

QUALITATIVE AND MIXED METHODS IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH (QMM)

(Course leader: Koen Peeters)

A basic understanding of human behaviour and the socio-cultural context is key for effective international health research. Qualitative research provides a means to access unquantifiable facts and gain an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural setting in which international health takes place. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods and data sources, in mixed-method designs, enhances the strengths of the respective research methods and constitutes an essential tool to answer research questions that cannot be investigated by quantitative methods alone.

Combining theoretical knowledge with methodological skills, this short course targets an international audience of researchers, professionals and students in international health.

NUMBER OF CREDITS

6 ECTS

MODE OF STUDY

This course (component) is organized :

- Distance learning (Online)
- Face-to-face (Antwerpen)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course the participants should be able to:

1. Critically assess the quality and validity of qualitative and mixed methods in international health research in peer-reviewed articles, protocols or research reports
2. Design research strategies (choosing the appropriate method for the research question: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods) related to specific health problems and socio-cultural settings
3. Relate and apply theoretical concepts and models to specific research questions and infer their implications for methodology
4. Carry out basic qualitative research independently, including research design, data collection, theory based data analysis and presentation

CONTENT

The course consists of a combination of three related modules that provide a directly applicable and integrated tool for research.

1. Qualitative Research Methods

- Research strategies:
- qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches compared
- Qualitative data collection techniques in international health:
- Observational Methods (Participant observation)
- Interviewing (from informal conversations to formal in-depth interviews)
- Group discussions (informal group discussions; Focus Group Discussions)
- Text analysis (documents, secondary sources)
- Qualitative research methodology:
- Basic concepts: triangulation, iteration, flexibility of the research process
- Sampling strategies:
- The logic and application of qualitative sampling techniques (non-probability sampling; purposive, theoretical and snow-ball sampling)
- Data Analysis:
- Sequential, interim, abductive analysis; context analysis; coding
- Grounded theory: applicability and limitations for health research
- Qualitative Data Analysis software: NVivo (QSR International)
- Structural characteristics of qualitative research:
- Formality and structure
- Field work
- Quality, validity, applicability, comparability and transferability of results
- Ethics and informed consent in qualitative research

2. Concepts and models for qualitative health research

- Concepts:
- Basic concepts that are directly applicable in international health research will be taught, such as cultural diversity, beliefs, community, ethnicity, mobility, stigma and social exclusion, access to care, medical pluralism, social vulnerability, adherence,... (Selection concepts subject to change.)
- Theoretical research models:
- Research models are theoretical tools that provide a structured overview of most relevant factors to be researched for a specific research question in a determined context. The use of models in general will be taught and applied to the certain research models, such as the Health Seeking Behaviour model, Vulnerability and the Medical Poverty Trap,... (Research models subject to change.)

3. Mixed Method Approaches

- The preparation of survey questionnaires:
- The generation of questionnaires: quality requirements
- The use of qualitative research to prepare and fine tune questionnaires
- Cross-cultural use of standard questionnaires:
- How and when to use standard questionnaires in different cultural contexts: possibilities and limitations
- Mixed methods approaches:
- Combining and alternating quantitative and qualitative research methods to enhance the strengths of the respective methods

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

The course combines interactive lectures (102 hours) on methodology and theory with practical small group tutorials (14 hours) and field work (32 hours). In terms of self-study the students are expected to read the required reading materials prior to the lectures.

Problem oriented learning methods are used, focusing on concrete cases from international health research.

Students will actively carry out fieldwork to apply the methods and theory taught. One day per week is dedicated to coached fieldwork in small groups of maximum 9 to 10 participants on a set of predefined research topics outlined in predefined research protocols. During fieldwork, students apply the theory and methodology taught under the supervision of a tutor providing feedback and technical assistance. The field work allows students to apply theories and link them to their concrete experiences in the field, enhancing their research skills.

ASSESSMENT

Participants are assessed:

(1) In a maximum 3 hour written exam based on essay questions that invite students to consider practical applications of the course content (50% of total mark).

(2) On the field work (50% of total mark), including Nvivo database and coding; weekly analytical reports; and data collected.

Students can receive oral or written feedback on their exams and on the final evaluation of the fieldwork documents when requested.

Re-sits for the written exam are organized at the ITM or at collaborating institutes depending on the place of residence of the student..

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

This course targets an international audience of researchers, professionals and students.

Admission criteria are:

- A university degree in health or social sciences of 240 credits
- Proficiency in the course language: candidates who are not native speakers of the course language or whose language of instruction during higher education is not the same as the course language, must provide proof of language proficiency by a certificate from a recognized institution. Required level for English: TOEFL paper-based 580, computer-based 230, internet-based 88 or IELTS 6.5

SELECTION CRITERIA

- Academic record (grades)
- Motivation (presented in a motivation letter)
- Possibility and necessity to use qualitative and mixed methods in research, study or work context
- References
- Relevant additional training

REMARKS

The course takes place alternatively at Institute of Tropical Medicine, Nationalestraat 155, 2000 Antwerpen or at a collaborating Research Centre. In 2019 the course will take place in Antwerpen.

LITERATURE

- [Flyvbjerg, B. \(2006\). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 12\(2\), 219-245.](#)
- [Jaccard, J., & Jacoby, J. \(2009\). *Theory construction and model-building skills: A practical guide for social scientists*. Guilford Press.](#)
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Sage.

STAFF INVOLVED

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