The Relevance of Glaserian and Straussian Grounded Theory Approaches in Researching Human Resource Development

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Abstract. This paper is aimed at researching Human Resource Development via employing the Grounded Theory (GT) approaches. This study, sought to resolve the main question of: how should the alternative GT methodologies be applied in researching the areas of HRD. For this purpose, a focused literature review on GT was comprehensively carried out to creatively conceptualize the model. The result of the paper indicates some differentiations between the main GT approaches ― Glaserian GT and Straussian GT; and a model for the application of GT approaches in HRD research was conceptualized showing the exemplary cases where such alternative GT methods can be applied in the major areas of HRD.

Key words: Human Resource Development, Grounded theory, Glaser, Strauss and Corbin

1. Introduction

Many authors argue that HRD confronts with unique set of challenges and some emerging trends globally and locally (Devadas, Krauss, Silong, 2009; Mclean, 2004). As an academic response to this, studies on innovative HRD research and theory building methodologies have been one of the main focuses as appeared in HRD literature (Torraco, 2002; McLean, 2004). These recent trends in HRD have confirmed the need for fresh approaches in research in order to resolve the particular context-specific HRD issues. In this case, among the other research approaches, or methodologies, Grounded Theory (GT) is mostly applicable (Egan, 2002). Although this method has been used in HRD research, there have been no sufficient and appropriate considerations of the changes and ontological segregations taking place in main GT branches mainly Glaserian GT and Sraussian GT. GT has been presented as a theory building methodology by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Glaser has defined GT as "… a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area" (1992, p. 16). Corbin and Strauss has used GT … "in a more generic sense to denote theoretical constructs derived from qualitative analysis of data" (2008, p.1).

2. Comparing and Contrasting between Glaserian and Straussian GT Approaches

Glaserian and Straussian perspectives of GT are different especially in terms of the paradigmatic dimensions, formulation of research questions, analysis procedures used, usage of literature, sampling procedures, and the procedures for validating the resultant theory.

2.1 Paradigmatic Differences

The Glaserian perspective in GT is more towards the post-positivism (Annells, 1996). Based on its philosophical roots, Glaserian grounded theory relates to critical realism ontologically, modified objectivist's epistemology, and methodologically discovers theory through verifying it using sequential researches

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(Annells, 1996). However, Corbin and Strauss (2008) rejected and label them as 'post-positivists' by Denzin in 1994 (p. vii). Instead, they preferred it to be called 'constructivists'. Thus, it has taken a shape as a relativist ontologically, subjectivist epistemologically, has recognized the interactive nature of the inquirer and the participants, and has placed it in a constructivist paradigm of inquiry.

2.2 Formulation of Research Questions

Glaser rejects starting the research process with a research problem followed by research questions (Glaser, 1992, and 1998). In contrast, Straussian perspective enters the field with some research questions. In fact, when formulating the research problems and questions, the researcher can use his experience, knowledge and even the literature if it is needed (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; and Corbin and Straus, 2008).

2.3 Use of Literature

Both perspectives in GT recognize the role of literature in developing a new theory. The difference is where the literature is used. Glaser (1992, 1998) strongly opposed the use of literature at the beginning of the research so as to avoid 'forcing the data' with the researcher's preconceptions. Instead, he suggests comparing and contrasting the emerging theory with the extant literature at a later stage especially when the substantive theory is beginning to emerge. In contrast, there is no such hard and fast rule in the Straussian approach, with regard to the use of literature. The Straussian believe that it can be done at any phase of the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

2.4 Sampling Procedures

Both perspectives agree on the use of theoretical sampling as the method of sampling. The procedures of theoretical sampling also seem to be not of much difference. However, Glaser identifies and criticizes some aspects of Straussian theoretical sampling procedures which he called as 'model sampling' that 'forces the data rather than letting them to emerge' (Glaser, 1992).

2.5 Analysis Procedures

In both approaches, the main analytical methods are coding and constant comparison methods controlled by the theoretical sampling. Coding consists of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Glaser (1992) criticized the Straussian coding approach for the so called 'force to data'. Furthermore, Glaser (1992) argues that selective coding should only begin when the core category emerges, in contrast to Straussian's approach which recommends selective coding to be done from square one in order to generate the core categories themselves (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

2.6 Procedures for Validating the Resulting Theory

In validating the resultant theory, Glaser (1992 and 1998) focused on four criteria: 'fit', 'relevance', 'work', and 'modifiability'. In contrast, Corbin and Strauss (1990, 208) used variety of techniques such as validity, reliability, credibility, plausibility and value of the theory, adequacy of the research process, and the empirical grounding of the research process.

