Public Management Research and a Three Qualitative Research Strategy

Omoregie Charles Osifo*

Faculty of Philosophy, Public Management, University of Vaasa, Finland

Abstract

The study of public administration and management requires scientific steps, because of the philosophical views of research as scientific process that lies on ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The qualitative method is a major aspect of public management research, which also has been criticized from different perspectives; especially, in relations to its characteristics (proximity to quantitative method, determinism, finding actual causation, objectivism etc.). The main purpose of this article therefore, is to discuss the basic scientific steps in public management research and to focus on literature review, interview, and documentary analysis as qualitative strategies in data collection, analysis, and interpretation in public management research for especially young researchers and also old researchers in this unique field. In addition, this paper tries to contribute to the views that the qualitative method is still one suitable method for public management research and different strategies could be adopted in one research task through the mixed method.

Introduction

Scientific steps to discovery include understanding the problem, making a plan, carrying out the plan, and reviewing your work [1]. The steps could further take a pragmatic form represented by the equation:

$$\text{Theories} + \text{phenomena} + \text{data} = \text{findings}$$

Science, like other human activities, is a major approach to understand the structure and nature of things; a historical perspective of how science explains reflect fundamental philosophical varieties that dates back to Plato, because it is between those that analyse scientific explanation (mathematical proof for example) as phenomenon we discover and those who view it as phenomenon of human construct [2]. Scientific realism views the phenomena of a particular study to be independent of the researcher, because they exist in the outside world; why constructivism on the other hand, emphasizes the construction of reality, because the researcher defines concepts from a self-perspective [3]. Figure 1 is a representation of the key steps in research inquiry. The unique characteristics of public administration research include the following:

1) Public administration often goes with restricted number of cases, but does not mean the amount of data to be processed is usually small (e.g. different actors are connected to decision-making process)

2) Public administration is often interested in finding solutions to key issues in the public sector

3) Public administration research has a limited body of knowledge (e.g. valid theories). Most importantly, we distinguish public administration research through the subject of study; outcomes; and contributions. In public administration, policy is a key subject/issue of research; because it feeds into policy; and later informing policy as the outcome of research [4].

The main objective of this article is to examine the basic steps in public management research and to state that qualitative method is a key aspect of public management research because, public administrators mostly ask the questions that often begin with 'how many,' 'how much,' 'how efficient,' 'how effective,' 'how adequate,' and 'why' of a program or policy; which the qualitative method can offer good answers. In addition, is to examine the three main strategies in qualitative method

and how they could be reconciled in public management research. The three strategies or techniques are literature review, interview, and documentary analysis.

Research Background and Public Management

Research in many fields including public management can be understood through a philosophical background of science that goes with ontological (nominalism versus realism), epistemological (anti-positivism versus positivism), and methodological (ideographic versus nomothetic) supports [5]. A diversity oriented researcher approaches the world key ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that indicates a set of questions (epistemology) that are then examined (methodology, analysis) in unique ways [6]. The aggregation of a researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be referred to as paradigm or interpretive framework [7].
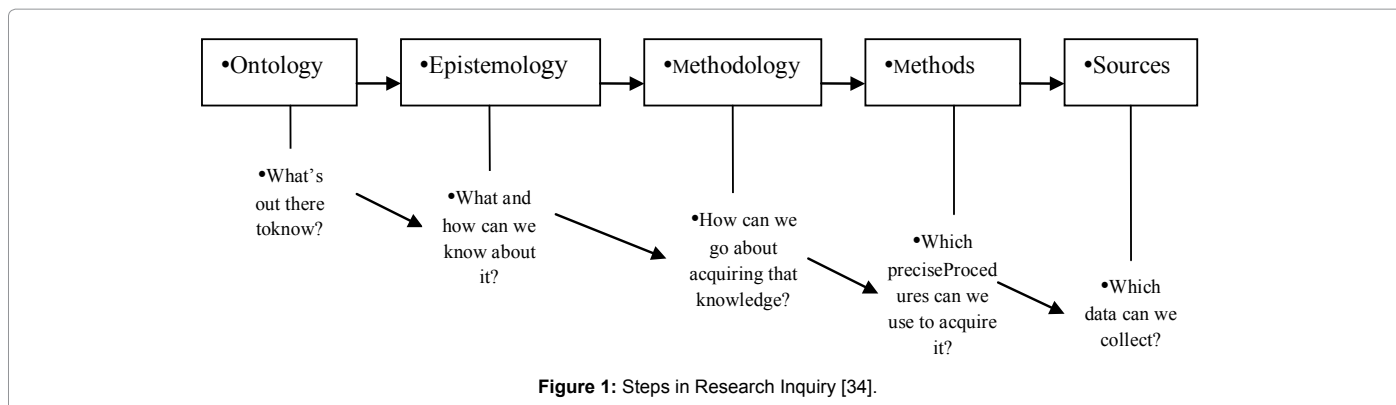
The positivist, post-positivist, constructionist, and critical paradigms determine, with varying degree of freedom, the design of a qualitative research investigation; positivism (objectivism), post-positivism (partial objectivism), and constructionism (oppositional level) can also be referred to as epistemological paradigms in research inquiry. From a positivist perspective, there is reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood; the doctrine of verifiability that every meaningful (i.e. true or false) statement about the world is one that can be verified (or at least tested) by experience (empiricism). Post-positivists main argument is that reality can never be fully understood, but only approximated. Experts in critical theory, constructivist, post-structural, and postmodern schools of thought reject positivist and post-positivist criteria when evaluating their own work; but rather evaluate their work with verisimilitude, emotionality, personal

Figure 1: Steps in Research Inquiry [34].

responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts, and dialogue with subjects [2,6,7,8]. Ontology concerns what an existing subject contains; in addition are the features, differentiation, and classification of the existing subject. Ontology can also be defined as the image of social reality upon which the theory is premised. Ontological questions in public administration can include issues of administration, performance, social concepts, agencies, and countries. Epistemology concerns theories (positivism, post-positivism, and constructivism), ways of knowing (literature review, interview, and documents) and inductive and deductive formulations. Different progressive stages of epistemological theorizing cover the traditional (positivist), the modernist or golden age (postpositive), blurred genre, the crises of representation, and postmodern or present moments (new sensibility that doubts all previous paradigm). Alex and Rosenberg [2,6] has defined epistemology as the study of nature, extent, and justification of knowledge. Methodology is the logic, potentialities and limitations of research methods/techniques. Methodology concerns collection and analysis (interviewing, observing, documentary analysis etc.,). How is knowledge gained in the world? Metaethics for example is the field of ethics, which is interested in the nature and methodology of our moral judgements [9,10]. Methodology is the way adopted to answer research questions, and in most public administration and management discourses are descriptive qualitative analysis, quantitative explanatory analysis, and quantitative interpretive analysis. The ontological and epistemological natures tend to manifest in methodology.

Hyyrylainen [11] has differentiated the relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology with the following questions regarding ethics and integrity for examples: what are ethics and integrity? (Ontology), how can we study ethics and integrity? (Epistemology), and is it possible to make broad generalizations about ethics and integrity in behaviour (Methodology). He further stated that consequence, virtue, and duty theories of ethics and integrity studies are representation of positivism, anti-positivism, and modernism. The study of ethics and integrity in public administration and management researches for example is strongly linked to descriptive relativism in methodological sense. However, studies in social sciences are mostly divided into two. Objectivists are of the view that form of measurement of ethics and integrity is possible, because they conceptualize the world as real world with a combination of hard, tangible and relatively immutable structure. Relativists on their own are of the opinion that the world is something, which is made up of names, concepts, and labels that help in structuring reality. While objectivists usually try to explain and predict the real world via regularities and causal relationship, relativists try to understand the world. In addition, objectivists often test existing theories systematically as possible using surveys, questionnaires, tests

and other kinds of standardized research instruments (deduction); but relativists focus on the analysis of the subjective account which one generates by getting inside situations and engaging oneself in the process of discovery like using document and interview (Inductive) [11,12]. Axiology as an approach in public management research is considering values in agreement with ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Axiology further concerns the question of whether interview for example is conducted in the right way.

Public Management and the Qualitative Method

Public management and its research can be characterized as a post-normal science and a branch of social science [5]. Collecting and interpreting data are crucial aspects of public management research that often starts with a plan. Research involves the study of observable information; the special elements that offer meaning to a research project are problem, question, and aim; however, there are quantitative and qualitative information that serve the purpose of answering a research question, because administrators and policy analysts depend more on survey research (interview included) and experimental and secondary data (including documents and literatures) [13].

The qualitative method has become prominent after a gradual shift from quantitative positivism in most social science discourses especially, public management. The qualitative method is as old as research itself, which is learning and finding process. A famous paradigmatic theme includes the epistemological and ontological views of knowledge as a human construction; another popular title is the reliance on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data, like observations in natural settings reported in field notes, interviews recorded in transcripts, and document analysis [14]. Qualitative method is sometimes seen as anti-positivistic inquiry that mainly tries to understand rather than explain; which represents an umbrella term for a variety of methods and techniques that could not quantified due to various factors and judgements [15]. Qualitative research is often characterised with no static definition, boundary, and process by quantitative researchers/scientists. Qualitative researchers think historically, reciprocally, and structurally with values and hope; they also self-consciously rely on personal experiences as a resource in their inquiries [8]. In qualitative research, the researcher plays an active role in data collection and analysis. These are made easier, because the researcher understands that research is an interactive process. The qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data [16]. Irrespective of the fact that data are popularly assumed correct irrespective of how they were collected; data collection still needs systematization and planning as well as the analysis of data. Most administrators and policy

analysts adopt the descriptive design, because they make provisions for information and causality, which are easily understood and interpreted. Cross sectional, cross time and case study are other notable techniques in public management research inquiry [13]. According to Denzin and Lincoln [8] the questions that structure the issue of design are:

1) How will the design connect to the paradigm being studied ?

2) Who or what will be studied?

3) What strategies of inquiry will be used?

4) What methods or research tools will be used for collecting and analyzing empirical materials?

From the premises of the above questions, the issues that arise become that of conceptualization, problematization, and operationalization. Research focus should be on conceptualizing and operationalizing the concepts into sensible and measurable variables [17]. Problematization is the act of proposing and emphasizing problem. A concept is an abstraction representing an idea; operational definition is formulated to state exactly how the concept will be measured, because it details how to describe the occurrence of a variable and how to assign a value to each occurrence [13]. These formulations make research simple, complex, interesting, and justifiable; because of connections and relationships that exist even in public management. However, it is important to state that the qualitative method has its unique weaknesses. The features (rhetoric) of qualitative research are sometimes described as indirect representation of the quantitative method, which has informed the need for management scholars to recognize the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative methods [18]. Different research findings also exist that has justified the relevance and position of the qualitative method [14].

Three Strategies in Qualitative Method

Critical thinking and examination are necessary before adopting data collection strategies, because data choice is often determined by research strategy. The strategy of inquiry involves the skills, assumptions, and practices used by a scientist or researcher when going from a paradigm and a research design to the collection of empirical materials. In addition, strategies of inquiry link scientist or researcher to particular approaches and methods for collecting and analysing empirical materials. In public administration numerous strategies/techniques abound in research inquiry, but in this paper, three qualitative strategies/techniques (literature review, documents analysis, and interview) are the focus [8].

Literature review as a technique

Data collected through literature review is secondary and used to accomplish different purposes; which is often characterised as cheap, flexible, wide in scope, and ideological or systematic. Research often is an interactive process, where investigators develop on the work of others; too often scientists or researchers with an interest of understanding unfamiliar problems may begin by reinventing the wheel [13]. The literature review is a comprehensive survey of previous inquiries connected to a research question that allows the author to place his or her research into an intellectual and historical context (a focus on a particular unit of analysis, such as eras, disciplines, movement, concepts); literature review should be acknowledged as a discovery venture, where the researcher tries in a brief manner as possible, to reflect the key research development in a specific field [19]. Literature review helps an author to describe how other scholars, both within and outside of a discipline have approached a particular question

in the pattern that reflects the history of the question; the approaches that have been used; the insights that can be gained; the challenges and dead ends; and relationship between the variable of interest and outcome variable. In addition, a literature review helps in opening up a given subject or issue by showing the quality and findings of previous research; the author then has the responsibility of displaying to the reader what is known and unknown on a given subject with standard justification [19].

We talk about systematic literature review when unraveling key facts and positions/findings about a present research inquiry from existing literatures via a systematic, explicit, and reproducible approach. Literature review is a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and reconciling body of finished and saved work by academics and practitioners [20]. Literature review is research of research findings, foundation of new research, tool for searching and assessing information, theory of evaluation and development, survey for the state of knowledge of a particular topic, problem identification, and provider of historical account for the development of theory and research on a specific topic. There are various methods in conducting literature review, which vary from each other by the rigour of how data is collected and interpreted; and some of them are narrative, integrative, systematic, and meta-analysis [21]. Literature review is both a qualitative and quantitative approach. It is qualitative when less rigorous technique is adopted to get the main components of a research task for examples descriptive relativism and narratives. However, literature review is quantitative when rigorous or systematic technique is adopted during analysis and interpretation of a research task. Meta-analysis is the process or technique of reconciling research results by using various statistical methods to retrieve, select, and combine results from previous separate, but related studies [22]. Less rigorous forms of meta-analysis are meta-summary and meta-synthesis. Narrative literature review is summarizing previous research with no detailed methodological requirement. Integrative literature review is more rigorous than narrative; collection of empirical research findings is without tight integrative findings. Systematic literature review is the most rigorous review in qualitative research; where research passes numerous screens. Sources of literature are journals, conference proceedings, books, theses, government gazettes, internet, think thank etc. Literature review in some instances might not be as easy as it sounds, because of this care, patience, and procedural guideline are needed by scientists and researchers that adopt this strategy in research inquiry.

Table 1 is a representation of the basic approach or guide a public management researcher could adopt when using the literature review technique in a qualitative research inquiry.

The information in Table 1 only represents basic steps or what a researcher is required to do when doing a literature review; the authors and publications do not exactly exist. The aim(s), research questions, and theories determine the natures or types of literatures a public management researcher would review. A particular issue requires literatures with similar or close orientations. In addressing a particular issue a minimum of 5 or maximum of 100 literatures are required, depending of the scope, challenges, and requirements of the issue.

Interview as a technique

Interview is often classified as a primary source of data collection in social sciences that requires care and expertise [23]. Interview is a conversation between two or more persons. Interviews normally take the form of conversation that occurs between an interviewer and

Author(s) and Publication	The Main Focus of Literature	Main Contents in Relation to Independent Variable	Main Contents in Relation to Dependent Variable	Methodology and Strategy	Main Finding(s) of Literature
Zara Cole. How Ethics Affects Trust (1980). John and Co: Paris	This book examines the relationship between trust and ethics	Ethics is a strong guide for right. A sound ethical framework enhances administrative performance.	Trust is the foundation of good society. Trust is premised on reciprocity.	Quantitative Method. Survey analysis	Ethics is the main enhancer of trust. The relationship between the state and citizen is reciprocal.
Sandra Holms and James Miller Public Service Motivation and Public Service (2014). M&M Publishers: London	This book focuses on the reasons why people do public services	Public Service Motivation is the reason people like to do or join public service	Performance has multiple relationships and dimensions in public service	Triangulation Approach. Interviews and Document analysis	A third variable of age mainly determines the relationship between Public Service Motivation and Performance.
Peter Charles. Re-examining the Impact of Colonialism on Developing Countries (2015). Osifo Prints: Benin	This article tries to take a new perspective to the problem of underdevelopment in developing countries	Power is influenced by both internal and external dynamics	Subjugation has a short and long term effects on the psyche of a nation or people	Mixed Method. Literature review and documentary analysis	The present development problems in most developing countries are products of exploitation and poor participatory framework
Stella Brooks. Public Health Policies in Finland (1999). Janell and Sons: Stolckolm	This article examines the key policies in the management of health care in Finland	Care is an uncompromising attribute of a welfare state	Well-being is one key determinant of citizens´ participation	Qualitative Method. Documentary analysis	Finland places much emphasis on citizens' well-being, because it is one key attributes of a welfare state.

