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A Review of Research Methodologies and Methods Used In Recent Partnership Studies

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a review of empirical & theoretical methodologies used in recent partnership studies as collected from several different authors on partnerships. The paper describes in detail how each of the methods can be used in practice, when their usage is most appropriate, and identifies how to improve their application in partnerships research. The major findings include: most mixed - methods were entrenched in quantitative methodology such as semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document reviews; judges were employed frequently to assess partnership processes and correlational techniques were utilized most widely to analyze quantitative data; case study was the most frequently used qualitative methodology. Challenges commonly faced in quantitative research in partnerships studies include designing specification of the unit of analysis, sampling instrument design and administration, particularly in data analysis, which are addressed by employing a mixed - methods embedded in quantitative methodology. Implications of these findings are further discussed and future research directions are suggested.

Key Words: Partnership, Rural Development, Research,

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1. Introduction

Previous studies that have examined different partnership subjects have used a variety of research methodologies and methods**.** This review provides a profound insight to research methodologies that are employed to partnership subjects. In order to expand the sources under review, conference presentations, cited articles, unpublished papers, relevant policy documents and survey reports were also reviewed. Although the review doesn't encompass materials from discipline outside of partnerships field, the majority of the cited focus on collaborative work to achieve development. This review analyses literature on partnership aspects in general, with a view of increasing the understanding of particular relationship issues. Therefore, there are a few issues worth noting. First, this review focused on either the synthesis of the literature or academic paper abstracts. In the first instance, the review relying on literature was not well supported by empirical data. Secondly, although academic studies were good sources of empirical data, they were not representative of all types of publications in the partnership field. However,, his classification of the research methodologies appeared to be grounded in a mixture of research methodologies and substantives contents, hence resulting in some inconsistency Questions such as what specific methodologies and methods are distributed in partnership studies were not addressed. Thirdly, a mixed- methods research was not addressed in Knight, (1998) study. Instead Knight, used only qualitative methodologies while studying on the "*Perspectives on Partnerships: Social Partnerships approached from the relational perspective"* as an "inter-subjective world of culture, consciousness and purposive action, where relationships are organized through the ideas, values and interests of those producing human action and interaction". Equally a mixed-methods was not analyzed by Authors Denzin and Lincoln, (1994), and Author Silveman (1985), who also uses qualitative research, which they define as an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary field that cross-cuts the human, social and physical sciences. But as a quick growing mode of inquiry in social sciences, not considering this mixed-method fails to provide a complete picture of the development of partnership research. Thirdly, this review only examined research methodologies in partnership research. Yet they are not compared with those of another similar field.

The review examined the different research methodologies and methods used in recent partnership studies. The purpose of the review was primarily descriptive. It helps researchers of partnerships aspects to identify the latest trends of the development in partnership studies and further supports the findings generated from the previous literature reviews with the empirical data.

1.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

Although most studies were often categorized by methods (Foster & Meinhard, 2003; Fountain, 2002; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001; Mulroy, 2003), the analysis in this review is based on both research methodologies and methods. For this reason, it is necessary to make a distinction between the two concepts. Research methodologies denotes to 'the general logic and theoretical viewpoint 'Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 35) of a research, while methods denotes to specific strategies, procedures and techniques of analyzing and interpreting data (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2002).

There are three research methodologies that are generally accepted: quantitative, qualitative and mixed – methods (stake, 1995; Eilbert, 2003; Creswell, 2014). It should be noted however that each of these methods reveals a set of specifications of a conceptualization (ontological) and knowledge of understanding (epistemological) assumptions. For instance when carrying out a quantitative research, the investigators assume that reality of the phenomenon is not known to them and facts is objective and physical. In light of this, the investigators interpret their role as onlookers in the studies. On the other hand, in conducting qualitative research investigators assume that truth about the phenomenon exists independent of them and facts are more personal. In this case researchers interpret personal experiences in an exceptional social setting. Mixed methods investigators mostly employ both qualitative and quantitative methods (Baum, 1995; Greene, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzi and Turner, 2007).

The main rationale of research methodology is because it expresses philosophical expectations but also provides guidance in the selections of research methods used in a study. Scholars such as Van Maanen (1983) defines qualitative methodology as an array of interpretative techniques which seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. Yet, qualitative research according to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) argue that qualitative research is more phenomenological and inductive in nature. This means that it focuses on establishing an understanding from respondent's feedback, with the skills and experiences of the researcher playing a critical role, especially in data analysis (Creswell, 2003). The primary techniques categorised under qualitative research methods include interview, observations and other methods (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). The advantage of qualitative methods is that it provides a rich descriptive data that aids better understanding of any research problem for which more knowledge is still wanting. This is because it assists in gaining new viewpoints on problems about which little is yet known or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively (ibid). The qualitative research method on the other hand stresses the examination of compound situations which cannot always be easily quantified. This is a subjective approach to finding answers to research questions (Beedles, 2002). This approach furthermore can deliver the elaborate details of phenomena that are occasionally difficult to constitute and derive through quantitative methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The limitations of the qualitative research technique are that: the method is not a formal research approach to quantify data (Miles and Huberman, 1984); and requires rich and complex data, and it is often difficult to build a theory and theoretical description (Eisenhardt, 19890). As a result, generalization of the findings is the most problematic facet for this research approach (Beedles, 2002). On the other hand, quantitative method is conventionally grounded on the positivist approach to explore phenomena. This also motivates the deductive model which shows hypothesized associations. Sooper and Schinder (2001. p. 49) affirms that in respect to interpreting the causal hypothesis, 'the trend is evident from the nature of the variables. Quantitative approach is often characterized by the use of deductive form of logic wherein theories and hypothesizes are chosen before the study begins and remains fixed throughout the study (Creswell, 2003) The primary technique of employing the quantitative methodology is by the use of questionnaire surveys with worked out rules and procedures (Creswell, 2009). This study approach provides a solid answer to the research questions technically which is defined in an objective way and measured through statistical tools and techniques (Rosner, 1990). The quantitative approach also displays some intrinsic limitations. As the research approach is not designated to facts of single phenomena, this may not continually be vindicated in complex and more intricate observable situations. In addition, this research method limits the objectivists' approach and is not suitable for subjective experiments or information where statistical analysis is not essential for comprehensive discussion of the situation (Beedles, 2002). Moreover, this technique may not be beneficial to gather a historical process involving changes (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). As mixed methods of research combines both qualitative and quantitative methods, it has been preferred by many researchers. However, whether a study used qualitative, or quantitative, mixed methods of research is preferred for its breadth and depth in terms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, for broader understanding and corroboration (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, it is the methodology but not the methods that defines whether a study is qualitative, quantitative or of mixed methods. An example a researcher opts to use observation and process analysis to data collection. But is the researcher decide on the working

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definitions of the observed behaviors before carrying out a study and are only interested in the frequency of the observed behaviors, the differences between the two groups of respondents and the effect of one variable on another variables, this research is just an example of qualitative methodology.

Aside, research methods involve the actual process of carrying out research and the information generated by analyzing of the methods is important to understanding research in partnership aspects. In light of this the paper presents reviews research methods used in recent partnership studies.

THE THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS OF RESEARCH METHODS

This section presents a theoretical framing of discusses of a collection of interrelated research methods commonly used in partnership studies. It guides the research by providing a philosophical basis on which the studies in partnership related studies are conducted, and how it forms the link between the theory and their practical components during investigation. This theoretical framing therefore has implications for the decisions made in a research process (Martens, 1998). Below is a collection of the theoretical discussions, methods, and the epistemology underpinning researches in partnership studies, (Crotty, 1998).

Survey Research Method

The survey research method involves the use of standardized questionnaires or interviews as tools of data collection about participant's and their perception in a systematic way (…….).A questionnaire is a research tool consisting of a set of questions intended to capture responses from respondents in a standardized way. Questions may be structured or unstructured. Unstructured questions ask respondents to provide a respond in their own words, while structured questions ask respondents to select an answer from a given set of choices. For example Weiss, et al. (2002), in exploring "*The Relationship between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning*" and focusing on the characteristics of the partnership as a whole, data was collected using **Semi-Structured Qualitative Interviews.** Furthermore, semi-structured qualitative interviews instrument content according to Weiss, et al is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with people in partnerships. The use semi-structured interviews to provide questions prepared ahead of time. This prior preparation gives the researcher confidence during the interview. It also allows informants the freedom to express themselves freely in the best way they could. Conclusively, the semi-structured interview method is seen to provide more reliable and comparable qualitative data. Questions should be designed such that respondents are able to read, comprehend and respond to them in a meaningful manner. The survey research method can be used for descriptive, exploratory and explanatory studies. This means it is appropriate for studies that have individual participants as the unit of analysis such as employees, board members of partnerships are often used as key informants.

Weiss, et al. (2002), in exploring "*The Relationship between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning*" and focusing on the characteristics of the partnership as a whole, data was collected from multiple informants within each partnership. According to Weiss, et al. after a partner agrees to participate in a study, questionnaires are mailed with a personally addressed, hand-signed cover letter to all the active and knowledgeable partners in the partnership, as identified by the researcher. This helps to ease data analysis, as tabulation for nearly all surveys are easily done with many computer software packages. It also helps to reduce bias as the questionnaires provide uniform question presentation and researcher's own opinions would not influence the respondent to answer questions in a certain manner. Most of the questions are close-ended, with a few being open-ended. This gives respondents an opportunity to clarify their answers and provide additional information.

In an "*Examination of Factors That Influence the Motivation for Participation in a Collaborative Partnership*", Ivery, ((2004), begins by identifying the primary contact persons with whom the list of organizations that are recruited to participate in the study. He employs stratified sampling plan in the study and randomly gives the small size of the sampling frame. A concern on the potential high non-response rate among these organizations is raised, and the decision to include all partners in the sampling frame is made. After the sampling frame is defined, the pre-study data-gathering consists of informal conversations with partner organizations, and their staff, together with the collection of various secondary materials. A two-phase study is then selected in order to gain a full perspective on partnership. Furthermore, Mulroy, (2003) studying "*Community as a factor in Implementing Inter-organizational Partnerships: issues, constraints, and adaptations*" uses qualitative research. This type of research follows a constructivist tradition in which truth is not absolute but rather varies and arises from a consensus among stakeholders within a given historical and temporal context.

The strengths of survey research method include: 1) is appropriate for measuring a wide variety of unobservable data such as people perception. 2) Suited for remote data collection about a population that if too large to observe directly e.g for a region, where mail-in or electronic mail or telephone surveys using meticulous sampling can be used to ensure that population is adequately represented in the small sample. 3) it ability to for participants to respond at their convenience; 4) large sample surveys allow detection of small effect even while analysing multiple variables, and depending on the design, may also allow comparative analysis of the population sub groups. Last, it is economical in terms of resaehcers time, effort and cost. However, survey research method has also weaknesses such as: 1) it is subject to respondent bias if the questionnaire is not very clear on what is required, and non response bias, sampling bias; 2) May not be appropriate for certain demographic groups such as children, the illiterate

Questionnaire can be self-administered mail survey, where same questionnaire is mailed to a large number of participants and willing res[podents can complete and return in postage.

Interview Survey Research Method

Interview survey research method is a more personalized data collection and mainly conducted by trained interviewers using a research protocol e.g standard set of questions. The interview script contains special instructions for the interviewer that is not seen by respondents. For instance , Weiss, et al. (2002), in exploring "*The Relationship between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning*" and focusing on the characteristics of the partnership as a whole, data was collected using **In-depth Interviews** from multiple informants within each partnership.

Anderson (2005), studying "*Partnership between agribusiness and peasants: Its implication on Rural Development*" followed a qualitative account and synthesis from secondary data and field work in rural areas. Preliminary discussions are carried out prior to and during field work in order to select the villages, groups and individuals to be included in the study. The study uses observations, individual interviews and group discussions. Participatory research methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as in triangulation, observation, semi-structured interviews, ranking and scoring techniques, wealth ranking, etc) are used throughout the two-month study. Participatory methods used during field work facilitate communication between the researcher and local people, and amongst the local people themselves. These methods enhance the understanding and analysis of local situations, problems and possible opportunities (Pretty et al., 1995). According to Chambers (1993), PRA facilitates collection, presentation and analysis of information with the rural people.

According to Patton, 1987:108), and Yin 1994:84 utilise in-depth interviews. Patton, notes that in-depth interview is an important source of qualitative data. This is because it allows the researcher to enter into another person's world and understand the person's perspective from his/her own context.

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Furthermore, to Patton, such an in-depth interview serves as a source of meaning and elaboration of the partnership concept from different respondents. (Paton ibid and Yin 1994:84) asserts that interviews may take several forms. These include: informal conversational interviews, the general interview guide approach and the standard open-ended interviews. However, to them, the greatest weakness with the informal conversational interview is the great amount of time used to generate data in a more systematic form during the analysis stage. Also, time is spent on finding a pattern that emerges at different points in different interviews with different respondents. Nonetheless, the pattern which emerges to a great extent helps in revisiting the questions for the subsequent interviews. Strengths it: 1) may include space for the interviewer to record person observations and comments; 2) the interviewer had the opportunity to clarify any issue raised by the respondents or ask probing questions or follow up questions. Weakness is that 1) it is time consuming and resource intensive; 2) special interviewing skills are required for the interviewer.

A variation of the personal interview is the focus group discussion (FGDs), which is a technique where a small group of respondents (usually 6-10 respondents) are interviewed together in a common location. The interviewer is essentially a facilitator charged with the responsibility of leading the discussions and ensuring that every participant has an opportunity to respond. A cross-sectional survey and focus group design is used to collect observations on partners. The follow-up qualitative survey and focus groups (Rice and Ezzy 1999), is identified. The purpose is to clarify and provide a more in-depth discussion of issues identified in the one-on-one interviews. More specifically, the objective is to gather perceptions and challenges participants encounter in developing the partnership. The groups are also to give possible solutions with a view to examining how they fit with the proposed model, and explore alternative explanations where there is a mismatch. The quality and validity of the research are improved by bringing in these diverse views and local knowledge (Israel et al 1998; Krieger et al 2002).

Advantages of FDGs are that they 1) allow deeper examination of complex issues, because when people discuss different ideas. for instance, in a study on partnership, "*Engaging Communities: An evaluation of a community development model for tackling rural fuel poverty*", Rugkasa, Shortt, & Boydell, (2004), all members of the steering partnership were invited to take part in focus groups, and partner representatives were interviewed individually. **The f**ocus groups and interviews helped gain insights into people's shared understandings of partnership and community development. Topic guides were developed prior to the interviews and were based on a review of the project documentation. All interview questions were open-ended, allowing interviewees the time to introduce and elaborate and prioritize on the themes. These types of questions also allow lengthy discussions of key features of the process, rationale and strategy. In the paired and group interviews, respondents are able to react and build upon the responses of others, while at the same time exploring on the experiences of those who were taking part in the change process. According to Rugkasa, Shortt, & Boydellused, research methods correspond with the two strands of the evaluations; strand 1 explores the outcomes

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for householders, and strands 2 focuses on the project's process and delivery mechanisms. The 'impact and effectiveness' strand on the other hand helps to focus on the generation of partnership and wider outcomes for partnership role, and their impact on extended service provision. The process helps in evaluating partnership operations, funding, sustainability and management.Weakness, DFGs may be dominated by a dominant personality if not well managed; 2) others may be reluctant to voice their opinion in front of their peers or superiors especially for sensitive issues say incomes of people, office politics, etc

What to note while conducting interviews 1) interviewers should prepare a kit to carry to the interview session, consisting of a c cover letter from principal researcher, adequate copies of the survey tool, photos identification, and telephone number for respondents to call to verify the interviewer's authenticity. During the interview the interviewer should follow the questionnaire scripts and ask questions exactly as written

The Case Study Research Method

The case research also called case study, is a method of exhaustively studying a phenomenon over time within its natural situation in one or few sites. Several methods of data collection may be used including interviews, observations, etc. The case study research method is defined by Yin (2014, p.10), as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. GAO (1990), defined a case study as "a method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance, obtained by extensive description and analysis of that instance, taken as a whole and in its context. According to Denzin and Lincoln, (1994), the case represents an integrated system of patterned behavior. However, (Yin, 1993, p.9) alludes to the fact that the selection of these cases to be studied is often the difficult step in a case study research. In relation to this Creswell (1998) suggests that case studies can be developed from three different theoretical perspectives; that is, no use of existing theory; use of a theory to develop the analytical framework; and use of a theory after evidence is collected to explain a phenomenon. Gillham (2001) in addition argues that a case study should have "a case" which is the object of the research. The case study relate with other research methods because it is a methodology where different methods are combined with help in illuminating a case from different angles: to triangulate by combining methodologies. May studies that have examined different aspects of partnerships such as George, and Bennet, 2004; Flyybierg, 2006; and Eisenhardt, Graebner, 2007have used case studies.

For example Eilbert (2003) used exploratory case studies, which involve making site visits to two identified community health partnerships. Preliminary telephone discussions with people at the case sites identified by experts in the case site selection; visits to each site to attend where possible, meetings and carried out interviews with participants. The case study approach helped to inform sound generalization of findings. For instance, according Eilbert, the findings from the case partnerships were used to underpin the work of other similar partnerships which demonstrated that imbalances of power and control between partners affect efforts for strengthening partnerships for health promotion activity. In researching on "*Local Partnerships in Ireland*", Turok, (2000), examines four case studies to gain more detailed insights into the partnership process. The case study examples are broadly representative of the total population management of partnerships, including one rural and three urban. The study also uses interviews and evidence obtained during the study. Turok examines the operations and effectiveness of local partnerships in Ireland, together with their achievements.

In studying "*Business Non-profit Partnerships as Learning Arenas: More than just transactions*?" Roscher (2009), uses case study methodology. Roscher (2009), used the case study methodology where investigation was conducted in a rather post positivist tradition, starting from what was empirically available. Roscher views collaboration in the light of the interactions taking place and as a rather open, very individual process (constructivist approach) with a strong emphasis on the outcomes (pragmatist view). Therefore, the investigation was conducted in the frame of several case studies however, comparability was very limited. Roscher employed the case identification approach because of the great variety of cases in cross-sector partnerships as seen in social organizations and businesses. Three cases were chosen on the basis of variety of criteria, of: sufficiently mature partnerships (so the structures are already set up); one with a strategic importance to the partnering organizations; and those whose ties quality is at arm's length vs. embedded ties.

Furthermore, Walsh (2004), while researching on "*Partnerships for effective* *development: Partnership Theory and Practice*" employs case study approach to illustrate the factors that contribute to successful partnerships for local development. Walsh uses seven case studies; three of them were handled by one partner and the rest (four) by another partner. Each case study however, sought to outline how the local partnerships were established, what contributed to their success, what worked well and what were the lessons leant, and the barriers to effectiveness. To address these questions, Walsh developed a template for each study which helped to collect information from primary and secondary sources on the background context to formation of the partnerships, membership of the partnership, operating procedures, results achieved and replicable lessons. He also borrowed from the systems theory to explore the issues of partnerships to improve the health of the community. A case study methodology is therefore, well suited for the study of partnership, given that it too, is a system of patterned behavior, influenced by its environment. As an open system that influences and is influenced by its environment, the partnership is indistinguishable from its context, where explanatory variables can be found.

Further Knight, 1998, argue that case studies are used as instructive research methods in instances where, research is exploratory in nature and the phenomenon under study is complex. The aim is to build/generate theory, as it helps to draw out new insights on phenomena, which would significantly enhance existing knowledge on a topic. The key strength of case study research is that it paves way for a holistic view of a specific process and/or phenomenon. The case studies in my study on "Partnership between NGOs and Smallholder Farmer Groups:

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Implications for Rural Development in Uganda" presented the meanings of partnership by their members, as depicted by the researcher (Nalere, 2015). Case studies are good in guiding the development of analytic and problem solving skills, allows for exploration of solutions for complex issues, and allows applying new knowledge and skills. Case studies, were designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data Thus selection of cases was done so as to maximize what can be learned in the period of time available for the study, thus the unit of analysis was a critical factor in the case study. Case studies tended to be selective, focusing on one or two issues that are fundamental to understanding the partnership system being examined. On the contrary, case study may provide insufficient information that can lead to inappropriate results, thus should be used with caution.

