

Title: select either a qualitative or quantitative study, then make a critical analysis of it using any eight of the following categories: introduction, abstract, documentation, literature review, aims, context, research design, research methods, reliability, validity, mode of analysis.

The purpose of research studies can be seen upon as to explore the information within the given environment and consider their viability and effectiveness and whether these can add value for learners to the overall experience. The term 'Research' can consist of different meanings, research enquires can be defined as; a methodical, formal and precise process employed to gain solutions to problems and to discover and interpret new facts and relationships. (Waltz and Bausell, 1981, p.1). Therefore the ultimate goals of research are to formulate questions and aim to find the answers to those questions. The immediate goals of research are categorised as exploration, description, prediction, explanation and action, where they provide a strategy for figuring out which questions to ask and which answers to seek. (Sarantakos, 1993).

Primarily this assignment will focus on a specific educational research study, based on 'Bullying and racism among Asian schoolchildren in Britain' conducted by Mike Eslea and Kafeela Mukhtar. (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) The study is formulated and conducted upon the Quantitative research methodology. Quantitative research methods were originally developed in the natural sciences to study natural phenomena, (Bryman, 1988) this can be visualized as it uses numerical forms of representation which then can be presented in forms of graphs and tables, (Denscombe, 2003). Quantitative research is associated with many different approaches to data collection; the main fundamental characteristics are as follows; the approach is concerned with obtaining numerical information which can be analysed using statistics, where it does not need to go beyond the use of what is stated as 'Descriptive' (Silverman, 2000). The Aims are to establish cause and affect relationships, where experiments result in high levels of reliability. The research study will be critically examined and analysed in depth on the following eight selected categories; abstract, introduction, literature review, research design, research methods, reliability, validity and documentation.

Abstract:

An abstract can be defined as a paragraph that summarizes the whole study. The abstract is in essence a teaser (*Dane, 1990, pp22 6*), as readers will use it to decide whether or not to read the full report based upon the abstract. The abstract of an Quantitative study should provide a succinct, but a thorough overview of the research conducted, and it should specifically describe the objectives of the research; the hypotheses tested, the methods used, the statistical analyses of the data, the results of the study and the conclusions. A carefully crafted abstract is essential because judgments about the quality and validity of the general research can be determined from the written abstract.

Concentrating onto the actual research paper and highlighting critically the abstract. It can be identified clearly that the overall purpose has been stated earlier within the abstract, as the opening sentence begins with a brief description of previous researches within the same field, and how the research problem arose from neglecting issues of racism linked to bullying within Schools. (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) The Abstract sets the scene for the main purpose of the research as it states; in result from the lack of research upon racism within schools there has been little known about bullying linked to ethnic minority children within Britain. So in appraisal to the abstract, according to (*Dane, 1990*) the objective has been described, and the problem has been addressed. The methodology used, including the research design, and data collection methods should be mentioned within an abstract (*Buley, 1991*). This has also been set in a concise sentence, through presenting the research method and the use of a survey questionnaire and mentioning the design of the research. In effect to the research method, the study also describes the criteria used to select participants in the research and where the study took place, however the reasons why the survey was carried out within that specific part of Britain is left unmentioned.

Concise discussions of a few significant research findings are included within the abstract, “*Results show that bullying was widespr ead, 57 per cent of boys and 43 per cent of girls had been bulli ed that school term*” (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) So the results have reflected the key findings of the study. Also the results and indifferences had been mentioned within the abstract, which is a point to be praised as data should

be included in the abstract. Statistical differences between groups, treatments, or programs should be indicated (*May, 1997*).

However the Learning outcomes are not so clear, and a specific learning outcome has not been stated which will be achieved from the research. Also the conclusions established are not so scientifically sound, as it can be questionable if it is a valid interpretation of the data presented. As within the last sentence of the abstract it states that although it is difficult to generalise and make assumptions from such unrepresentative samples, by saying that it ends with the results to show that bullying is clearly a rich and complex problem among ethnic minority children, (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000*.) This could bring to mind the question of reliability and validity.