Table 1: A basic guide for the literature review technique.

interviewee that is followed by note taking or electronic device recording [24]. Interview also takes place in group settings like focus group and brainstorming [15]. In an interviewing process, a relationship is formed between the interviewer and the interviewee (respondent) towards the accomplishment of a set goal. The interviewer normally takes the lead position towards the accomplishment of the set goal(s), because he/she normally designs the general nature of the interview. Respondents also play special roles relating to task accomplishment, because their responses/answers help the interviewer in understanding salient issues and points. A popular paradigmatic theme of qualitative research includes the ontological and epistemological views of knowledge as a human construction [14]. Qualitative interview research is primarily subjective, because it involves the description of responses/answers from the interviewee(s) by the interviewer and it is for this reason interview is most classified within the boundary of descriptive qualitative analysis. Interview is one key strategy of research inquiry or data collection in public management, because administrators and policy analysts nowadays rely much on survey research (interview). Generally, interview in public management has different things that make it complete and acceptable. Public administrators often ask the questions that begin with how many, how much, how efficient, how effective, how adequate, and why of a program [13]. Due to the natures of administrative questions and research, interview gives deeper insight into what other concern stakeholders might be thinking about a project or program; helps to judge outcomes and performance of public policy and programs; represents willingness and avenue to know on the part of a researcher; helping in the advancement of research features (aims, validity, measurement, and results); and complementing other methods of research inquiry (e.g. questionnaire survey, literature review, documentary analysis etc.) in a mixed method.

Interview is assumed formal when there are prior preparation, valid identity, and order (e.g. academic and job interviews). Interview is assumed informal when there are no prior preparation, valid identity, and order; it occurs most times accidentally (e.g. pre-policy interview). Open-ended interviews are when questions are presented to a respondent in the form that generates unlimited answers from the respondent (e.g. can you please tell me about yourself?). Closed-ended interviews are when questions are presented to a respondent in the form that generates restricted answers from the respondent (e.g. do you agree or disagree with the result?). Structured interviews occur when respondents are asked similar questions in a uniform order (e.g. questionnaire form interview). Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in the order of questions asked a respondent as a result of answers given by the same respondent (e.g. questionnaire form interview followed by extra questions). In unstructured interviews, the letters, questions, and presentation differ from one interview to another (e.g. media interviews). Single person interview is an interview that takes place between an interviewer and one interviewee (e.g. a researcher and an expert). Group interview is interview that takes place between an interviewer and more than one interviewee (e.g. a researcher and a focus group of 6 to 12 individuals of same orientation and goal). Telephone interviews are usually short. Collecting survey data via telephone involves verbally asking questions and corresponding answer choices to an individual designated as the unit of observation [25]. Mailing interviews involve sending detailed questionnaire form and a follow up letter to the address of choosing persons, whose responses are important for accomplishing a research task. Face-to-face interviews involve personal contact of researcher or interviewer with interviewee(s) also for accomplishing a research task. Electronic interviews are digitally oriented and convenient; they often occur with the aid of a computer. Interview questions and answers are exchanged through emails and online charting in most occasions. Writing the introduction of an interview exercise is the first practical step towards reaching the respondent(s) and it entails the following: The title of the research work or engagement; The signature of the researcher or interviewer (general identity of the researcher that must include the name and organization or body the researcher represents); The scope of the research; The purpose of the research; and The reason for choosing the would be interviewee. Interviews produce good result through valid and reliable questions and survey design. Unfortunately, there is no set format to construct interview questions, but just guidelines requiring knowledge of the subject being studied, measurement theory, research methodology, and common sense [17]. Interview questions must be concise and the general content as short as possible (at least not more than three pages). The interviewer needs special training in order

to understand the do's and don'ts of the interviewing process, like understanding the right person to be interviewed; the right questions and how to ask them; the right place an interview ought to hold etc. There are ethical issues relating to anonymity, privacy, consent and others [15], which include avoiding all sorts of bias and sticking to integrity before and after an interviewing process; contacting would be interviewee(s) before the real interview exercise on the contents and aim of the interview and reason why they were chosen; and conducting interview with a guide. Interpreting and applying interview answers are both the responsibilities of the researcher. The central responsibility in an interviewing process is to understand the meaning of respondents answers [26]. Interview responses are transcribed manually or digitally in order to get the main values, components, tools, and variables in relation to a research task; manually, it involves personal intellectual skills and digitally through software programs like Nvivo 9. The answers a researcher or interviewer obtains from respondents are after a careful analyse, applied in relation to the research work in answering the research question, justifying the research aim, unfolding special issues around a research problem, and defining the positions of previous researches. The cumulative benefits of interviews end with research finding and recommendations.

Table 2 shows some policy issue questions a public management researcher should ask in relation to data collection and the context they should be asked.

Document analysis as a technique

Document analysis has a long tradition in the history of qualitative research; documents generate specific realities and the realities they produce have effects [27]. One key factor to consider when thinking about documents is how the content, context, and setting relate to a research task [28]. Document analysis includes a range of activities seeking to reveal information hidden in documents and document collections [29]. A high degree of professionalism and care are needed when doing documentary analysis. Data collected through documents is secondary. Documents can be in manual or electronic form. The analysis of documents can provide insights into basic issues. Documentary analysis is a part of qualitative research in social sciences and can take the shapes of qualitative content analysis, qualitative descriptive analysis, qualitative interpretive analysis, and semiotics analysis [30]. Documentary analysis can serve as complementing strategy to other qualitative strategies like interviews. Due to the natures of administrative questions and the tasks public administrators try to accomplish, the analyses of documents become relevant often in public management research. Document analysis has a historical, present, and futuristic outlook and motive. The following are some documents often used in public management research inquiry: agencies reports (on annual basis in most occasions), constitutions, conference papers, etc.

Most documents are either in hard copy (manual paper) or electronic (internet sources) form, which are read through different software and hardware. In addition, are national, state, and local governments gazettes, constitutions, reports (annual), conference papers etc., that can be found in popular archives when they in manual form, and Webpages when they in electronic form. Finally, are international organizations (United Nations for example) constitutions, conventions, reports (annual), conferences and symposia papers etc., which can also be in manual or electronic form. Documentary analysis in public management research inquiry is a strategy that is as popular as other strategies like interview and literature review. In most popular regards documentary analysis helps a researcher in understanding a research problem, answering a research question, justifying a research objective and many others.

The nature of documentary analysis includes content analysis, qualitative descriptive analysis, qualitative interpretive analysis, and Content analysis is a strategy for analysing a body of text that treats the elements of the body of text as empirical entities. It is further premised upon a clear sequence of steps with which to systematically organize elements of text in order to enable an investigator to meaningfully interpret and make inferences about the patterns in the content of the overall body [31]. Qualitative descriptive analysis is the act of describing relevant aspects of a phenomenon or variable through less rigorous means. Qualitative interpretive analysis like descriptive analysis is the act of interpreting relevant aspects of a phenomenon or variable through less rigorous means. Semiotic analysis is close to discourse analysis; it is the study of signs and sign process, meaning, analogy, relevance, communication etc. An emphasis on semiotics or hermeneutics can inform ethnographic data collection and analysis, where an attention to culture as a system of signs and texts offers the main impetus [32]. Using documentary analysis in qualitative research like other strategies requires care, patience, and procedural guideline (systematization), because it is not often that easy as it sounds or appears. The questions of validity and reliability are always there in documents analysis like interview; how valid and reliable are the documents being used in a research work or analysis. Public management researchers should try to abstain from picking any documents for a research project, rather documents selected must have a focused expertise or area of concentration; documents selected must represent a valid and reliable institution; documents selected must also represent a national, international, private, and public body like federal or state government; and finally, documents selected must represent a formal project.

One document a public management researcher could analyse as data for a research task at the international level is United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948. To start, a researcher needs to create issues under different topics in relation to the theories, research

Issues	Open-ended	Close-ended
Health Care Improvement	What is your assessment about the present state of public hospitals?	Do you agree or disagree that more doctors are needed in public hospitals?
Government Decentralization	What is your view that the central government is too far from the people?	Would you support or discourage the view that local administration should be created?
Welfare Service Provision	How would you describe the general well-being of people in your community?	Would you approve or disapprove the need for unemployment benefits increase?
Citizens Participation	Why is election the best avenue to take people along?	Are you for or against the view that the referendum should still hold?
Inter-Governmental Relations	How would you support the view that federal and state ministries should cooperate more?	Is it right or wrong for only the federal government to handle educational issues?
Salary and Wage Increase for Civil Service	What is you view that the poor performances of most civil servants are a result of low pay?	Do you agree or disagree with view that motivation is positively related to money?

