

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Support Documentation



Glossary of Terms for RESTORE (Initial) PLA Training Galway Oct 31st - Nov 3rd

Anthropology

The scientific study of humankind.

Applied anthropology

Goal-oriented research and activities by anthropologists that, by providing information, making policy recommendations or initiating direct action are intended to produce a desired socio-cultural condition.

Bias

Any special influence that sways the mind; a value judgement (may be positive or negative). Racism, sexism, ageism are all types of negative bias or prejudice.

Card Sort

A participatory research technique which is useful for categorisation and for revealing meanings and categories of analysis relevant to the participating group.

Criterion (plural = criteria)

A theme or point by which something is assessed or evaluated; a rule, standard or means of judging.

Cross-cultural research

The exploration of cultural variation across two or more cultures.

Cultural anthropology

A field of anthropology which focuses on the study of the cultural diversity of contemporary societies, including economic, social, political and religious activities and belief systems.

Culture

A basic **definition**: the shared patterns for life and behaviour held by a group of people. This is a wider definition than the concept of 'high culture' (drama, theatre, ballet, etc) or 'popular culture' (television programmes, celebrity-watching, etc) or 'tradition' (food preferences, modes of dress etc).

A more developed anthropological **description of culture** is Cohen's (1997) notion of culture as "that which aggregates people and processes, not determines or integrates behaviour." This preserves the notion that while culture may be a force or process

that draws people together, it does not assume that people are simply products of culture, but can affect and influence culture. This highlights the notion of culture as a fluid changing reality, influenced by the individuals who share it.

Data

Data is the material or information that emerges from/ is generated during research processes.

Development

Improvement in the quality of human life by ensuring an adequate level of nutrition and suitable physical surroundings, as well as by forging social, political, economic and religious systems that recognise individual potential and promote self-esteem.

Direct Ranking

A participatory research technique which is useful for ranking and prioritisation.

Disenfranchise

To deprive someone of her/his rights in some way, to hold back or take away power from people.

Dynamic

In a state of fluidity and/or change (usually carries positive connotations).

Egalitarian society

A society characterised by the even distribution of wealth and power, and equal access to wealth and power by all individuals who make up the social group.

Emic (research perspective)

There are two basic approaches to qualitative research: Taking an emic approach means that you are interested in the perspectives of the research participants, how they perceive their world, how they 'explain' it and also how they use language to do so. You pay attention to their language because it reveals how they experience their lives and conditions, and how they analyse this experience. In participatory research, with a focus on 'local experts', we adopt a predominantly emic approach.

Etic (research perspective)

An etic approach means you are interested in your perspective on research participants, and will use your framework of analysis, and your analytical lens to explore, analyse and re-present what you understand about participant's experience.

Fieldwork

The hallmark of research in cultural anthropology, it usually involved the anthropologist living for an extended period of time with a group of people in order to explore their lives. More recently, fieldwork can mean shorter term but intensive engagement with a community, stakeholder group or organisation.

Flexible Brainstorming

A participatory research technique which allows a group to generate and share a large amount of information (or data) very quickly, organise and re-organise it flexibly without losing any element; in some instances, Flexible Brainstorming can include assessment of the information with a view to moving forward in some way.

Historical Profile (see Timeline below)

Holistic

Refers to viewing the whole society or group as an integrated and interdependent system; an important characteristic of the anthropological approach to exploring human experience.

Inter-cultural

Meaning 'between cultural groups'.

Intercultural

Currently used to describe a multiplicity of ethnic groups with an emphasis on mutual respect, interchange and interaction.

Interview

In this workshop, we use the term 'interview' in relation to all the PLA techniques taught. Practitioners 'interview' maps, matrices, pie charts, etc., asking open-ended questions in a way that generates a 'thicker description' (Clifford Geertz) of the data.

Intra-cultural

Meaning 'within a cultural group'.

Mapping

A participatory research technique which provides an 'insider' view of places, processes or persons and information about key contexts within which they operate (see also Venn mapping).

Marginal

To be on the edge – disenfranchised, rendered powerless or less powerful than others.

Matrix

A participatory research technique which shows correlation (for example: correlation between problems and solutions, solutions and sources of help, and so on).

Multicultural

Has been used to describe a situation where several cultural or ethnic groups co-existed; has become associated with the tendency towards separatism. The term 'intercultural' is usually preferred.

Objectives

A set of expected results and effects.

Pie Chart

A participatory research technique which is useful for establishing proportionality. Can be used as a ranking tool.

Process indicators

Measures used to monitor the effects of project activities in the short-term, so that necessary corrections and realignments can be made in project planning. Process indicators measure progress of activities that contribute to achieving objectives and results.

Qualitative (research)

A generic definition/description: Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis and interpretation of empirical materials; it is multi-method in focus, and takes a naturalistic (compared to a laboratory) approach. *'Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand.'* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Qualitative researchers use such methods to engage with people in their ordinary and extraordinary activities, observe what they do, ask about what is seen, listen to people's explanations, explore people's experiences, emotions, perspectives, attitudes, behaviour, and beliefs. The results of qualitative enquiry are produced in words and, more recently, in additional creative media including film, photography, drama, art, and the worldwide web. Qualitative research presents insight into motivation and meaning. *See 'quantitative research' for contrast.*

Quantitative (research)

Quantitative research involves processing findings numerically and producing research results in number form. Surveys and structured questionnaires are typical quantitative research tools. Quantitative research results allow for statistical measurement and comparison, for example, over time (diachronically) in cases where the original and follow up research conditions, process, target groups and analytical procedures are consistent. *See 'qualitative research' for contrast.*

Seasonal Calendar

A participatory research technique which can be described as a matrix with a distinct sense of time (*see Matrices*). Seasonal Calendars are useful for planning purposes when you need to correlate items and time, but can also be applied in many other ways.

Timeline

A participatory research technique which charts historical or key events in a chronological manner. Historical profiles are useful for plotting 'history'; for providing context and/or charting the flow of events.

Values

Emotionally charged beliefs about what is desirable or offensive, right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate.