Research strategy justification of methodology psychology essay

The following chapter initially provides a brief insight by discussing few research approaches and philosophies, which were considered during the literature review. The second section of the chapter will compare different research methodologies. Different opinions from writers are presented and critically compared to provide the reader with sound knowledge about quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies. This is followed by the justification of the specific methodology, which will be used in-order to investigate the specific case study. In the middle part of the chapter, research strategy, research design, the sample size of the research, rejected methods and procedures will be discussed followed by the selection of specific research method to collect information from the FLMs in focus group and HR manager is discussed in-detail. The next part of the research is to discuss how to ensure validity of data. Validity and reliability of data is very essential of any research. Data collected from multiple sources can be cross-referenced to ensure the research is valid. At the end of the chapter limitation of the research will be discussed followed by ethical issues, which will be considered during the extensive research.

3. 2 Research Philosophies

In the following section different research approaches and philosophies are discussed which were considered during the detail literature review. First of the approach considered was the epistemological approach which is a part of philosophy that asks questions such as " what can we know?" or " what can we be sure of?" and questions such as " How do we get beyond opinions and data to the real facts and knowledge?". The realistic objectivity is based around what is know about the HR function in the specific case study, its

strategy, formal structure and systems that managers have to work within and what could be considered as constants. The subjective entities of the conceptual framework i. e capacity development, mentoring, support and coaching mechanism, overall involvement in the policy and procedures formulation and handling difficult issues related to grievance & disciplinary and sickness & absenteeism policies that are not easy to measure and are not fixed or constant. They can only be fully understood through interpretivist means as this part of the conceptual framework assumes that reality isn't always observable and in this instance that is very much dependant on the human relationships between HR advisors, FLMs and managed staff. Using the approach HR and devolution of role to FLM can be implemented in the specific case study and different stakeholders can interpret the actual HR role and responsibilities that it contains, in different ways i. e. it is more subjective by nature.

3. 3 Comparison between Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method

According to (Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.). (2005) in social sciences quantitative research is often contrasted with qualitative research which is the examination, analysis and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. The qualitative research doesn't involve mathematical models although, it has been argued again and again that the two go hand in hand. Some writers always argue that there was a disagreement about the proper place of qualitative versus quantitative research. The new method of qualitative research evolved to address the perceived problems with reliability and

imprecise modes of data analysis. Both the research methodologies have a different assumption about the world. According to (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) Quantitative research is based on a positivist philosophy, which assumes that there are social facts with an objective reality apart from the beliefs of individuals. Qualitative research is rooted in a phenomenological paradigm, which holds that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation. The second major comparison between both the approaches was done perfectly by (Richard & Cook, 2003) where the writers explains that quantitative study portrays a world of variables and static states whereas qualitative study describes people acting in events or a program. The writer gave an example of how director tells using hiring interviews to encourage staff to actively sell services or an informant tells about the political battles that led to the legislation governing sales. The writer further argues that differences presented between qualitative and quantitative studies having different descriptive strengths. The quantitative study assesses the magnitude of relationships more precisely. One can say rather clearly that 61% of the variance in student learning is explained. The qualitative study concludes with more ambiguous statements like " strong leadership is necessary, but not sufficient for excellence." The author further highlights the issues of approach regarding these research methodologies where the quantitative researcher typically employs experimental or correlational designs to reduce error, bias, and other noise that keeps one from clearly perceiving social facts. The prototypical qualitative study is the ethnography, which helps the reader understand the definitions of the situation of those, studied. The author investigate the issue of purpose regarding the research methodologies where quantitative research seeks to

explain the causes of changes in social facts, primarily through objective measurement and quantitative analysis. Qualitative research is more concerned with understanding the issue and viewpoints. (Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. 2002) emphasis that quantitative study persuades by de-emphasizing individual judgment and stressing the use of established procedures. While the language of hypothesis testing is avoided, the impression is given that the whole study is a disciplined exploration of a pre-existing conceptual framework where is qualitative study there is less attention is given to describing procedures and how individual judgment is disciplined in the qualitative study. The study is presented as frankly exploratory. The strategy is one of comparing pairs of agencies known to be different in order to discover what might explain those differences. The search is not described as strongly controlled by pre-existing theory. There is no preliminary model. Instead, reference to past research is incorporated into the presentation of findings.

Quantitative research designs are characterized by the assumption that data, evidence, and rational considerations shape knowledge (Horna, 1994). Qualitative research designs are those that are associated with interpretative approaches, from the informants' point of view, rather than ethically measuring discrete, observable behavior (Jones, 1997). Neither quantitative, nor qualitative method, however, is superior over the other, for each has its own strengths and weaknesses, especially when considered in relation to a particular problem. (Halfpenny, 1994) however, mentions that there is some polarity between the two methods; where quantitative approach is described as hard, objective and rigorous; the other is considered to be soft, subjective

and speculative. At the same time, many researchers have shown that both the approaches may complement each other (Burgess, 1984) and may be integrated in the practice of social research.

Mixed methods research has thus come of age (Creswell, 2002). The most widely used term given to the concept, encompassing use of more than one method employed within one piece of research, is triangulation between methods (Creswell 2002). Whilst not arguing for a hierarchy of research methods, this third way, the mixed methodology, provides even greater strengths to the researcher, and may enhance both the quality and the perception by others, of the research. The study involved both secondary as well as primary research and concurrent triangulation approach can be adopted. It is useful as a model when a researcher uses two different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study (Creswell, 2002). Creswell also emphasizes that this model generally uses separate quantitative and qualitative methods as a means to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other method.

3. 4 Research Strategy: Justification of Methodology

The study is an effort to explore the barriers preventing successful devolvement of Human Resource Management to First Line Manager in specific case study (in Pakistan Textile Industry). The research will provide analogy by comparing the views and experiences of FLMs against the HR Manager to identify the key barrier that are preventing successful devolvement of Human Resource Management to the Front Line Manager.

The study also provides a constructive conclusion on the impact of devolved Human Resource on the FLMs and the organisation itself.

The methodology, which will be employed, in this research will draw the existing knowledge, utilising the conceptual model and the most crucial is the researcher's experience working in this textile industry will be very useful. Still there will be questions which will still need more detail answers so open semi structure interview will be used that will be directed towards the FLMs (See Appendix B: I for semi-structure interview). After the data is collected from FLMs, the semi-structure interview will be conducted (asking the same set of questions) with the HR manager to compare the views and experiences so that we can identify the key barriers that are preventing successful devolution of human resources responsibilities to the FLMs (See Appendix B: I).

This approach will collect information qualitative in nature, rather than any numerical collection of data or explanation based on the attributes of the graph or source of data. As reinforced by (Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. 2005) Qualitative research is often used for policy and current working procedures since it can answer certain important questions more efficiently and effectively than quantitative approaches. Qualitative approaches have the advantage of allowing for more diversity in responses as well as the capacity to adapt to new developments or issues during the research process itself so it would be more suitable to use in the research project to investigate the current problem. So qualitative methodology would be more suitable as reinforced by (Richard & Cook, 2003) where author highlights the difference between two methodologies where the quantitative researcher typically

employs experimental or correlational designs to reduce error, bias, and other noise that keeps one from clearly perceiving social facts. The prototypical qualitative study is the ethnography, which helps the reader understand the definitions of the situation of those, studied. The qualitative study is more concerned with the understanding of the issues and viewpoints of the people and issues related to them.

The study is based on the specific case study (in Pakistan Textile Industry). According to (Fisher, 2007), case study approach will enable a holistic account of the subject, which will help to investigate and explore relationships between the experiences of FLMs against the HR Manager. The study will try to answer the questions whether the expectation from different stakeholders was expectable and justifiable? What are issues related to the devolution of HR responsibilities to FLMs? Did both the main stakeholder agreed or disagreed on the key barriers to the successful devolvement of HR responsibilities to FLMs? Were key players able to carry out their duties due to these barriers? What were the underlying reasons if there are any key barriers to the successful devolution of HR responsibilities.

This is particularly the case for understanding how and why certain outcomes were achieved (not just what was achieved) but also answering important questions about the functions and procedures of HR and their relationship with the FLMs. Also to explore the impact on FLMs being able to take HR role effectively, and identifying the key barriers in the overall devolvement of HR. This will be achieved by using semi-structure interviews from the FLMs. These types of research can be expensive and time-consuming to conduct, many fields of research employ qualitative

techniques that have been specifically developed to provide more succinct, cost-efficient and timely results. For this research, a specific case study is used which provide a single case holistic approach. The research is focused on investigating the barriers preventing successful devolvement of Human Resource Management to First Line Manager in specific case study (in Pakistan Textile Industry). The other major reason of using the specific case study is, that we can collect multiple views from different stakeholders, which are involved in the organisation. The multiple views from different FLMs and HR manager can give a detailed insight about the organisation and allow the researcher to understand fully the issues related to the research topic.