Table 2: Policy Questions in Public Management Research.

questions or hypothesis, and aim(s) of research. The following are some issues a researcher can discuss the contents of the documents under:

1. Human Rights as a Universal Issue

2. Human Rights as a Heritage of Humanity

3. Answers to Global Ethical Questions

Under the first issue, the researcher could highlight and discuss the general issue and preamble of the document in relations to theory, questions, and aims of research. Under the second issue the researcher could highlight and discuss the central issues in articles 1 to 28 in relations to the aim, questions, and theory of the research. And finally, under the third issue the researcher could highlight and discuss the key issues in articles 28 and 29 in relations to the aim, questions, and theory of the research. The researcher can do these through the scientific act of description or interpretation.

In addition, other documents a public management researcher could analyse as data for a research task at the national level using the same approach above are operational documents and reports of various anti-corruption agencies or institutions. Here the researcher could focus on the key anticorruption laws, policies and procedures of these agencies or institutions. Some good examples of these agencies are the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) of Hong Kong; the Independent Corruption Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) of Nigeria: and the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission (IACC) of Bangladesh.

Strategic Synthesis

Research design creates syntheses for the varied aspects of research, including methodological reconciliation. A model is a statement, diagram, an equation or other abstraction that takes selected elements and links them to each other; a model is most necessary before data collection (Figure 2). After the research question and study's purpose are stated a preliminary model is necessary. The relevant things about models (schematic and symbolic) are: 1) they are made up of elements and relationship; 2) the originators are required to arrange their thoughts; 3) they are subject to modifications as progress is being made in research project and; 4) different versions may be built to meet different needs. The elements in a model are variables, which are categorized into independent (input or cause) and dependent (output or effect). Variables are observable characteristics that can have more than one value or that can vary; but elements that do not vary are called constants. Hypothesis is the expression of the relationship between two variables in the manner that they can be empirically tested. Co-variation is the patterned relationship between an independent and dependent variables that takes direct, inverse, and curvilinear forms. A progressive relationship is direct form; a retrogressive relationship is inverse form; and a mixed relationship is curvilinear form. However, if two variables do not vary together their relationship is assumed random or null [13].

It is a proven fact that research goes with different things. Most often, qualitative researchers use some combinations of different techniques with various dimensions [16]. Researchers can balance information gotten from one source with information gotten from another source and the mixed method and case study are major representations of this fact. Research configuration can also take a comparative setting, where emphasis is placed on the similarities and differences of outcomes of variables or phenomena. Comparative approach is the act of teaching alternatives. Comparing is ultimately a human exercise, which product is at the same time biological, inborn, social, and learned [33]. The study of public administration, including administrative ethics requires comparison in order to discover cross-national generalizations. Above all, a good research design must be able to link research problem, question, logic, and method in the manner that they agree with hypotheses and operational/empirical aspects of a research task.
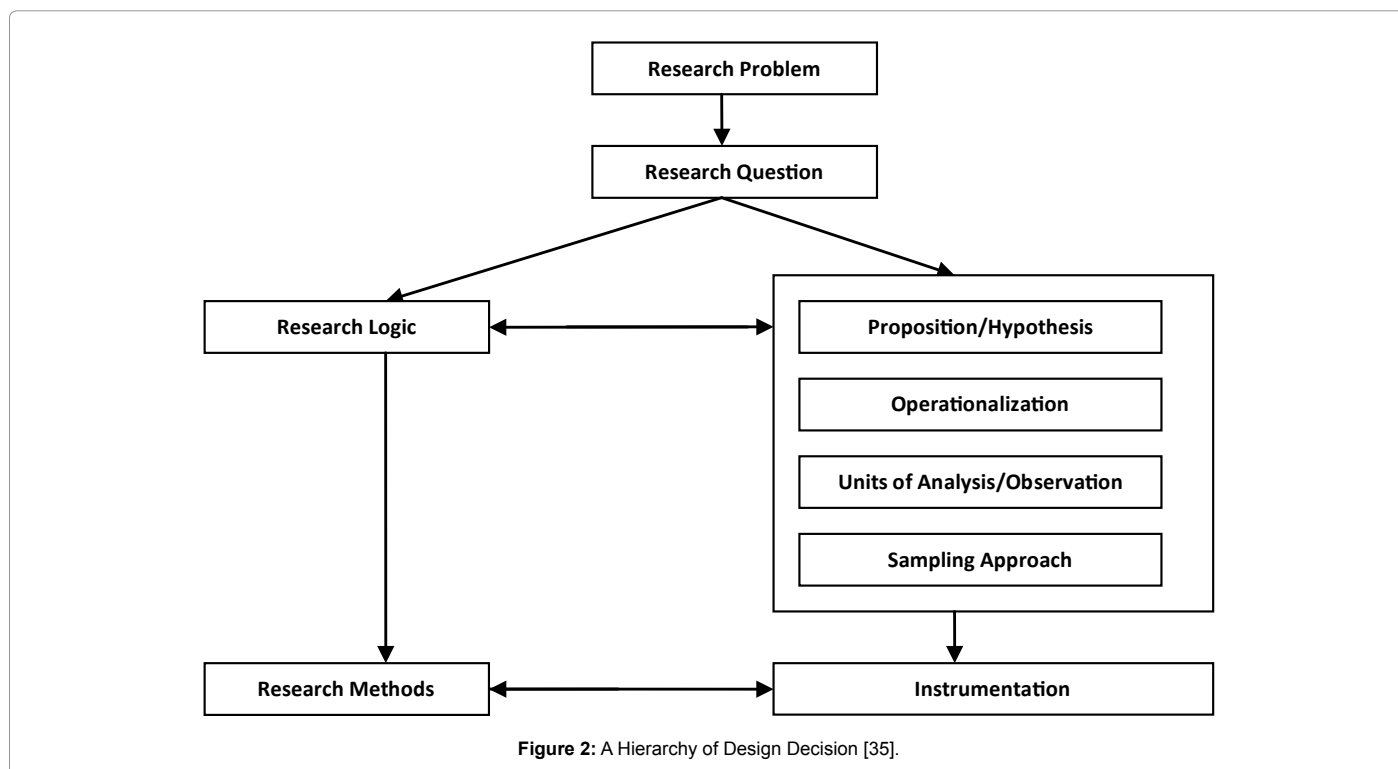

