'GROUNDED THEORY' AS A CRITICAL RESEARCH METHOD FOR DEVELOPINGTHEORY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

'Inclusion' has been adopted by policy makers, politicians and educationalists from a variety of persuasions. The principles applied are often so imprecise that it is impossible to comprehend them. However, it is to education and the classroom where the focus of this paper is centered. In general, papers concerned with issues of inclusiveness concentrate on stories describing populations excluded from the mainstream of school life. In "Inclusive research" theoretical sensitivity is needed for developing an insight with which a researcher comes to the research situation making the study more concrete and related it to "reality" of the phenomena. This is true and should be used in behavioral studies. The meaning and subtlety of data is recognized and forms the wide creative base and credits both the experience and the expertise. Grounded theory (GT) is shaped by the desire to discover social, psychological processes as propounded by Charmaz (2009). The newer version of GT states that neither data nor theories are discovered but are constructed by the researcher as a result of his/ her interactions with the field and its participants as stated by Ralph, Brinks and Chapman (2015) which is considered the best method of investigating psychological phenomena and aspects related to inclusive education.

***Keywords:** Grounded Theory, Inclusive Education, The Process in Grounded Theory,Features of Grounded Theory Research Design*

Introduction:-

Grounded theory is a form of qualitative research design. Qualitative research is also concerned about an individual's assumptions and values, thus it tends to gather enriched data interpretation. According to Opie (2004) Grounded theory is, 'a process of collecting qualitative data and understanding data analysis to generate categories (a theory) to explain a phenomenon of interested'. Creswell (2012) also viewed that the emerging theory is "grounded" or rooted in the data, thus it will provide a more sophisticated explanation than a theory derived from other studies. Thus, grounded theory design can be used when the current available theories fail to describe the phenomenon of interested. Apart from creating

new theories, grounded theory can be viewed as a process to examine data in order to discover theories that contained within. It is applicable to complex behavioral problems even though the contributor factors have not been identified (Stern 1980) the created theory has the advantage of to be consistent with empirical evidence due to its nature of rooted in the real data. It is the most common and popular qualitative approach.Grounded theorist researchers have been successfully conducted in many educational studies.

Beginning with research questions, the researcher would employ documentary analysis, observation or interview to gather data. Using the data and only the data, the researcher would move from sorting and organizing the material to explicating it on a conceptual level at which point pattern or theory could be identified that would make sense of the data. Two cornerstones of grounded theory outlined by Glaser and Strauss in their fundamental publication, The Discovery of Grounded Theory, were theoretical sampling and the use of the constant comparative method.

• **The Process in Grounded Theory:-**

An important feature of grounded theory is that it represents a systematic method that may be applied to research problems. The systematic nature of the method is useful in judging, generalizing and comparing the results of grounded theory research.

The Process of the grounded theory methodology is outlined below:

1. Research Question – The process starts with the selection of a suitably complex research problem. In the context of this study, the research question related to the aims of the project, which were to develop a multimedia application based on a student model and to investigate the benefits of individual configuration of multimedia to learning within the application.

2. Data Acquisition – In grounded theory methodology, data is collected in the same ways, using the same techniques as in other research methodologies. Data may be qualitative or quantitative or combinations of both types. The analysis of data collected in research is often referred to as 'coding'. Data is coded differently depending on the purpose of the data and the stage of the project. Three stages of data analysis are involved in grounded theory – open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

    a. Open Coding – Open coding is the process of selecting and naming categories from the analysis of the data. It is the initial stage in data acquisition and relates to describing overall features of the phenomenon under study.

    b. Axial Coding – In axial coding, data are put together in new ways. This is achieved by utilising a 'coding paradigm', i.e. a system of coding that seeks to identify casual

relationships between categories. The aim of the coding paradigm is to make explicit connections between categories and sub-categories.

c. Selective Coding – Selective coding involves the process of selecting and identifying the core category and systematically relating to other categories. The process involves the following stages:

- Explication of the story line.
- Relating subsidiary categories to the core category using the paradigm model.
- Relating categories at the dimensional level. This involves understanding the range of values that categories may have. For e.g. the category' motivation' may have a range of values between not motivated and highly motivated.
- Validation of relationships against data.
- Further refinement of the story line.

• Kinds of Grounded Theory Design:-

In order to produce high quality, grounded theory research, researchers need to understand the grounded theory paradigm and the nature of the study. Researchers should select a research design paradigm that is parallel with their beliefs about the nature of the phenomenon of interested.

1) **The Systematic Design** – It is broadly applied in educational research. It composed of three stages of coding – open coding, axial coding and selective coding. (Creswell, 2012)

   i) Open Coding – A grounded theorist is required to construct initial categories of information about the studied subject by segmenting the collected data. They need to identify the important words or phrases and label them by using a suitable term (Birks and Mills, 2011). Later all collected data are classified into the corresponding categories.

   ii) Axial Coding – According to protocol described by Creswell (2012), the researcher needs to choose an open category and relate it to other categories.

   iii) Selective Coding – Grounded theorists generates theory by interpreting the interrelationships that emerge among categories formed in axial coding. Selective coding retains only relevant variables to the core variables in order to yield an explicit theory (Glaser and Holton, 2004)

   Researcher used 6 components to construct the model;

   1. The phenomena   2. Casual condition   3. The content

   4. Intervening condition   5. Action/ interaction strategies.

6.Consequences.In selective coding stage, the core category was expressed as a group the statement namely, 'Waiting is boring; sometimes waiting is fair.' The researcher explicated the grounded theory by using 3 propositions –

1. Already knowing.   2. Adjusted doing.   3. Being fair.

Based on this work, explication of theories through propositions statements allow the voices of the participants providing concrete evidence to support the generated theory.