In general, some of the unique strength of case research method use in partnership related studies includes 1) it uses either in a positivist way for the purpose of theory testing or in an interpretive way for theory building. 2) it allows modification of the research questions during the research process, should the original questions come out not to be relevant/ silent; 3) it helps derive wealthier and more contextualized and more authentic interpretation of partnership aspects, given its ability to capture a rich array of contextual data. 4) partnership aspects can be studied from the perspective of multiple participants and using multiple levels of analysis (e.g individual and partnership as a whole). Notwithstanding the above strengths, case research method has some limitations. Frist, because it involves not experimental control, internal validity of inferences remains weak. Nonetheless, this problem of controls may be addresses in case research using "natural controls". Secondly, the quality of inferences resulting from case research hinges on profoundly on the integrative powers of the researcher. For example an experienced researcher may see concepts and patterns in case data than a novice researcher. In this case the findings may be criticized as being subjective. Lastly, the fact that the inference is deeply contextualized, it may be difficult to generalize inferences from case research to other context or other organizations.

When using case research method in studying partnership aspects, there are some key decisions the researcher needs to consider. First, ensure that it is the right method for the research questions being studied. For example case research method is particularly relevant for : exploratory studies for discovering relevant constructs in areas where theory building is at the formative level, for studies where experiences of participants and context of actions are important, and for studies aimed at understanding complex, temporal processes aspect on partnerships; for studying partnership processes that involve multiple participants and interacting sequences of events, such as partnership change, etc. second, knowing the appropriate unit of analysis. Whether the researcher wishes to study an aspect at individual or group or partnership or multiple levels. Thirdly, knowing the design to use - whether a single or multiple case design. For instance, a single design is more appropriate at the outset of theory generation, but a multiple design more useful for theory testing in order to establish generalization of inferences.

Literature Review

A literature is a “critical analysis of a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification and comparison of prior research studies (Boote and Beile, 2005). Boote and Beile, further argue that a literature reviw is an evaluation of report of studies found in the literature related to a selected area. The relevancy of the literature is to provide a context of the research, justify the study, ensure the research has not been done before; shows where the research fits into the existing body of knowledge; highlights, the flaws in previous work; and help refine, refocus the research topic.

In researching on “*Local Partnerships in Ireland*”, Turok, (2000), examines four case studies to gain more detailed insights into the partnership process. He further draws on previous reports and papers, interviews and evidences assembled during a study visits. Turok presents the results of survey research which compares the different types of Irish partnerships in terms of their origins, growth, activities and impacts, and assesses the Irish Partnership experience within the context of research in seven other EU countries. Such a comparative approach provides insights which assume particular interest at a time when the Irish Government adopts new initiatives to promote greater co-ordination of partnership activities at a county level.

the review can be desk Research such used In a research paper presented at the 57th Annual United Nations Department of Public Information/NGO Conference in New York; “*Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action”, New*

York, on "North/South Partnerships: Different responsibilities and Opportunities – The role of NGOs in Meeting the MDGs" Kalima, (2004) uses desk research approach to describe the numerous types of partnerships at the regional, international and global levels: South –South, North–North, and South–North partnerships. According to Kalima (2004), this eases and quickens field research (primary research). According to Kent (1993), desk research involves gathering data that already exists either from internal database, publications of both governmental and non-governmental institutions, professional local and national newspapers and magazines, or commercial databases. Desk research advantages include both being cheap and time effective. Carrying out an initial desk research is strongly recommended to gain background knowledge for primary research and/ or providing an alternative for doing primary research.

Roscher, (2009) in studying the Business Non-profit Partnerships as Learning Arenas: More than just transactions (Roscher, 2009) 1.2.13.2 Analysis of Documents In order to gather as most data as possible, various means are used: analysis of documents directly relates to partnerships; as well as documents that may express changes within the organizations and their strategies based on partnership activities, e.g. mission statements or similar documents. The press and other media documentation are used. All partners and other participants joins the management in the semi-structured interviews.

Researching on "Effectiveness of Alliance and Partnerships for Health Promotion", Gillies (1997), adopts the reviewing of evidence approach which takes two forms:

a) Published literature review, b) health expert opinion, and c) case study. There are two types of literature, the published and unpublished. Therefore, the Published Literature Review involves using the search strategy of particular partnerships. According to Gillies, this approach provides original sources of data which were abstracted for analysis presented in Roe et al. 1997. According to Gillies, each of those regions contributed up to five current best practices on partnerships for health promotion. Gillies, (1997), further uses randomized controlled trials approaches in the literature review.