The research focus on the FLMs only not the staff and would like to investigate the barriers to the effective HR devolvement . One more key benefit of using the case study is that it provides easy approach to the FLMs to get their opinion and then to broaden the knowledge after the semi-structure interviews then involve the experiences of HR manager with the semi-structure interview to understand the underlying key issues and barriers that are effecting the overall successful devolution process. The main drawback with a single case study is that it doesn't allow any sort of comparison or critical evaluation of responses from other research case. This can be limited if the research wants to draw conclusion from another case study.

3. 5 Research Strategy for the Specific Case Study

The following section will discuss the strategy and analysis process that has been formulated and will be used in the research. The analysis process

describes the basic elements of data analysis and interpretation and its fluid. First of the research is based on a specific case study which will provide a holistic account of the issues related. The case study approach will allow to understand the overall situation and have a sound knowledge how these entities interact with each other and their relationship. To gain detail understanding of all the issues around the devolvement of HR this can only be achieved using semi-structured interviews and qualitative questionnaires due to time constraints and the limited access time to FLMs working for the case study. The research is not looking to compare the individual FLMs against each other or compare different departments against each other. The main focus of the study is to consider FLMs as a single entity or element and identify and explore the barrier in the overall devolvement process. Then HR Manager will be asked about the key barriers that are affecting the devolution of HR responsibilities to FLMs. These difference of experiences and opinion will be compared and contrasted to find the problem.

The good analysis of data depends completely on understanding the data that has been gathered and having in-depth knowledge about the issues related to the problem that is being investigated. During the qualitative analysis the data gathered should be studied in-detail and also any noticeable impression should be recorded which can be further investigated from different focus groups of FLMs. The focus should be on the quality of data because sometimes information provided doesn't add any meaning or value. The process of detailed evaluation and analysis will lead to what you want to find out. This will identify few key questions that you want your analysis of the research to answer. This will be noted and help to decide how

to begin. The key questions can change but the focus will be maintained. In this approach the focus will be to analyze how individuals or focused group responded to the open ended questions. This stage will be crucial because all the responses will be collected in order to identify the consistency and differences. The data from each question will be put together. Then the researcher will explore the connection and relationships between questions and their responses collected. During different research various methods are used to categorize information such as coding the data or indexing the data. To bring the real meaning to the data collected different key themes or pattern will be organized based on ideas, concepts, behaviours, interactions or key phrases. Then organisation into coherent categories will be summarized and bring meaning to the text. This process can be very time consuming and labour intensive depending on the amount of data that will be collected. The process has to be thorough and the data collected will be re-read multiple times to identify the coherent categories or key themes. The key themes will get the focus of the study and areas that need further investigation. In the research using the preconceived themes or categories, you read through the text and find the themes or issues that recur in the data. This approach allows the categories to emerge from the data. These categories or key themes are defined after you have worked with the data or as result of working with data. The initial list of categories can change as you work with the data and investigate further. This is an iterative process and some new themes can emerge or different subcategories can emerge to get the focus.

As you are organizing the data into different key themes and categories either by the questions you will begin to see the key pattern and connections both within and between the key themes. Assessing the relative importance of different themes will be crucial for the analysis of data. To identify which categories appear to be more important, you can count the number of times particular themes comes up, or the number of unique respondents who refer to certain themes. These count can provide a very rough estimation of relative importance of key themes. Also during the analysis of data you can find that two or more themes that can occur together consistently in the data. When one theme is found the other appears automatically. It can be cause and effect relationship or create sequence through time. For example, respondents may link that the barriers to successful devolution to HR are because of certain reason whereas another focus group repeat the same shows the cause effect relationship. These connections if identified are important to look for, because they can explain why something is happening and helps to identify the problem and better understanding of the underlying issues. Then the researcher should ask himself how do things relate with each other? What are the key themes and what relationship they have with each other? What can be other factors that may contribute? Then they key themes and connections will explain the findings. The researcher will avoid to get side tracked by the details and the rich description in the data and focus on the important issues and key relationships that are being investigated in the research. The interpretation of data will take place provide meaning and significance to the analysis of data. The good place to initiate is to develop a list of key points or important findings that will be discovered as a result of categorisation of key themes and sorting the data.

Then the next phase of analysis of data is to stand back and think about what you have learned. What are the major lessons? What new things that have been learnt due to the process? In the final part of the analysis development of an outline presenting the results and writing the final report. The report can include quotes or descriptive examples to illustrates the points and bring the data to real existence. The length and format of the report will depend on the target audience. Sometimes to support the description of the information different diagrams with boxes and arrows can fit all the pieces together. By creating models may reveal gaps in your investigation and connection that remain unclear. These areas can be investigated for further study.

3. 6 Selection of Research Methods

In-order to investigate the study; research methods, which will be used, are as follows for

Initially semi-structured interviews with focus groups of FLMs will be conducted. The semi-structure interviews via a series of three focus group (4 FLMs in each focus group. Total 12 FLMs).

Each semi-structure interview with each of the focus group is designed to last for 90 minutes and will take place on 24/1/2012, 26/01/2012, 30/1/2012

FLMs are selected from different departments with wide range of experiences and different level of qualifications.

3 out 12 FLMs have university qualification whereas the remaining FLMs have basic college qualification.

The semi-structure interview will be conducted at the premises of the Specific case study.

During the semi-structure interview the key areas that need further explanation will be highlighted and asked from different focus group to get their opinion. Also opinion from the HR Manager will be collected as well.

The themes needing further explanation telephonic interviews and emails will be used

To compare and contrast the view, semi-structure interview will be conducted with the HR Manager. The same set of questions related to key themes will be asked from the HR Manager to present the finding (took place 08/02/2012).

The Interview with the HR Manager is designed to last not more than 2 hours.

Open Ended questions will be asked at the start of the investigation phase so that participants can feel relax.

Documentation related to case study HR policies and structures will be reviewed.

FLM job role will be reviewed to find out what they prefer to do

Different authors and writes agree in the literature that using semi-structure interview would allow in the future to investigate more areas as they gather probing replies. This was reinforced by (Maxwell and Farquharson, 2007)

semi- structure interview offer consistency in lines of enquiry with the ability to offer opportunities for further probing responses. The methods have been deployed in different researches and have earned credibility in different qualitative research. To ensure credibility of the research and data which is collected, is verified using different multiple methods and sources are used. These multiple methods will allow triangulating of the facts, which have been gathered. In the study the data from the previous chapter in the literature review will be compared against the focus group (FLMs) semi-structure interview data and further consolidated and checked during semi structure interview with HR manager's responses. This will ensure all facts gathered are authentic and valid. In-order to receive a detail feedback from the semi-structure interviews open-ended questions will be used rather than closed ended. Also using focused group will encourage all the participants to think about different emerging themes discussed and it will build on relevant themes. To follow up on different themes and issues raised during the focus group, will be investigated further with the senior HR manager. The interview will be based on issues surrounding devolved HR, and what have arisen from the interviews with FLMs.

3. 7 Research Design & Procedures.

The aim of the study is to explore the barriers preventing successful devolvement of Human Resource Management to First Line Manager in specific case study (in Pakistan Textile Industry), which shouldn't be ignored while designing the open-ended question for semi-structure interviews. The questions were considered from a range of themes relating to the conceptual model, which was formed out of literature review. The semi-structure

interviews via a series of three focus group (4 FLMs in each focus group. Total 12 FLMs). These Front Line Managers comes from different departments from the same case study. To break the barrier between the researcher and the focus group, initially during the semi-structure broad questions about the specific case study HR functions, its polices and structures will be asked and what issues they think are the barrier to successful devolvement of HR responsibilities to the FLMs. These broad and generic questions will make respondents comfortable and encourage them to engage with the overall research process. After the initial engagement then the second set of questions will be more focused around specific hard and soft elements of HR. The information collected from the FLMs focus group and themes emerging will be further investigated, compared by conducting semi-structure interview with the HR manager. The interview questions from HR manager will be the same set of questions so that experiences from all stakeholders can be compared against each other. This would be a very important opportunity to fill any gaps and press the HR managers to answer all those queries in-detail.

