Research in the Faculty of Humanities

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Abstract:

    The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences departments play a fundamental role in university education. Humanities are educational courses that aim to teach individuals about the human condition in variety of forms, as well as to look at them with a critical and analytical eye. The scope of Humanities includes the studies of philosophy, religion, foreign languages, history, language arts (literature, writing, oratory, rhetoric, poetry etc.) and visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography, film making etc.) Research in Humanities is often misunderstood because when we think of research what immediately comes to our mind is a laboratory setting and experimental outputs. But the process of research in Humanities includes the reinterpretation or rediscovery of known artifacts from various critical or creative perspective to generate new art or analysis or interpretations. This paper explores definitions of Humanities, and research in humanities and also examines its topics, methods, content analysis, trends, challenges and scope in research in humanities.

Keywords: Humanities, topics, method, content analysis, trends, scope

    'Humanities' comes from the Latin word 'humanus' meaning human, cultured and refined. Culture includes speech, knowledge, beliefs, arts, technologies, ideals and social rules. Humanities are academic disciplines that focus on the human condition. These disciplines include Ancient and Modern Languages, Literature, History, Philosophy, Religion and Visual and Performing Arts. Individual research is the most prevalent form in the humanities. Scholars working in the field of the Humanities are referred as 'humanists'. Humanities students can pursue careers in fields like editing, multimedia work, digital marketing strategy, foreign languages proficiency, art direction, graphics design, event management, civil service etc.

    When we consider 'creation' of something new as a fundamental concept of research, in Humanities it consists of literary authorship of new art or scholarly enquiry of text and social, political and historical concepts. In other research subjects and fields research eventually aims at producing some tangible outcome for the benefit of an individual or society. But the products of research in Humanities are intellectual and intangible that can contribute to different academic disciplines. Rather than examining physical attributes, the Humanities probe such intangibles as purpose, meaning and judgment, thus challenging people to self-reflect, think abstractly and create. The Humanities focus on critically interpreting culture and humanity and teach valuable skills, making them a central component of the most colleges' general education requirements. The Humanities are important because they offer students opportunities to discover, understand and evaluate society's values at various points in history and across every culture. The fields of study in humanities include literature_ the study of the written words, including fiction, poetry and drama.

    One of the most exciting things about humanities research is the way it can challenge our assumptions and broaden our perspectives. By delving into the past and present of different cultures and societies, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and diversity of human experience. We can also develop critical thinking skills, hone our communication abilities, and learn to appreciate the power of creative expression. Humanities research topics are as varied as the human experience itself. They encompass everything from the study of ancient civilizations and cultural artifacts to contemporary issues such as climate change, globalization, and social justice. Whether you are interested in the history of art, the philosophy of science, or the literature of a particular era, there is a humanities research topic that can captivate your attention and fuel your intellectual curiosity. Moreover, humanities research topics can be an essential tool for addressing contemporary issues and advancing social change. From analyzing the role of media in shaping public opinion to exploring the ethical implications of emerging technologies, the humanities can provide valuable insights and perspectives on some of the most pressing challenges of our time.

How to Choose the Right Humanities Research Topics?

Choosing the right humanities research topic is essential for a successful and fulfilling research experience. However, with so many fascinating topics to choose from, it can be challenging to know where to begin. Choosing the right humanities research topic requires a combination of personal interests, research feasibility, and broader significance. By following the tips, you can identify a research topic that is both fulfilling and impactful and that will contribute to your field and to society at large.

Explore Your Interests: Start by exploring topics that genuinely interest you. Consider your passions, hobbies, and personal experiences. Do you love reading novels or studying art history? Have you always been fascinated by philosophy or anthropology? Identifying your interests can help you find a research topic that you will enjoy and be invested in.

Find The Gap: Look for gaps in the existing literature on a particular topic. What questions have not been answered or explored in-depth? This can provide you with a unique angle for your research, and it can also help you make a significant contribution to your field.

Consult with Your Mentor: Consult with your academic advisor, mentor, or professor for guidance and advice. They can offer valuable insights into potential research topics, provide feedback on your ideas, and offer suggestions for further exploration.

Consider The Feasibility Of The Topic: Make sure that the topic you choose is feasible within the time and resources you have available. Consider the scope of the research, the availability of sources, and the practicality of the research methods you will use.

Consider the significance of the topic: Consider the significance of the topic you choose. Will it make a meaningful contribution to your field or discipline? Will it have broader implications for society or culture? Choosing a topic that has broader significance can make your research more meaningful and impactful.

Brainstorm with peers: Brainstorm with your peers and colleagues for fresh ideas and perspectives. Collaborating with others can help you identify potential research topics that you may not have considered on your own.

Stay flexible: Finally, it is essential to remain flexible and open to change. As you delve deeper into your research, you may find that your initial ideas and assumptions need to be revised or adjusted. Staying flexible and open to new ideas and perspectives can lead to more fruitful and meaningful research.

Research Methods in the Humanities:

Research in the humanities can be accomplished through a surprisingly diverse range of methods, which apply equally well to the study of languages, literatures, the fine arts, applied arts, and religion. Qualitative research is commonly used in Humanities because it allows for a deep understanding of issues and problems within these disciplines, focusing on feelings, opinions and subjective aspects of research. Most of these methods fall into two basic categories: Extrinsic or Contextualist approaches and Intrinsic or Isolationist approaches.