Equally, Weiss, et al. (2002), in exploring "*The Relationship between Partnership Synergy and Partnership Functioning*" and focusing on the characteristics of the partnership as a whole, data was collected from multiple informants within each partnership. Weiss, et al. (2002), also reviews the existing literature and instruments that have been used in partnership research and evaluations, so as to establish any existing research related to this study. This includes getting familiar with the historical and seminal theories and research studies, as well as the most recent cutting-edge studies. The review of the existing literature brings forth new ideas, while at the same time enhances the credibility of both the study and the researcher.

For Hartwich, et al. (2007), researching on the "*Building Public-Private Partnerships for Agricultural Innovation in Latin America: Lessons from Capacity Strengthening*" applies several sources of information such as in-depth interviews, focus groups done with partners and relevant literature review.Hartwich include review of a number of policy documents, project documents and the academic literatures. These helps to verify, disprove, or make known conclusions reached on partnerships using focus groups and in-depth interview approaches. The use of e*xtensive and relevant literature review* was an attempt to summarize or comment on what is already known about partnerships for rural development. By collecting different sources, synthesizing and analyzing them critically, essentially create new knowledge and perspectives. Literature review helps the verification of findings in comparison with others (Manamela, 1993:43).

Finally, Mattessiech & Monsey, (1992) studying "*Collaboration in Health, Social Science, Education and Public Affairs",* reviews the research literature on Collaboration in Health, Social Science, Education and Public Affairs. They identify a total of 19 factor terms, as characteristics from 133 studies examined. Some of them include: 1) Environmental characteristics (history of collaboration or cooperation in the community; partnership entity seen as a leader in the community; and political/ social climate is favorable); 2) Membership characteristics (mutual respect, understanding and trust among the members; appropriate cross-section of members; members sees collaboration as in their self-interest; ability to compromise; 3) Process / structure characteristic (members share a stake in both process and outcome; multiple layers of decision –making; flexibility, clear roles and policy guidelines developed; and adaptability). Others include 4) Communication characteristics (open and frequent communication; establishing informal and formal communication links); 5) Purpose characteristics (concrete, attainable goals and objectives; shared vision; and unique purpose); 6) Resources characteristics (sufficient funds; and a skilled convener). These six (6) characteristics, gives 19 factors, which provide the first synthesis of the critical factors that are crucial in successful partnerships.

A Summary of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Various Data Collections tools

In order to ensure construct validity, the requirement for multiple data collection methods is already observed. The use of empirically validated instruments adds immeasurably to the vigour of the research. The use of rigorous qualitative research methods can enhance the quality of findings (Nicholas and Pope, 1995) as well as quality improvement efforts. The section below describes the strengths and weaknesses of the four crucial qualitative research methods (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a great way to get input, feedback and dialogue with the potential consumer/audience (Webb, 2002). The focus group interviews taps into human inclinations. Attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts, products or services are developed in part by collaboration with other people (Asbury 1995, p. 414). With this method, a small number of subjects are brought together to discuss the topic of interest. One of its advantages is that, members do not feel intimidated, but rather express opinions freely. It is also easy to manage as its size is kept deliberately small. Webb, further says that to aid the discussion, a topic guide is prepared beforehand and the discussion is led by the researcher, to ensure that a range of aspects of the topic are explored. The discussion is often taperecorded, then transcribed and analyzed. The idea behind the focus group method is that the group processes helps participants to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview When group dynamics work well the participants tend to work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions.

Drawing attention to the diversity of uses of the term focus groups, Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) initially defines them as “group discussions exploring a specific set of issues' that are `focused' because the process involves `some kind of collective activity'. The focus groups are quick, cheap and relatively easy to assemble. It is good for getting rich data in participants' own words and developing deeper insights. Members are able to build on others' responses and come up with ideas they might not have thought of in a one on one interview. It should be noted however, that the focus groups can be expensive and time consuming, since one has to coordinate the members through a productive discussion. It’s easy to also get wrapped up in the focus group feedback as well.

Direct Observation

According to Johnson and Webb (1995), observation is used to gather evidence about how value judgments made by research participants can impact on decision making. Direct observation aims at having the researcher become immersed in or part of the population being studied. This is in order to develop a detailed understanding of the values and beliefs held by members of the population regarding the research topic. Occasionally, a list of observations that is required for research is prepared beforehand, other times, an observer makes notes about anything they observe for a later analysis. There are two types of observation methods: non-participant observation, and participant observation. The observation method of research is basically developed for observing people in their natural setting. It focuses more on their everyday normal life. This method helps in overcoming challenges on validity and bias. However, it is not appropriate if past events are being studied, since it may be difficult to frequently measure attitudes or opinions; yet selecting an appropriate sample may be tricky.

In-Depth Interviews

Frederikson, et al. (1996), in a study to explore family functioning and interpersonal relationships, used unstructured interviewing as a method of qualitative research, for lack of adequate theory and definitions. Interviews in qualitative research help probing of issues in detail, as they seldom involve asking a set of predetermined questions (Patton, 1987). The advantages are that in-depth interviews encourage subjects to express their views at length. Whereas, this also helps in obtaining more detailed information on the topic of study, it loses the richness that can arise in a group where issues and views are exchanged through a debate.

