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RIDZWAN CHE RUS
Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

TO USE OR NOT TO USE HYBRID GROUNDED THEORY IN THE FORMATION OF THE MODERN APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING MODEL IN MALAYSIA

Abstract:

Under Tenth Malaysia Plan from 2010-2015, Malaysia Government hopes that vocational education to be a mainstream vocational education and transform Malaysia to higher income economic country. The understanding of the formation process of skilled workers should be studied. In Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET), most studies using quantitative methods rather than qualitative methods. Hence, most studies only look at the surface and evaluation a training program conducted without in- depth look why and how it happened that way. Grounded theory is one of the qualitative research methods are often used. However, in this study, the researchers focused on the formation of the proposed model system of comprehensive modern apprenticeship. We used this method in effort to form a model of apprenticeship training in Malaysia. We will try to discuss issues and challenges facing by TVET researcher in term of using Grounded Theory. We provide guidance to new researchers who intend to use this method in their study. The use of grounded theory method will allow researchers to grasp the main concern and how respondent resolve it.

Keywords:

grounded theory, qualitative, apprenticeship, vocational, TVET

JEL Classification: I20

INTRODUCTION

Various Technical and Vocational Education System (TVET) as the Malaysian Skills Certificate (SKM), the National Dual Training System (SLDN), and National Modular Certificate (CIS) conducted in Malaysia (Ahmad Tajudin Jab 2010). Implementation of the above is based on an apprenticeship system that involves learning on the job and learning in Technical and Vocational Training Institute (ILTV). Implemented this system is to create high-skilled workers. High-skilled workers are an important asset to the formation of higher income economic and develop countries. Therefore, it is important to increase student enrollment in TVE and improve the overall quality of training offered (Mohd. Gazali 2011). However, "how the process of the formation of highly skilled knowledge workers and that the core of the human capital of Malaysia implemented?".

Human capital, knowledge and skills are key assets to achieve the high-income countries. 77 per cent of the labor force has only 11 years of basic education to Malaysian Certificate of Education or its equivalent, and only 28 per cent of employment in high-skilled group (Malaysia 2010). Tenth Malaysian Plan reports (Malaysia 2010) noted that many studies have found competent Malaysian graduates lack the technical skills required in the industry, and weak in the soft skills, including professional work ethic, communication skills, teamwork, decision making and leadership. Therefore, this problem should be seen in the form of training institutions that students become knowledgeable and skilled workers are.

GROUNDING THEORY CLOSE UP

The intent of grounded theory was to generate theory close to data that relates to a particular situation. It provides a theoretical lens for both researchers and practitioners to improve workplace practices (Ng and Hase, 2008). The insights that grounded theory reveals is the contextual explanations rather than descriptions what is going on. This is why Glaser (1992) argued Strauss and Corbin (1990) because it full of description. Grounded theory is not preconceived theory or a priori theory. It is theory grounded in data that is methodically acquired during the course of the research (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

In grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss stress, "*initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework*" (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 45). In other words, grounded theory requires a researcher to approach the problem situation with an open mind and allow the evidence accumulated to dictate the 'emerging' theoretical agenda. A grounded theory can be used as a fuller test of a logico-deductive theory pertaining to the same area by comparison of both theories than an accurate description used to verify a few propositions would provide (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Glaser (1967) popular dictum 'All is data' encouraging our exploration about Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 2). Grounded Theory is the systematic generation of theory from systematic research. It is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. These concepts or categories are related to each other as a theoretical explanation of the action(s) that continually resolves the main concern of the participants in a substantive area. Grounded Theory can be used with either qualitative or quantitative data (GT Institute, 2012).

A grounded theory approach in which the researcher takes the role of a dispassionate, neutral observer who remain separate from the research participant, analyzes their world as an outside expert, and treat research relationships and representation of participants as unproblematic (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded Theory is a *general* research method (and thus is not owned by any one school or discipline); which guides you on matters of data collection (where you can use quantitative data or qualitative data of any type e.g. video, images, text, observations, spoken word etc.); and details strict procedures for data analysis. Grounded Theory is a research tool that enables you to seek out and conceptualize the latent social patterns and structures of your area of interest through the process of constant comparison (GT Online 2012).

Grounded Theory is a *research method* that will enable you to develop a *theory*, which offers an explanation about the main concern of the population of your substantive area, and how that concern is resolved or processed (GT Online 2012). Grounded Theory is qualitative research method where a researcher derive[s] inductively from the study of a phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis and theory should stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory and then prove it.