Introduction:

Whereas the abstract summarises the whole report, the introduction presents the subject of the report. The purpose of the introduction is to put the study in context (*Dane, 1990*). This is often accomplished by quoting previous research in the general topic, citing leading researches in the area, or developing the historical context of the study. The introduction acts as a lead-in to a statement of the more specific purpose of the study. Typically, the introduction states the problem to be solved or the experiment to be performed and explains its purpose and significance. As *Wilkinson (1991)* mentioned: "The introduction is the part of the paper that provides readers with the background information for the research, so that readers can understand how it is related to other research". (*Wilkinson, 1991, p.96*) It also provides the reader the needs to understand and perform the experiment, and specifies unresolved issues, or social concerns.

The introduction of a Quantitative study is usually written in a form from the third person angle, which sets an impersonal view that tends to exclude the researcher from the picture and helps to create a sense of objectivity and distance between the researcher and the subject, this is phrased as a quantitative epistemological stance. (*Creswell, 1994, p43*). Reflecting this to the research study, to its advantage it can be noted that the study is formatted in a third person point of view. The introduction provides many accounts of previous background research based on bullying within

schools in many locations, which builds up a good foundation of research sources. However bringing to attention that the introduction also includes a mixture of the literature review within the contents of the introduction, instead of having a separate subheading for the literature review.

Another factor that should be mentioned is that when looking at the starting of the introduction, rather than gradually presenting the problem, it precipitates by stating issues of surveys of racist attitudes within British schools that claim there is a serious wide spread problem, and then leaps to a research conducted in Manchester. This issue can be criticised as it is mentioned in *(Bem, 1981 as cited in Dane, 1990 p 217)* suggested that; the research projects introduction should introduce the problem a little at a time, so the introduction should begin with a statement which is not starting from the middle of the theory or problem but rather opening with an issue that the reader is able to relate to experience. The final paragraph should be a clear statement about the theory or proposition under study. *(Balnaves and Caputi, 2001)* the hypothesis must be stated explicitly, it should be a precise prediction not a general statement that there may be differences somewhere between conditions. Although the specified last paragraph of the research study does not emphasize on the hypothesis as such, however it does make a clear definition of what the research is aimed at undertaking and makes mention of hypothesis based on certain factors, such as the children's ethnic origin, culture, language etc. *(Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.)* The introduction overall does build a firm foundation and highlights the points of importance.

Literature review:

A Literature Review in general terms is a critical summary and assessment of the range of existing materials dealing with knowledge and understanding in a given field. *(Blaxter, et al, 1997, p110)*. After a research study has formulated and has identified the research problem, the next step is to search for studies that are related and relevant to the problem. Research studies are expected to start with a literature review for varies of reasons. Firstly to get an awareness of existing literature in one's chosen field of research, to provide background information and understanding. Also to demonstrate the importance of the subject area, an understanding of what others have

seen as the most important issues and theories. A literature review brings forth a generator of questions and dilemmas to be pursued in research, so in order to provide a context from which to go upon and build on through confirmed existing research or alternatively, to challenge existing understandings and argument.(Cano, 2002)

Although the literature review within the research study has no separate heading from the introduction, the review of literature can be seen as rich in source, providing a range of various views of researchers. The literature review must be able to provide the reader with an *up to date account and discussion of the research findings* in a particular topic. (Cano, 2002). Within the introduction, the study has relevant research studies, questionnaires, surveys dated from 1985, *The heartstone Odyssey (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.)* to the latest of 1997 Olweus. According to (Cano, 2002) there are two vital points to include within a literature review, firstly; delineate the major and relevant theoretical position(s) pertinent to the research problem. Referring back to the research study, the researchers have defined many significant researches in relation to the study itself.

The second point is to present summaries of prior research. This would include a review of how the variables have been studied and includes results, conclusions, and weaknesses. Well this can be seen successfully within the study, as the research has used many studies to build upon, for example the survey of racism in schools in Manchester by (McDonald et al, 1989 cited in Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) And on the other hand used studies to be criticized, such as the *DfEE Sheffield Bullying project (Whitney and Smith, 1993 Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.)* Not to mention the study by Loach and Bloor 1995 (cited in Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) where the study criticizes the ideas held by them and ends the paragraph by saying “How valid is this criticism?” (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) So it is clear that the literature review has established the basis for the study. As a Literature review is like a compass, it gives the overall study a bearing on what has been done, also aids the conceptualization and measurement within the research design. (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001, p24). The literature review within the study has created a strong base upon where the whole research design can pillar itself onto. A sound literature review, “gives a good basic framework to proceed further with the investigation.” (Sekaran, 1992; p38), by clarifying the research problem and identifying likely variables.

Research Method and Research Design:

The research method and research design sections have been combined accordingly to the research which is being analysed due to that the study has combined both together under one heading. In the methodology section, the researcher indicates the subject, instruments, and procedures used in the study. Ideally, the purpose of this section is to provide enough information so that other researchers could replicate the study. There is usually a subheading for each part of the methods section (Dane, 1990). As it enables the reader to primarily interpret the results in the light of the methods used and secondly to do an exact replication of research study solely based on the method used. The research design determines how to conduct the research and the methods used. Research design has been referred to as: a master plan specifying the methods and procedures. (Zikmund, 1991, p42).

Typically the research sample size in a quantitative approach would be reasonably large, researchers involvement in this stage of the research process is limited, with the researcher acting as an independent observer. Incorporating this within the research method and design of the study, there should be ideally four sections within the methods section, which are Design, Participants, Materials and procedure. (Dane, 1990) in contrary to this the study (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) Begins with participant, then materials (*Questionnaire*) and lastly procedure, so specifically speaking it has not included a design section. However by acknowledging this, there is no single blueprint for planning research. Research design is governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose' the purpose of the research determines the methodology and the design of research. (Cohen, 2000. p 75).

A well structured research design ought to include a variety of elements. For instance; what is the main methodology of the research (Cohen, 2000. p 75. In this case the methodology has not been stated explicitly as such, however judging from the style and structure of the method, the study can be recognised as a Quantitative questionnaire survey. What observations to make and how to make them? This question has been answered fully in the participants section of the study, for example (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) the number of children who had taken part in the survey,

in total of 243 children, also their age ranging from 12-15 years of age and the non-random selection of children who were of ethnic minorities, specifically from India and Pakistan and who were either Hindu or Muslim. The location where the research had been carried out (Preston and Bolton) (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) And reasons to why some schools had rejected assisting the survey questionnaire. In particular the method section is clear in that the variables measured have been stated systematically.

Other essentials, such as how the data will be gathered and who would be undertaking the research (questionnaires) has also been clarified. The Questionnaire design was also fully stated, how the questionnaire was formatted and used (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) The Procedure, this should be described in chronological order and the details of how the information was gathered (*Dane, 1990*). The procedure section in the study has described what the participants (children) were intended to do and how confidentiality was obtained. However an important note is that validity and reliability had not been addressed overtly nor had any section emphasised on those aspects.

Finally in presenting the results from a Quantitative approach, through the research design, would result in data being discussed as to the extent to which it either proves or disproves the research question. This has been done so within the study, as the end section is titled; '*Discussion*'. (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) Within the discussion it does explain and give an in depth analysis of the results thoroughly. The discussion begins with a confirmation that bullying is common within Asian children (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) This was intentionally the research question, that bullying and racism are linked especially within ethnic minorities. In regards to this it can be noted that variations throughout the research process including research purpose have a major effect on how data is analysed. (*Patton, 1990, p373*) Therefore it can be concluded that the reporting research results from the findings were discussed, in a recognised format, as to the extent to which the data collected had confirmed the research question.