Figure 2: A Hierarchy of Design Decision [35].

The main issues that come to mind when documents analysis, literature review, and interview are adopted for a research work are questions of reliability, validity, and sensitivity. When you ask, "Does this document for example produce dependable or consistent data?" you are questioning its reliability. When you ask, "Does this document produce data on the variable of interest?" you are questioning its validity [13]. While reliability is characterised by stability, consistency, dependability, and trustworthiness; validity is characterised by exactness or correctness. Validity has some connotations of reliability, but they are wrongly used interchangeably most times; validity implies logic and well-grounded principles of evidence [34]. The sensitivity includes many issue that go with research ethics. Choosing the qualitative method in public management research could be very interesting and challenging. Options relating to strategy adoption (both qualitative and quantitative) could be numerous in public management research, but the conclusion to adopt the strategies of literature review, documents analysis, and interviews could offer a researcher more flexible analysis, because of the ability to use two or the three strategies together in one research exercise.

Conclusion

The qualitative method is indeed special and interesting in various ways. The qualitative method is a key aspect of public management research, which is characterised as a post-normal science and branch of social sciences. Due to the natures of administrative questions and research, data collection, analysis, and interpretation must be given special attention. Numerous techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation abound in public management, but three special ones are literature review, interview, and document analysis. Standard and conventional techniques are important in research inquiry, because of the philosophical views of research as scientific process that lies on ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Literature review is a comprehensive survey of previous inquiries related to a research question that allows the author to place his or her research into an intellectual and historical context. Document analysis includes a range of activities seeking to reveal information hidden in documents and document collections. The analysis of documents can provide insights into basic issues. Interview is mostly classified as a primary source of data collection in social sciences that needs care and expertise. Interview is conversation between two or more persons. Interviews normally take the form of conversation that occurs between an interviewer and interviewee that is followed by note taking or electronic device recording. The three techniques (interview, literature review, and document analysis) are part of qualitative research. However, irrespective of the pattern adopted in a research inquiry, there is a need to reconcile or synthesize different aspects like research problem, questions, logic, and methods in the manner that they agree with the operational/empirical aspects of a research task. Research configuration can also take the forms of mixed method and comparative setting. In the mixed method, two or the three qualitative strategies discussed in this paper could be used in a single research exercise.

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