Surveys

Surveys are of two broad categories: the questionnaire and the interview. Questionnaires are usually paper-and-pencil questions that the respondent answers (Glasow, 2005). Interviews are administered by the interviewer, with answers recorded based on what the respondent says. Questionnaires can be mail survey, which are relatively inexpensive to administer and allow the respondent to fill it out at their own convenience. However, it is known that the response rates from mail surveys are often very low. In the personal interview, the interviewer works directly with the respondent. This gives the interviewer the opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions. However, the interviews can be very time-consuming and they are resource intensive.

Further methods used in qualitative research in partnership studies

***a) Expert Opinion*:** Helmer, (1983), argues that eliciting consensus from within a group of experts is more reliable than other methods of using panel decision making. The major advantage of this method is that it is a simple technique to use and the consensus will emerge with one representative opinion from the experts. Since this method provides confidentiality, many barriers to communication are overcome, such as reluctance to state unpopular view, to disagree with one's associates, or to modify previously stated positions (Barnes, 1987). It however has some limitations such as the consensus reached may not be a true consensus; it may be a product of specious or manipulated consensus. A specious consensus does not contain the best judgment.

b) Informal Conversation: This involves observing the participant’s view point through a natural interaction relying on the spontaneous generation of questions. This method doesn’t rely on any predetermined set of structured questions to ask participants but only relies on the interaction in order to guide the process of interview (McNamara, 2008). The merits for this method are that it allows some flexibility (Gall, Gall & Borg,

2003) in Turner, (2010). Also being able to interact with participants in an informal environment, the researcher is best placed to ask follow-up and probing questions, based on participants' response. Hence, it could give a more personal approach to the interview. Despite these merits, this approach can be quite unstable or unreliable as the interview is quite inconsistent, making it complicated to code the data (Creswell, 2007). Besides, the interviewer may receive consistent answers from the respondents (McNamara, 2008) in Turner, (2010).

c) Review of documents: This is a rich and valuable data collection method in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). It is used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. In instances where documentary evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory, the researcher employs other methods such as interviews to verify the evidences. This however, is an exceptional rather than a rule.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the review of research methodologies and methods used in recent partnership studies indicated that researcher on partnerships have been keeping pace with recent developments of research methodologies in social sciences. For example the call to use advanced statistical techniques and sophisticated statistical methods such as correlation, and multilevel modeling as used by Creswell, (2009) and Beedles, (2002). As discussed above, research methodologies reflect truth in different partnership aspects. The perception shown in qualitative or mixed – methods research could not be revealed by quantitative methodologies. Although partnership related research is in a great need of methodological diversity, it also needs methodological rigor or rather more discussion of methodological issues. For example Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) claimed that their study was qualitative just because they used methods such as interviews. However, yet according to Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) when a study fails to make sense of the phenomenon in terms of meanings people bring to them, then it does not qualify to be qualitative in nature. Since most mixed- method research relied on questionnaires or surveys through which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, thus making them skewed towards quantitative methodologies. In addition, the needs of methodological diversity and rigor, researchers on partnership aspects also need to combine diverse research efforts together so that converging evidence of partnerships is accumulated.

The review of research methodologies and methods used in recent partnership studies also identified some areas that require further research such as:1) the need to review the interactions among research methodologies; 2) questions such as what specific methodologies and methods are distributed in partnership related studies was not addressed; 3) comparison between partnership research and other fields in social sciences will also require further research.

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10. **A TABLE SUMMARY OF THEORIES & METHODOLOGIES USED IN RECENT PARTNERSHIP STUDIES**

AUTHORS & YEAR	RESEARCH TITLE and Theoretical framework used	METHODOLOGY USED	OBJECTIVE OF METHODOLOGY USED
Key W. Eilbert, (2003)	A community Health Partnership Model: Using Organizational Theory to Strengthen Collaborative Public Health Practice.	Exploratory Case Studies Mixed qualitative method (semi-structured interview, focus group, documentary review) System Theory	Exploratory Case studies helped in developing analytic and problem solving skills; allowed for exploration of solutions for complex issues, and also allowed the application of new knowledge and skills. Mixed methods provided the opportunity for synthesizing of research traditions and gave the investigator additional perspectives and insights that are beyond the scope of any single technique. The results transcended the individual methods and disciplines. Utilize systems theory to determine a separate process is set up to develop the partnership model that shows that inputs are required for partnership development activities.
Pamela Gillies, (1998)	Effectiveness of Alliance and Partnerships for Health Promotion.	Reviewing the evidence adopted two approaches: literature published, and health expert identified current best practice. Case study accounts	Reviewing the evidence provided an understanding of the broad context of the topic of study and helped to avoid the duplication of existing research. The use of expert opinion not only provided inference on the research problems, but also informed the model and the potential pitfalls that could result, especially in data-limited situations. Therefore, experts provided a valuable source of information that offered useful insights into the study. Case study provided a background for understanding current knowledge on the study topic and illuminated the significance for the new study