Glaser and Strauss do not regard the procedures of GT as discipline specific, and they encourage researchers to use the procedures for their own disciplinary purposes. Although GT is a well-established methodology, it is an approach to research rather than a detailed research method. The general goal of GT research is to construct theories in order to understand the phenomenon/phenomena under study (Yazdan Mansourian, 2006).

WHICH VERSIONS?

We started with the title and other methodologies when submitting PhD research proposal. However, my supervisor suggested a field related to the field we want to review before which is the apprenticeship system. As of today (2012) have yet to see a model related to the apprenticeship training system in Malaysia. We have made reference in connection with this method as well as the appropriate methodology before study to be implemented. After seeing the educational research methodology book (Creswell, 2008) I see grounded theory method is the method most suited to what I am looking at. However, the dilemma begins when Creswell (2008) divides these methods into three different designs of the three founders. Which want suit best for me?

In general, there are three design or approach grounded theory of much discussion now. Among them is a systematic design procedure developed by two sociologists, namely Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin in 1990 through their book entitled *Basics of Qualitative Research 1e*. The second design is a design classic by Dr. Glaser in 1967 developed his results with Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* and grow as a solo by Glaser who defended the original method of grounded theory until now, as classical and the third is a constructivist design, founded by Charmaz in in 2006 through his book *Constructing Grounded Theory: a Practical guide through Qualitative Analysis results by Glaser response to the challenges and Strauss (1967)* which provides an opportunity for other researchers to explore grounded theory in their own way.

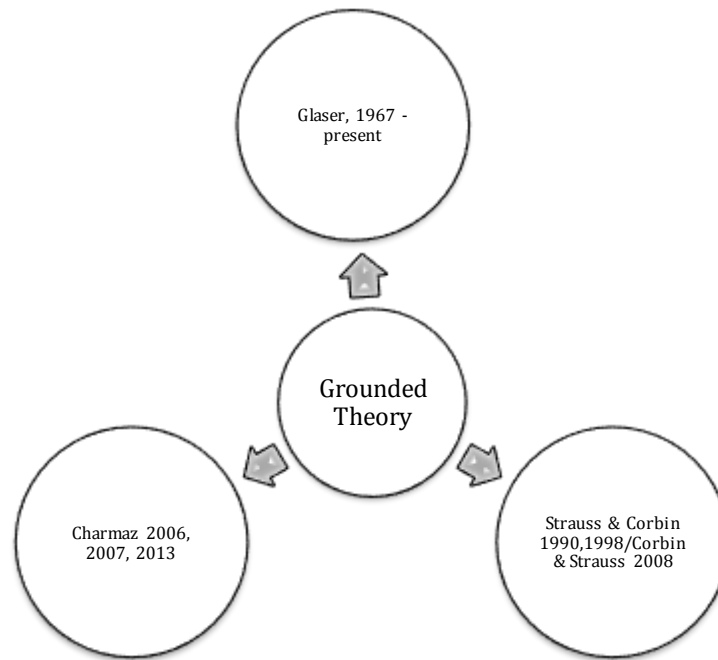


Figure 1: Grounded Theory version

Glaserian and Straussian perspectives of GT are different especially in terms of the paradigmatic dimensions, formulation of research questions, analysis procedures used, usage of literature, sampling procedures, and the procedures for validating the resultant theory (Udaya, Abu Daud, and Ismi Arif, 2011). In validating the resultant theory, Glaser (1992 and 1998) focused on four criteria: 'fit', 'relevance', 'work', and 'modifiability'. In contrast, Corbin and Strauss (1990, 2008) used variety of techniques such as validity, reliability, credibility, plausibility and value of the theory, adequacy of the research process, and the empirical grounding of the research process. (Udaya, Abu Daud, and Ismi Arif, 2011).

Researchers combine these three designs based on the same philosophy of pragmatism to conduct the study (Nathaniel, 2011). Researchers looked at a combination of these three methods will complement each combines aspects of the research themes that exist and is illustrated in diagram form for the understanding of the concept formation model people with skills and knowledge they have the high skills training institutes they have the involved. Coding analysis using constant comparative method carried out as was put forward by all the design in this method of grounded theory. This is core analysis of grounded theory.

ISSUES IN GROUNDED THEORY

Different version was the main issues in generating theory using grounded theory. Which is the best or right? After one and half years exploring grounded theory book from Discovery Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) till Grounded Theory: The Philosophy, method and Work of Barney Glaser (2011) we was concluded that classical version of Glaser maintain with the original procedures of grounded theory. Strauss & Corbin (1990) brings to bear every possible contingency that could relate to the data, whether it appears in the data or not, this is Glaser (1992) call it as Forcing. Glaser focuses his attention on the data to allow the data to tell their own story and it will emerge

naturally from the data.

Theoretical Sampling is other issues in grounded theory. Patton (1990) argues that all types of sampling in qualitative research can be termed purposeful sampling. When you have to use theoretical sampling is a question mark. Interestingly, in his list of 15 different sampling strategies Patton does not list or define theoretical sampling. This apparent confusion only serves to confuse neophyte qualitative researchers (Coyne, 1997). However, if the researcher can describe his/her sampling strategy insufficient detail, this should minimize any confusion regarding sampling (Morse, 1991), improve the quality of the research (Coyne 1997), avoid method slurring (Baker et al. 1992) and provide some clarification of the use of theoretical sampling in nursing research. This is will resolved if novice researcher starting to explore grounded theory from Glaser and Strauss (1967). When they start with other qualitative book it will make a problem.

Third issues in grounded theory are preconceived mind. Preconceived in mind can make a big differences in this method. Grounded theory researcher should avoid conducting a literature review prior to commencing data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss,1967, Strauss & Corbin 1990;2008). By avoiding a literature review at the grounded in the data it will free from misconception and preconceived. Hutchinson (1993), suggests that a literature review should proceed data collection and analysis in grounded theory. In that, it is the review of the literature that can identify the current gaps in knowledge, or help provide a rationale for the proposed research. This is why, we used literature in term of getting problem statement, we have to beware of understanding in depth.

CHALLENGES

Preparation protocol interviews and expert authentication between a major challenges in using this method. As Malaysia does not have many experts in these methods, then validation interviews and verification protocols Cohen Kappa also establish the space to be filled. Although Malaysia has many experts but the lack of qualitative clearly understand grounded theory methods that have developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967).

In addition to the above challenges are expert, the challenge to get major anxiety (main concern) respondents also should be explored prior to a study is to be made. But in this study, the researcher prepared a proposal before conducting research to get around main concern respondents. Although Glaser (1967, 1992, 2011) emphasizes the minimal proposal to meet the requirements of the university but this was not implemented. Proposal preparation using this method is fully implemented in a compromise between the needs of The National University of Malaysia (UKM) and also needs of grounded theory method. This makes the dilemma of researchers in the early stages if implemented fully in accordance with the classic version of grounded theory by Glaser (1992).

By reason of researchers using this method then indirect material existing in libraries in Malaysia are very less. This resulted in the university library does not buy materials that can help new researchers to fully understand this method. In our exploration, the book should be sought from various libraries; book early-grounded theory can be found in UKM, whereas other books have to be sought from other libraries such as the establishment of the university library and other universities. Finally, as a final step to buy its own researchers these books from publishers like Sociology Press and Amazon.com website.

As Stern (1994) said, grounded theory is described as half art and half science and as such it is sometimes difficult to fully describe the procedures of grounded theory to novice researchers. As a novice and not sociologist, grounded theory methodology is exploration of knowledge. Glaser (1998) recognizes that a novice researcher may experience this difficulty if supervised by others who themselves do not have a good understanding of this methodology. Accordingly it is a methodology that can only be learned, as Glaser (1998, p.19; 2003, p. 92) puts it "*just do it*".

