

# A Methodology Compass or Research Design

**Ethnographic research identifies and understands the ways that groups of people work and live**

A focus on identifying the cultures, practices, rituals, symbols, myths, beliefs and celebrations of groups and often uses observation, analysis of documents and artefacts, and interview method to gather data.

Example: Black, Yasukawa & Brown (2013) *Investigating the 'crisis': production workers' literacy and numeracy practices*

**Ethnographic Research**

**Narrative research asks questions about the biography/history of individuals in relation to a topic**

A focus on in-depth understanding of the stories of one or a few individuals and often uses interview method to gather data.

Example: Williams (2009) *Exploring professional development practices for vocational education and training practitioners*

**Narrative Research**

**Qualitative research asks questions like:**

- How much?
- What proportion?
- Where is something happening?
- Least? Most? Average?

A focus on sampling and obtaining large numbers of responses, and often uses survey method to gather data.

Example: NCVER (2015) *Employers' use and views of the VET system 2015*

**Quantitative Research**

**Phenomenological Research**

**Phenomenological research asks questions like:**

- What do people mean when they say...?
- What do people experience when...?
- How do people feel about...?
- What do people believe about...?

A focus on in-depth understanding of one or a few individuals and often uses interview method to gather data.

Example: Liveris & Cavanagh (2012) *A phenomenological analysis of the self-regulatory behaviours of a group of young adults in a business vocational education and training program*

**Case Study Research**

**Case study research builds a picture of a complex phenomenon by exploring it in its living context**

A focus on the place or time (context) of the phenomenon and identifying the way people and things interact in the context.

Often uses a range of methods (interviews, observations, document analysis) to build a picture (the 'case'). Can involve building multiple case studies and comparing them.

Example: Harris & Simons (2013) *Two sides of the same coin: leaders in private providers juggling educational and business imperatives*

**Grounded Theory Research**

**Grounded theory research asks questions about common/shared ways of behaving or thinking**

A focus on comparing what people say about a topic to identify a number of 'themes' and often uses interview method to gather data.

Example: Hodge (2010) *Trainers and transformation: Facilitating the 'dark side' of vocational learning*