16.01.2024 (9:15-17:00)	TUM Munich (room tba)	Qualitative Research Designs: Case Study, Ethnography, Interview Study, Document Study
17.01.2024 (9:15-17:00)	TUM Munich (room tba)	Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis: Templates, Tools and Techniques
19.01.2023 (9:15-13:00)	TUM Munich (room tba)	Qualitative Research Project Proposals: Presentation and Discussion of Initial Ideas

The doctoral seminar will be held in person at the TUM School of Management in Munich (seminar room to be assigned). Note that it is required to read all papers **before** class to allow group work and in-depth discussions.

Core readings

The following articles are **essential readings** in the doctoral seminar on qualitative research. They combine method articles (marked *) with selected articles from management (in a broad sense) published in top journals, which employ qualitative research in an exemplary fashion. The articles are listed in logical order (not alphabetical order). Altogether, they form a basis for our discussion. For the convenience of the participants, all required readings are provided as PDF files in the TUM Moodle learning platform. To get the most out of it and allow a fruitful discussion, read all articles **before class!** In addition, go through the assignments, make your thoughts, and take some notes, which we will discuss in class.

Introduction to Qualitative Research: Theory, Ontology, and Epistemology

In the introduction to qualitative research, we will reflect on ontological and epistemological assumptions, that is, the nature of reality and how that reality is known. They are fundamental and underlie any research. Based on that, we will discuss theory, theoretical aims, and methodological fit as an attribute of high-quality field research. In this context, we will differentiate between variance and process theories.

*Morgan, G., & Smircich, L. 1980. The Case for Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 5(4): 491-500.

*Sutton, R.I. & Staw, B.M. 1995. What Theory is *Not*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3): 371-384.

*Weick, K.E. 1995. What Theory is *Not*, *Theorizing Is*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3): 385-390.

*Edmondson, A.C. & McManus, S.E. 2007. Methodological Fit in Management Field Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 32 (4): 1155-1179.

*van de Ven, A. H. 2007. Variance and Process Models. In: van de Ven, A. H. (eds.): *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research*, Oxford University Press: Oxford: 143-160.

*Giesler, M. & Thompson, C. J. (2016). Process Theorization in Cultural Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43 (4), 497-508.

Assignment #1: Describe the basic assumptions about ontology and human nature in your own words. Which stance do you take? Describe and explain why!

Assignment #2: What is theory (not)? What is the difference between *theory* and *theorizing*?

Assignment #3: How would you characterize the state of the art in your research? Is it nascent, intermediate, or mature? Does this suggest a qualitative or a quantitative approach to your research?

Assignment #4: Think of your line of research. Formulate a research question, which is suitable for: 1) variance theory, and 2) process theory.

Qualitative Research Designs: Case Study, Ethnography, Interview Study, and Document Study

Case study is one of the main qualitative research designs in management. In the second session, we will learn about the defining features of the “Eisenhardt Method”. Besides, we will discuss ethnography, interview and document studies as alternative qualitative research designs using the examples of six carefully selected articles published in top journals.

*Eisenhardt, K. 1989. Building Theories from Case Study Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4): 532-550.

*Eisenhardt, K. 2021. What is the Eisenhardt Method, Really? *Strategic Organization*, 19(1) 147-160.

*Reeves, S., Peller, J. & Kitto, S. (2013): Ethnography in qualitative educational research. *Medical Teacher*, 35: 1365-1379.

Eisenhardt, K.M. 1989. Making Fast Strategic Decisions in High-Velocity Environments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(3): 543-576.

Fauchart, E. & Gruber, M. 2011. Darwinians, Communitarians, and Missionaries: The Role of Identity in Entrepreneurship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(5): 935-957.

Gümüşay, A.A., Smets, M. & Morris, T. 2020. “God at Work”: Engaging Central and Incompatible Institutional Logics through Elastic Hybridity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63 (1): 124-154.

Hertel, C., Binder, J. & Fauchart, E. 2021. Getting more from many – A framework of community resourcefulness in new venture creation. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 36(3): 106094.

Martin, D. & Schouten, J. W. (2014). Consumption-Driven Market Emergence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (5), 855-70.