Hartwich, et al. (2007)	Building Public–Private Partnerships for Agricultural Innovation in Latin America: Lessons from Capacity Strengthening.	In-depth interviews and focus groups Literature review of a number of policy documents, project documents and the academic literature.	The in-depth interviews and focus groups helped to verify, disprove, or make known conclusions reached on partnerships; Literature review attempted to summarize what is already known about the study.
Kalima, B. (2004)	North/South Partnerships: Different Responsibilities and Opportunities – The role of NGOs in Meeting the MDGs	Desk Research	Desk research provided the background knowledge for primary research. It also served as an alternative for doing primary research.
Walsh, J. (2004)	Partnerships for effective development: Partnership Theory and Practice	Case study (a template for each study)	Case study helped to scale down to researchable units on the topic. The template for each study helped to collect information from primary and secondary sources on the background context.
Andersson, R. D. (2005)	Partnership between Agribusiness and Peasants: Its implication on Rural Development. The case of TIKO in the Vakinankaratra region of Madagascar	Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools such as Triangulation, Observation, Semi-structured interviews, Ranking and scoring techniques, Wealth ranking, etc)	PRA tools facilitated communication between the researcher and local people, and amongst local people themselves. It also enhanced the understanding and analysis of local situations, problems and possible opportunities as it pertained to the study.
Rugkasa, Shortt, & Boydell, (2004)	Engaging Communities: An evaluation of a community development model for tackling rural fuel poverty	Focus groups (FGs), Interview guides	FGs facilitated lengthy discussions to gain insights into people's shared understandings of partnership and community development; Open-ended questions of the interview guides allowed the interviewees to introduce and elaborate on themes that they considered being important.

		Review of the project documentation	The review documents helped to clarify the research question and also aligned the focus of large scale primary research.
Weiss et al. (2002)	The relationship between partnership synergy and partnership functioning.	Multiple informants Questionnaires Semi-structured qualitative interviews and Review of the existing literature	Multiple informants allowed for greater validity and greater reliability that came from having more information rather than less information about the study. Questionnaires eased data analysis since data entry and tabulation for nearly all surveys were easily done with a computer software package. Questionnaires also helped to reduce bias as they provided uniform question presentation and researcher's own opinions would not influence the respondent to answer questions in a certain manner Semi-structured qualitative interviews provided more reliable, comparable qualitative data, while review of the existing literature enhanced the credibility of the study and the researcher.
Ivery, M. J. (2004).	Interorganizational Collaboration: An Examination of Factors That Influence the Motivation for Participation in a Collaborative Partnership of Homeless Service Providers.	Pre-study (data gathering consisted of informal conversation, focus groups) and the main study approach. Collection of various secondary materials included from journal articles, case reports, legal dictionaries and textbooks allowed. A cross-sectional survey	Pre-study attempted to clarify and provide a more in-depth discussion of issues identified in the one-on-one interviews. It also helped to sharpen the definition of research problem and informed the main study. The main study presented the broader picture on the research topic. Collection of various secondary materials helped to compare with primary data - to see the validity and reliability of primary data. A cross-sectional survey helped in gathering participant perceptions of the problems encountered in developing partnership and solutions attempted.

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Mulroy, E. A. (2003)	Community as a Factor in Implementing Interorganizational Partnerships: Issues, constraints, and adaptations	Qualitative studies typically included interviews and observations as well as case studies, surveys, and historical and document analyses.	The qualitative studies investigations helped in capturing in-depth the motivations, perception of the selected groups towards the different issues of the study on partnerships, by listening and analysing their way of expressing themselves in discussion groups or with non-directive interviews.
Mattessiech & Monsey (1992)	Collaboration in Health, social Science, education and Public affairs	Review of the research literature	Review of the research literature, helped to show the originality and relevance of research problem. It also provided justifications of the methodology used in the study.
Roscher, H (2009).	Business Non-profit Partnerships as Learning Arenas: More than just transactions?	Case studies Analysis of documents Press and other media documentation Semi-structured) interviews	The case study research design helped in focus on specific and interesting cases that are relevant to the study. It as a method helped to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic Analysis of documents helped to minimize time and costs. It also served as a stand-alone data collection procedure or as a precursor to collecting new data using other methodologies. Also press and other media documentation were used because they are easy to come by everywhere as many people use media. Semi-structured interviews with participating persons helped researcher to gain rapport and participants' trust, as well as a deeper understanding of responses.
Knight, H (1998)	Exploring the Fourth Sector Investigating Multi-stakeholder Cross-Sector Social Partnerships in Societal Arts Marketing	Qualitative methodologies Case studies	Qualitative methodologies were used as they were seen to be able to accommodate and actually embrace the complexity, irrationality, irregularity and subjectivity of the nature of humans, their values and social mores. The case studies helped to build/generate theory, as it helped to draw

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			out new insights on phenomena, which significantly enhanced existing knowledge on a topic. This is because provided a holistic view of a specific process/phenomenon.
Turok, (2000)	Local Partnerships In Ireland	case studies Comparative approach	Case studies to gain more detailed insights into the partnership process. The case examples were broadly representative of the total population of partnerships, including one rural (Oak) and three urban A comparative approach provided insights which assumed particular interest at a time when the adopted new initiatives to promote greater co-ordination of partnership activities at a county level were being done.

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