Reliability and Validity:

Reliability and validity have been put forth together due to the main factor, that as pointed out before, reliability and validity are not mentioned openly through the research study. Commencing with reliability, it is concerned with precision and accuracy. For research to be reliable it must confirm that if it was to be carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, the similar results would be obtained. (Cohen, 2000) There are three principles of reliability; stability, equivalence and internal consistency. (Creswell, 1994, p121). In some means the research can be categorised as being reliable, since the research method had been in depth and gave an account of how the research was to be conducted and certain procedures to be taken. However within the discussions the research had acknowledged that reliability was hard to maintain due to that majority of schools had not responded to the research and it was difficult to gain overall maximum interest and understandings from each individual child. (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.)

Reliability is a necessary condition for quality measurement; however it alone is not sufficient. As there is another building block required, which is validity; validity is a vital key to effective research, as a research that is invalid is worthless. (Cohen, 2000). There are three types of validity: measurements or construct validity, internal validity and external validity. (Dane, 1990). One important aspect of validity is that if a research is valid then it is also considered reliable, as stated earlier invalidity makes a research worthless.

Both reliability and validity can be questioned within the overall research study. Although the study makes mention of faults within the questionnaire and the research as a whole and provides recommendations within the discussion for room for improvements etc. It must be recognised that certain issues have remained unexplained. For instance as extracted from (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001) were potential threats to internal validity reasonable ruled out or noted and discussed and was the time frame of the study described? Answer to these criteria's are no, it had not been. Also whilst focusing on the survey questionnaire, (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.) it has not been stated whether or not the questionnaire had been pilot tested

or if there was anything that was within the survey that gave a bias response. Questions like what had been the return rate for responses from the schools and had there been any follow up with non respondents, and this could most likely reflect on possible limitations made in the discussions. It is unwise to assume that threats to validity and reliability can ever be erased; most rather that these threats can be attenuated by bringing to attention the importance of validity and reliability through the piece of research. (*Cohen, 2000.*)

Documentation

There are many different styles of documentation. Research studies could contain either an individual or combine form of documentation technique to show the use of other research within their own study. There can be four main styles of documenting, these are: The Harvard System, where the researchers name and date of publication is cited within the text. Secondly footnotes, the citing is done on the bottom of each page, with end notes in the same format but written in the end of a chapter or book. Finally the references and bibliography section where all the work which has contributed to the study or has been included within the research paper is listed accordingly to the authors second name in alphabetical order.

The research study had used to Harvard system to document other research within the study, for example: when mentioning a research within the text it is stated as (*Macdonald et al, 1989*) as seen in (*Eslea and Mukhtar, 2000.*) In the end the study also contains a list of references that cites all the research included within the text. There can be many forms of documentary sources, in light of the study, it can be understood that the study has only used materials from books and journals, especially educational journals. Any use of the internet, new papers or official reports has not been included.

Concluding on the research study as a whole, it can be apparent and understandable to note that each research has its own way of structuring its research problems, aims, purposes and analysis. Whilst looking at a quantitative study, although there is no universally accepted format for reporting quantitative research, most studies adhere to

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the sequence of scientific inquiry (*McMillan and Schumacher, 1997*). There is variation in the terms used, but the components indicated are similar in nature. The eight categories selected had been present within the research study, even though some of the headings were not specified as such. For instance research method and design were within one section, and the same for introduction and literature review. Overall the studies abstract had set a firm foundation, and then the introduction had built upon that and to credit the study even more, the literature review was rich in the sources used. The methods and how the research would be conducted were clear and concise. However weakest points were to be found within the reliability and validity of the overall study. Even though this was even acknowledged in the discussion, but this aspect of the study had made the research doubtful and questionable.

Word count: 3,300.

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