Extrinsic or contextualist approaches are largely historical in orientation; that is, they seek to examine the context, the milieu, the background that produced the literary text, artwork, idea, or author/artist. Such approaches assume that there are causal connections between the nature of a work of art (including its content and its form), or a linguistic or an ideological phenomenon, and the historical moment in which it occurred. Although the term "historical" would seem to suggest that such methods are applicable only to older works of art, texts, or ideas, they are in fact equally useful in a discussion of contemporary works and ideas as well; however, they are then more properly described as "extrinsic" or "contextualist" approaches. Biographical or psychological, social, political, economical, feminist, Marxist, cultural and other few could be various approaches within this category.

Intrinsic or isolationist approaches concern themselves solely with the structure and materials that constitute the text, painting, sculpture, vase, photograph, film, building, play (or any other artifact). By "structure" and "materials" we mean not only the diverse elements that comprise form and content but the innate and unique relationship that collectively produce and unify the aesthetic qualities of the artifact. Factors outside the text or artwork itself are banned from consideration .These methods are also referred to as "textual" (in the case of literary works) or "formal" (in the case of both art and literary works). Intrinsic approaches treat the work of art as an autonomous, unified system of structures or interdependent "signs," either linguistic or pre-iconographic depending on the medium under consideration. Structuralism, formalism, deconstruction or post-structuralism, phenomenological could be the various approaches.

What is the objective of research in humanities?

The objective of research in humanities is to expand students' knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behavior, ideas and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. The aims of research in humanities are to encourage and enable the student to develop: an inquiring mind the skills necessary for the effective study of humanities, a sense of time and place, a respect for and understanding of others' perspectives, values and attitudes awareness and understanding of people, cultures and events in a variety of places at different times an understanding of the interactions and interdependence of individuals, societies, and their environments an understanding of the causes and consequences of change through physical and human actions and processes, an understanding of contemporary humanities issues, a sense of internationalism and a desire to be proactive as a responsible global citizen an awareness of the connections with other subjects a lifelong interest in and enjoyment of humanities.

Content Analysis:

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as:

• "A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278)

• "An approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification" (Mayring, 2000, p.2)

•"Any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p.453).

These three definitions illustrate that qualitative content analysis emphasizes an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner.

Comparing qualitative content analysis with its rather familiar quantitative counterpart can enhance our understanding of the method. First, the research areas from which they developed are different. Quantitative content analysis is used widely in mass communication as a way to count manifest textual elements, an aspect of this method that is often criticized for missing syntactical and semantic information embedded in the text. By contrast, qualitative content analysis was developed primarily in anthropology, qualitative sociology, and psychology, in order to explore the meanings underlying physical messages. Second, quantitative content analysis is deductive, intended to test hypotheses or address questions generated from theories or previous empirical research. By contrast, qualitative content analysis is mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them, in the data. In some cases, qualitative content analysis attempts to generate theory. Third, the data sampling techniques required by the two approaches are different. Quantitative content analysis requires that the data are selected using random sampling or other probabilistic approaches, so as to ensure the validity of statistical inference. By contrast, samples for qualitative content analysis usually consist of purposively selected texts which can inform the research questions being investigated. Last but not the least, the products of the two approaches are different. The quantitative approach produces numbers that can be manipulated with various statistical methods. By contrast, the qualitative approach usually produces descriptions or typologies, along with expressions from subjects reflecting how they view the social world. By this means, the perspectives of the producers of the text can be better understood by the investigator as well as the readers of the studies. Qualitative content analysis pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts.

Qualitative content analysis involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation. This process uses inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison. But qualitative content analysis does not need to exclude deductive reasoning. Generating concepts or variables from theory or previous studies is also very useful for qualitative research, especially at the inception of data analysis. There are three approaches to qualitative content analysis, based on the degree of involvement of inductive reasoning. The first is conventional qualitative content analysis, in which coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data. This is the approach used for grounded theory development. The second approach is directed content analysis, in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings. Then, during data analysis, the researchers immerse themselves in the data and allow themes to emerge from the data. The purpose of this approach usually is to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory. The third approach is summative content analysis, which starts with the counting of words or manifest content, then extends the analysis to include latent meanings and themes. This approach seems quantitative in the early stages, but its goal is to explore the usage of the words/indicators in an inductive manner.

The Process of Qualitative Content Analysis:

The process of qualitative content analysis often begins during the early stages of data collection. This early involvement in the analysis phase will help you move back and forth between concept development and data collection, and may help direct your subsequent data collection toward sources that are more useful for addressing the research questions. To support valid and reliable inferences, qualitative content analysis involves a set of systematic and transparent procedures for processing data. Depending on the goals of your study, your content analysis may be more flexible or more standardized.

Research Phases in Humanities:

Step 1: Prepare the Data / Creation: In this phase, the design of the information structure has to be made through data modeling, based on the goals and designs of the research project.

Step 2: Enrichment: The raw or firsthand data material has to be enriched with more details of references and contexts.

Step 3: Editing: Editing includes enhancement of the data by giving background information, bibliographical references and links to related passages.

Step 4: Retrieval: In this phase, the information should be ready to be selected, looked up and used.

Step 5: Analysis / Conclusion: In this phase, the objectives of the research project are reached based on the qualitative description of research problem.

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