2   The Emerging Design

Robson (2002) claimed that the emerging design is especially suitable to be applied to study 'real world' which seems relatively complex, poorly controlled and messy.

For example a study conducted by Larson (1997) and discussed by Creswell (2012)

Aim of the study was to develop an explanation of high school teacher's conception of classroom discussion.

The researcher examined the data to develop categories and lastly an emerging theory regarding the process of classroom discussion was written without presenting a diagram.

3   The Constructivist Design

This design is developed by Kathy Charmz (Hallberg, 2006)

Constructivists viewed that multiple social realities occur simultaneously rather that a single reality (Hallberg, 2006)

The design advocator, Charmz (2008a) viewed that the constructivist design has advantages in addressing why questions and preserving the complexity of social life.

Constructivist design emphasizes the values and beliefs of the researcher.

It gives a new interaction between researchers and participants and this ongoing interaction will continue contributing to data construction (Hallberg, 2006)

Why GT was chosen by her?

1. Little is known about the nature of exclusion w.r.t. the disabled student. GT provides a vehicle for developing an understanding.

2. Development of research is incremental, stable and systematic. Each phase informing the next. This helped to plan research with no previous knowledge of exclusion and researcher was unsure of what type of data would be generated. Abstract ideas, meanings and actions had to be converted to analytical interpretation of the process in the world of participants.

3. Finally the above steps in GT helps to analyse relationships between human and social structure posing theoretical and practical concerns in social justice studies which is the core of Inclusive education.

Citation Index: General use of GT

1. Qualitative Research – 21795 – Denzin.
2. Design and Social Measurement – 2316 – Miller.
3. Patterns of Academic Researchers – 364 – Ellis.
4. In Inclusive Education– 5 – Jackson.

(Data from Web of science: Database covering 12,000 Journals. Base used – Impact Factor Calculation.)

Another important study in Inclusive Education is (here exclusion of Distance Education students in jobs)

Chen Tsang – Yao 'Polo' – Ph. D. June 2005.

Institution of Technology, University of Michigan.

"A Grounded Theory for research and synthesis of selected distance education literature". 180 pp. Here GT was used in 4 ways for research synthesis.

- Appraise new developments in the field.
- Verify existing theories or develop new ones.
- Synthesise knowledge from different lines of research.
- To infer generalization about substantiative issues from a set of studies directly on the issue.

• Features of Grounded Theory Research Design:-

Creswell has listed 6 major characteristics of typical grounded theory widely utilized by grounded theorist.

1. Process Approach – Corbin and Strauss (2008) viewed that the research process in grounded theory is a series of interactions and outcomes among a group of people regarding the studied phenomenon.

   Examples in educational research such as AIDS prevention, how the first year teaching life of a new teacher, leadership of a school principal.

2. Theoretical Sampling – It refers to the on-going process of coding the data , comparing the data and grouping similar data to build categories and core categories.

   The purpose of theoretical sampling is to systematically direct the grounded theorist to choose the most important data for the studied phenomenon.

   Theoretical saturation can be identified through 3 parameters –

   - No new data is distilled from a certain category.
   - The category could sufficiently cover salient variation and process.
   - The interrelationships between categories have been delineated appropriately.

3. Constant Comparative Method – One of the fundamental feature of grounded theory pertains to constant comparative method (Moghaddam, 2006)

   It is the process of comparing like with like, to trace out the emerging pattern and theory.

   Hallberg (2006) viewed the constant comparative method as the 'core category' of a grounded theory design because all the collected data are compared constantly to find out their commonalities and variations.

4. Core Category – The core or central category portrays the main theme of a study (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

   - The core category can be related to other major categories.

   - It should emerge frequently in the data.

   - The generated explanation must be logical and consistent when comparing to the major categories.

   - The core category should be named sufficiently abstract so that it can be used in other relevant studies..

   - The generated theory should have explanatory power.

5. Theory Generation – The outcome of grounded theory research is to construct a theory that explains a studied phenomenon from the collected data. He further pointed out that the resultant theory can be presented in 3 forms-

   - As a visual coding paradigm.

   - As a series or hypothesis.

   - As a narrative story.

6. Memos – Grounded theorists create memos about the collected data.

   Mareters and Kroeze (2009) argued that memo writing is a good idea to record emergent concepts or ideas throughout the research process. These types of memos are known as theoretical memos.

   Memo writing will increase researcher's intellectual assets (Birks and Mills 2011).

• **Conclusion:-**

Inclusiveness is an important aspect of democracy, and the primary virtue of government funded schooling is inclusiveness. A general democratic theory attempts to address the question of 'inclusive for what? Here diversity is welcomed and becomes its greatest strength. In contrast private schooling is distinguished by its exclusiveness. A necessary part of inclusiveness in the democratic classroom is an array of visions of democracy to debate. The requirements presented in this paper bring definition to the debate around democratic

education, and provide a conceptual bridge toward clarifying inclusive education. Offered here is a particular prospectus on democracy. It has no special virtue, except that if it errs at all, it errs on inclusiveness. Seldom will people welcome democratic education with open arms, it will need an organised advocacy, driven by clearly defined theory.

There is enormous pleasure in mastering new skills, and being appreciated by others for the useful things you do. This kind of social inclusion can mean hope replaces hopelessness, and with that hope, a sense of security that comes with an understanding of issues, and the working relationships developed in the process of refining issues and electing candidates.

In Grounded Theory, there are many approaches one can take as it is quite flexible. Identifying key issues where the decision of selecting a theory has to be done, being informed by the literature, a pragmatic approach needs to be addressed. Now GT is used in nursing and agriculture.

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