USING GROUNDED THEORY METHOD

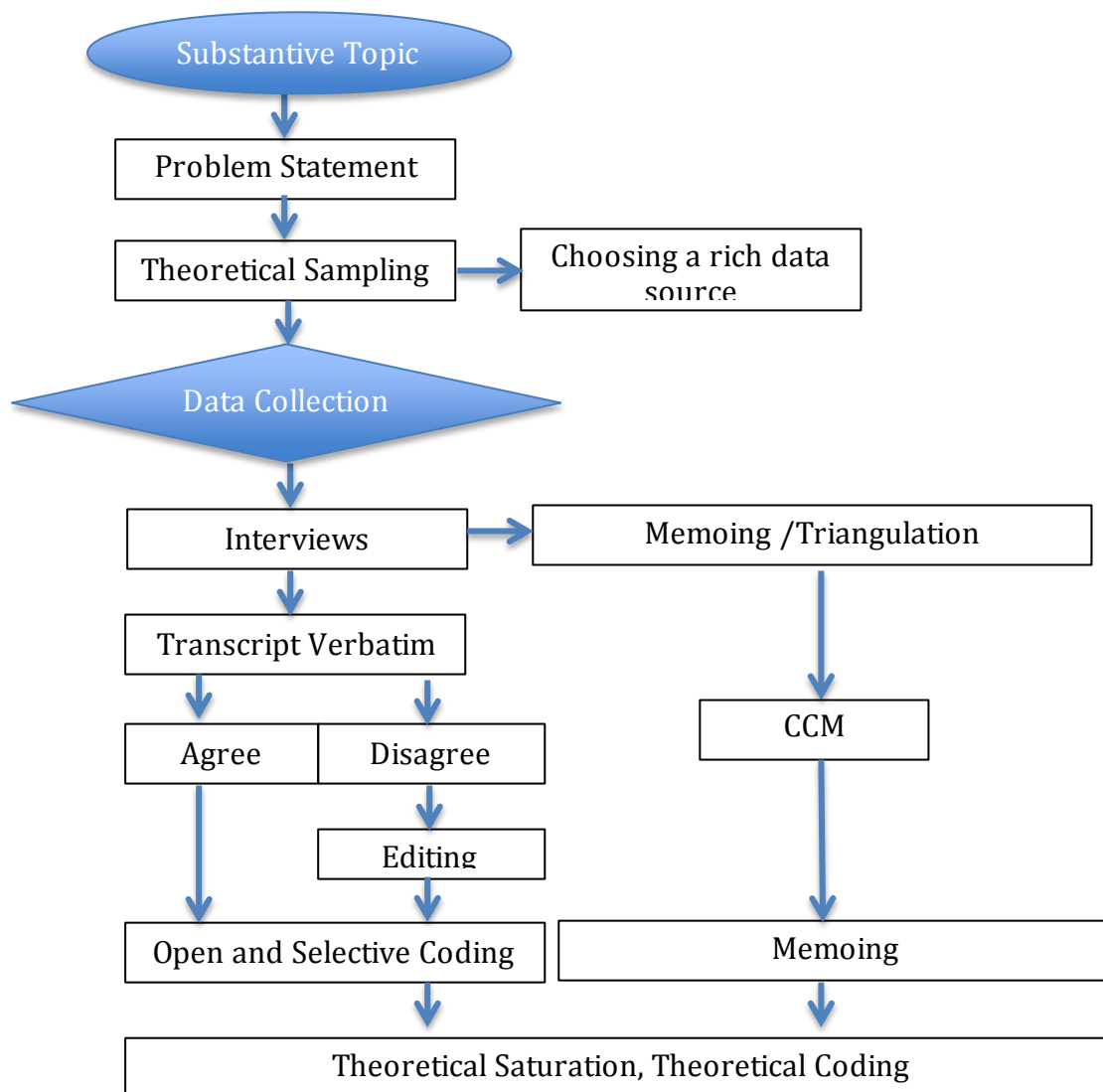


Figure 2: Grounded Theory Method Process

Figure 2 shows Grounded theory methods used during the process of data analysis. We started with writing memos after each interview conducted. This formed the memo different from one another memo by memo based on indicators, incidents, concepts, and categories emerging. According to Glaser (1998) memoing is a core process in grounded theory study. It was written about the ideas that emerged during the coding

process, data collection and analysis as well as relationship codes that exist in theory during the process of writing the memo. Codes and categories that emerged was formed and by our own disentesis based on the emerging category. It is different from the common qualitative method based on the analysis of themes that have been formed earliar.

Data were analyzed using the substantive coding involving open coding and selective coding (Glaser 2004). We has also run simultaneously with the constant comparative method in which we compared the incident to incident, incident and concept to concept to concept (Glaser and Staruss, 1967). Every concept that emerges will be compared with other concepts. All of these processes will be compared with each other to see the emergence of the concepts that would eventually form the core categories of the study.

CONCLUSION

One of the primary concerns of research committees is the ability of the research candidate to complete the study successfully. When we defend our proposal in graduate seminar held by Educational Faculty of UKM, we have to face many question from other researcher. This is the way that we can promote grounded theory as a method that can use widely. As a novice researcher while Glaser (2001, p. 119) suggests that grounded theory enables a “know-nothing to an expert and that takes the GT researcher from the very beginning of data collection, coding and analysis through many steps to a publication”, the need for researchers to adhere rigorously to the systematic procedures of the method is antecedent. Novice researchers should therefore read in-depth the methodological know-how of grounded theory prior to a journey of emergence. Lastly, we used other Glaser dictum 'just do it'.

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