Munir, K.A. & Philips, N. 2005. The Birth of the 'Kodak Moment': Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Adoption of New Technologies. *Organization Studies*, 26(11): 1665-1687.

Assignment #5: What are the distinctive features of case study and ethnography? Compare the two types of qualitative research designs, working out similarities and differences. When is useful to employ a case study or ethnography?

Assignment #6: Read the selected articles, that employ qualitative research in an exemplary fashion, i.e., Eisenhardt 1989, Fauchart & Gruber 2011, Gümüşay et al 2020, Hertel et al 2021, Martin & Schouten 2014, and Munir & Philips 2005. Analyze them in terms of: theoretical aim (theory building, elaboration, testing); type of theory (variance, process); ontological and epistemological assumptions; research design (case study, ethnography, interview, document); main unit of analysis; empirical units of observation; and sampling.

Assignment #7: Develop a research design relating your own line of research, including a specific research question, theoretical aim, type of theory, main unit of analysis, and empirical units of observation.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis: Templates, Tools and Techniques

In the third session, we will learn about different methods of collecting qualitative data (verbal, written, and visual), and analyzing qualitative data, including coding, developing a data structure (“Gioia Method”) and using tables to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research.

*Arsel, Z. (2017). Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44 (4): 939-948.

*Campbell, Coding In-depth Semistructured Interviews: Problems of Unitization and Intercoder Reliability and Agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(3): 294-320.

*Gioia, D.A., Corley, K.G., & Hamilton, A.L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1): 15-31.

*Cloutier, C. & Ravasi, D. 2021. Using tables to enhance the trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Strategic Organization*, 19(1): 113-133.

*Langley, A. 1999. Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 691-710.

Assignment #8: Read the articles by Eisenhardt 1989, Fauchart & Gruber 2011, Gioia et al. 1994, Hertel et al. 2021, Martin & Schouten 2014, and Munir & Philips 2005 (if you still need to do it!). Analyze them in terms of the methods of qualitative data collection and analysis. What methods are employed and combined to collect and analyze the empirical data? What kind of tables and displays enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research?

Assignment #9: What are “best practices” of qualitative research? What is the “magic bullet” to publish qualitative papers?

Qualitative Research Project Proposals: Discussion and Feedback

In the final session, we will discuss your initial qualitative research project proposals. You will get in-depth feedback from your fellow students and the instructor with a special emphasis on qualitative research design and methods.

Assignment #10: Submit an initial qualitative project proposal, including main research question(s), research context, research design, and research methods for qualitative data collection and analysis. Upload as a pdf file via Moodle until 18 January 2024 (23:59).

Course procedures

The seminar is designed as an interactive seminar, including group exercises, group presentations, open plenum discussions, and direct talks with and feedback from the instructor.

Assessment

The seminar objectives and the letter of participation will be achieved by:

- reading assigned papers (before class!);
- attending all classes;
- preparing the assignments at home;
- participating actively in group exercises and classroom discussions;
- developing an initial qualitative project proposal relating to your line of research;
- providing feedback on the initial qualitative research project proposals presented by your fellow students.

The assessment of the individual performance is based on pass or fail.

Instructor

Frank-Martin Belz is [Chair of Corporate Sustainability](#) at the Technical University of Munich (TUM School of Management). He studied Business Administration at the University of Giessen and the University of Mannheim (Germany). From 1991 to 1995, he was a doctoral student at the University of St. Gallen (Switzerland). He wrote his doctoral thesis on *“Ecology and Competitiveness in the Food Industry”*, employing a multiple case study design for theory building. After his doctorate, he was assistant and associate professor at the University of St. Gallen. In 2003, he was appointed full professor at the TUM School of Management.

Frank-Martin Belz focuses his research and teaching on sustainable entrepreneurship, employing qualitative research. Between 2014 and 2016, he coordinated a large-scale European research project on sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship, funded under the EU 7th Framework Programme. Since 2020, he has been Director of TUM SEED, a Center of Excellence in Exchange and Development, funded by DAAD. The [TUM SEED Center](#) focuses on Sustainable Energies, Entrepreneurship and Development, collaborating with eight leading universities from the Global South.