3. 8 Rejected Approaches

The following section of the study will provide the reasoning and justifications why different research approaches were rejected. The section will briefly highlight the reasons of the rejection and why a specific approach was not deemed appropriate to be used in the research for the specific case study.

At the initial stages of the research, all different types of research methods as identified in both Saunders (2009) and Fisher (2007) were critical

evaluated and considered but they were rejected due to certain reasons. Ground Theory was not a viable option and it was rejected because it attempts to theorise people's subjective understanding of their world, and researchers look for these themes in interviews and observations (Fisher, 2007). According to (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 and Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the theory is developed inductively from a corpus of data. According to the authors if done well, this means that the resulting theory at least fits one dataset perfectly. It works in a reverse fashion as compared to traditional research and it appears at the start that it's in contradiction to the scientific methods. Rather than begin with a hypothesis, the first step is data collection, through a variety of methods. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text. The Ground Theory believe that academic understanding only arises from what the research itself tells us i. e. it is emerging theory and not based on theories chosen in-advance of the research established. This approach is not appropriate for the research for the specific case study as in the study there is a research question with set aim and objectives to be achieved and the approach will not be appropriate to be used. Whereas Action Research was rejected simply because of its explicit focus on actions, learning by doing things or a group of people identify a problems and do something to resolve it and in particular it promotes the change process, that was not the purpose of this research.

The Experiment research method was rejected; as they are more align towards scientific objective studies or scientific invention. The Experiment Research is a scientific approach, which manipulates one or more variables,

controls and measures any change in other variables. The approach is not suitable for the current specific case study, as it doesn't have relations with the variables or scientific objective studies. Whereas Survey Research method needs a much larger sample size. Also the research would require the use of questionnaires that would be central to being deployed, neither of which were considered appropriate because the researcher didn't want those being interviewed to be aware of any detail of what they would be asked other than them knowing that the research was in relation to HR devolvement only. The main aim of the research was to get the real answers and positions, which they didn't think would be possible with these approaches. The other two rejected methods Ethnography and Archival Research were deemed to be too costly and time consuming and were not considered appropriate for research within the resources available.

3. 9 Ensuring Validity, and Reliability

Validity and reliability of data is very essential of any research. Data collected from multiple sources can be cross-referenced to ensure the research is valid. In the study to ensure that reliability and validity of the data collected using semi-structured interview will be further validated by structure interviews. So for this case study, the literature review has been used to highlight the major theme for open-ended questions for the qualitative semi-structure interviews. Then the outcomes from these focus group semi-structure interviews will have emerging areas and queries, which need further explanation. This can be done by designing structure interview, which are directed towards the HR senior manager who will provide further explanation. By verifying the data collected from the research it will enable

the researcher to discover whether the qualitative data collected from the focus groups is telling them what they think is correct or need further explanation.

3. 11 Limitation of Research

This study has some limitation. There is less number of respondents available for carrying out the research. The sample size of the study is small. The time is another factors which is the limitation to carry out details research.

3. 12 A consideration of any ethical or professional issues raised by your proposals.

In the project choosing participants with various experiences increases the possibility of shedding light on the research question from a variety of aspects. So it would be very beneficial to involve staff member who have more experience, which can provide insight to the problems faced by textile industry. The other major professional issue, which is raised due to the research project, is the aspect of interpretation of text, which will be gathered during the interview process. According to (Patton, 1990) the text can involve multiple meanings and the researcher's interpretation is influenced by his or her personal history. Since the researcher is often the one who collects the data as well as the one who performs the analysis, the question of the researcher's qualifications, training and experiences is important. During the research perform a balancing act with interpretation of data. On one hand, it is impossible and undesirable for the researcher not to add a particular perspective to the phenomena under study. On the other hand, the researcher must ' let the text talk' and not impute meaning that is

not there. These issues will be considered while carrying out the research process.

3. 13 SUMMARY

This chapter presents a helicopter view of the research methodology used for the completion of this study. The chapter further elaborates research approach and strategy undertaken for the completion of this project. The study also highlights different data collection method used for the conduction of the research. Further more, this section also describes the analysis methodology for descriptive and qualitative research technique. Finally, the chapter also describes the limitations of the research.

The next chapter will be Presentation analysis, which will present the finding of the research. Different questions will be asked in-order to investigate the problem further and the chapter will give insight to the problems and challenges faced by the industry.