Having compared and contrasted between the Glaserian and Straussian GT approaches, the main distinction that is rooted in their paradigmatic differences can be identified. Glaser (2002a; 2002b) believes in a 'true reality' while Strauss believes in 'constructive reality' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The concept of 'true reality' denotes that it is now real and independent to our beliefs about it (Wright, 1992). In other words, 'there is a real reality or ultimate truth' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). So in this case the challenge for the researcher is to collect exact data that can reveal the real reality. It is not determined relatively to the people, place, and time that are the major factors of subjectivity as Glaser (2000a) explained. In other words, it (the reality) is there. Glaserian approach is more applicable here as it tries to see the reality by collecting and fixing the needed data. This process is like a puzzle game. In the puzzle game, 'this time piece of picture determines the requirement of the next level pieces of pictures'. Similarly, this time data will guide and suggest the next level data requirements. In the Straussian perspective, since there is no true (one) reality (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, 2008) and it is relative to the interaction of people and their context; the challenge is to see how the reality is constructed relatively to people, time, and place and their interactions. So,

Straussian approach allows the researcher to interactively construct the reality with the participants, which is strictly prohibited in the Glasarian perspective!

3. HRD Research and GT Methodologies

According to Gilley, Eggland, and Mayachunich (2002), the components of HRD have been divided into four which are individual development, career development, performance management, and organizational development. Swanson (2008) also identified the HRD roles in line with these major four areas. On the other hand, Torraco (2004) showed the importance of studying about the 'context' of the study as equally important as the 'product' or the 'object' of the study. In HRD, mostly the product or the object of the study becomes the people's behavior. Based on these insights, any HRD study will mainly focus on people's behavior and the context of such behaviors. Hence, any HRD phenomena can have both or either of behavioral phenomena—all what people do explicitly and implicitly; and structural phenomena—all what people have made or arrange as the context of behavioral phenomena, and the natural conditions that determines the characteristics of the behavioral context. The applicability of Glaserian and Straussian GT approaches in such behavioral and structural HRD phenomena that are in implicit or/and explicit in nature can be conceptualized as shown in Figure 1. Furthermore, the particular exemplary cases for GT research in HRD, aligning to the above mentioned four HRD roles, can be presented as in Table 1.

Figure 1 A model of GT approaches in HRD research

	Behavioral pnomena	Structural
Explicit	**Glaserian GT** (Possible validity can be hindered by construction)	**Glaserian GT** (With highest possible validity)
Implicit	**Straussian GT** (Vertically depth analysis for validity)	**Straussian GT** (Horizontally depth analysis for validity)

Table 1 Glaserian and Straussian research methods in the areas of HRD

GT approach	Individual Development	Career development	Performance management	Organizational development
Glaserian	**Explicit** *Behavioral* -Training effectiveness in terms of individual output *Structural* -Study on training methods	**Explicit** *Behavioral* - Study on career movements *Structural* -Career management strategies	**Explicit** *Behavioral* -Individual output *Structural* -Study about performance management systems	**Explicit** *Behavioral* -Work team interrelationships *Structural* -O' structure/Technology

Straussian	Implicit **Behavioral** -Potential development of individuals **Structural** -Individuals work ethics	Implicit **Behavioral** -Individual career planning/expectations **Structural** -Role of career anchors	Implicit **Behavioral** -measuring individual attitude **Structural** -individual performance formulas	Implicit **Behavioral** -O' Citizenship behavior **Structural** -o' culture

4. Implications and Conclusion

The modeling of the application of the Glaserian and Straussian GT approaches can guide how to integrate the pros and cons as well as arguments and counter arguments of a particular methodology in one's research. Researchers are guided in a way, to make decisions regarding the validity, depth and the breadth of the research expected by the methodological canons. The other indication is about deciding the numbers of unit of analysis needed. Innovation in the research process will be greatly encouraged with some guidance in applying the right procedures at the right time. The proposed model or/and framework of using different GT approaches in HRD research which has not been given much scrutiny in the discussion in the HRD literature, welcomes constructive criticisms and feedbacks for its further development and sophistication.

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