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| **CHAPTER THREE :** **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**  **3.1** **Introduction**  **The previous chapter provided a critical review of the literature relevant to this study. The chapter established what has been researched and published around the subject and thereby shedding light on and validating issues to be investigated in this dissertation.** Create a link between LR and M  This chapter endeavours to explain and justify the selection of the research methods in order to address the research objectives identified in chapter one of this dissertation which are:   1. To critically review the literature on management of change in organisations. 2. To critically review managing the process of change in curriculum in general and CfE in particular 3. To investigate teachers’ perspectives on management of the process of change to CfE using Lenzie Academy as a case study. 4. Suggest recommendations on best approach for managing the process of change for CfE in Scotland.   In this chapter, the research strategy employed in the study is first laid out clearly validating it selection. Sampling and data collection techniques together with the framework of data analysis are then identified, discussed and validated. The chapter concludes by identifying potential research limitations and ethical issues.   * 1. **Philosophy and Approach**   Altinay and Paraskevas (2008:69-70) assert that positivism and phenomenology (or interpretivism) are the two main research philosophies. They highlight that “positivism promotes a more objective interpretation of reality, using hard data from surveys and experiments while phenomenology (interpretivism) is concerned with methods”. Moreover, phenomenology seeks to facilitate an understanding of how we view and make sense of our world and the environment around us (Saunders et al., 2012). Bell and Bryman (2011:18) assert that with phenomenology, “the researcher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of the world”. With this philosophical stance (phenomenology), the researcher is confronted with the challenge of adopting an “empathetic stance” by diving into the social world of the “research subjects and understand their world from their point of view” (Saunders et al., 2012:137). This study therefore adopts this philosophical approach with the aim of entering the social world of the teachers in a bid to understand their perspectives on how the process of change towards CfE has been managed.  Further to the philosophical position guiding the research process, researchers identify two main paradigms that are of paramount significance: deductive and inductive approaches (Wilson, 2010). Wilson (2010) asserts that deductive approach involves development of theory which is then subjected to further testing through numerous propositions. Theinductive approach on the other hand starts with collection of data and works through data analysis from which a broader generalisation and theory is formulated. This study aims at arriving at a generalisation regarding teachers’ perspectives on the management of the process of change towards CfE in Scotland and the inductive approach stands to be the appropriate research paradigm.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Research Philosophy | Phenomenology (or Interpretivism) | | Research Approach | Induction | | Methodological Choice | Mono method - Qualitative | | Research Strategy | Case Study | | Time Horizon | Cross-sectional | | Data Collection Methods | Semi-structured interviews and questionnaire | | Data Analysis Techniques | Comparative Analysis |   **Table 2:** *Summary of Research Process*  **Research Strategy**  As stated in chapter one, the overall aim of this research is to investigate teachers’ perspectives on the management of the process of change toward CfE in Scottish schools. Specifically, the main focus is geared towards gaining a better understanding of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs regarding the process of change towards CfE which is at its epic stage of implementation. To get a deep and thorough understanding of this research subject, a case study approach was used. Yin (2014:16) defines case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in-depth and within real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident”. Silverman (2010) argues that when using a case study, a researcher is able to undertake an in-depth and thorough investigation to gain a good understanding of the research topic.  Furthermore, both Yin (2014:11) and Saunders et al (2012:179) highlight the significance of Case Studies by asserting that they yield answers to the “why”, “what” and “how” questions that would justify conducting a case study. It is evident that this study seeks an understanding of a current phenomenon – investigating teachers’ perspectives on management of the process of change towards CfE – and therefore appropriate for using a case study to conduct the research.    It is worth noting that the **case study approach** to this research has been decided upon due to the constraints of time and budget. Neuman (2005, in Saunders et al., 2012) refers to this approach as **purposive sampling** commonly used when handling smaller samples like in case study research. Sampling is of great significance in research. Bell and Bryman (2011:718) assert that a sample is “a segment of the population that is selected for investigating … it is a subset of the population”. Sampling provides a better alternative to performing a survey of the whole population due to constraints of time and budget on the part of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2012). **One of the drawbacks** of such sampling is that the findings cannot be generalised for not being statistically representative. The findings, however, will provide a snapshot of a clear understanding of the research subject. Merriam (2009) highlights that snapshot provides insights and brightens meanings which increase the experiences of readers. She further argues that such insights can be treated as tentative hypotheses that are useful for structuring future research and also in advancing the knowledge base of a particular field.  In order to address the overall aim of this research, Lenzie academy has been selected as a case study based on firstly its outstanding performance[[1]](#footnote-1) at both standard grade and higher/advanced higher levels examinations. The choice of Lenzie academy is also based on the researcher’s regular engagement with the school for the past 10 years as a parent[[2]](#footnote-2) whose two children attended the school and one is in her 4th year.   * 1. **Data Collection Methods**   This research employed two different types of tools for collecting data: Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Brewerton and Millward (2001) highlight that when using an inductive research approach like the one adopted in this study, semi-structured interviews also referred to as in-depth interviews by Saunders et al (2012) are the most appropriate tools to use. They further argue that analyses of data collected using semi-structured interviews are easier to perform compared to the unstructured, ones where interviewees are totally free to express their opinions and perspectives on the research subject. McNeil and Chapman (2005) argue that this instrument helps the researcher to obtain in-depth information in a flexible and fluid manner.  To minimise biases from interviewees’ responses, the head teacher was excluded from the random sample of interviewees given he is manager in the school. Saunders et al (2012) argue that avoiding interviewing top managers helps a researcher get insights into attitudes, perceptions and perspectives of employees on what actually is happening in an organisation instead of the all good news responses syndrome.    Questionnaire was another research instrument that was used for the collection of primary data. Saunders et al (2012:416) define questionnaires as a method of data collection where “each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order”. Questionnaires were distributed by the school to all the teachers across the entire 19 subject – departments (at least one teacher from each department) who volunteered to take part in the study. The questions were objective and also exhaustive enough to gather responses[[3]](#footnote-3) that would enable the researcher to attempt to answer the research questions and thereby meet the objectives of the study.   * 1. **Data Analysis Techniques**   Both semi-structured interviews (see appendix 5) and questionnaires (see appendix 6) were employed in the collection of qualitative primary data for this study. The questionnaires were administered to all teachers from the school who volunteered to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three volunteer principal teachers from the school. Prior consent was sought from all volunteer interviewees and questionnaire respondents to include their responses in the study. For the semi-structured interviews, the volunteer teachers were made aware that the interviews wuld be audio-recorded – this being a generally accepted and good practice and procedure for interviews in qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2012).  When the empirical data was collected it was properly presented described before undertaking the analysis. A comparative approach was employed adopting the Richie and Spencer method (2002) as follows:  Thematic categories were identified from the questionnaire and interviews (after interviews were transcribed and coded). Questionnaire findings were then compared against each other and then compared to interview responses and finally compared against the literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this dissertation where possible. In the same manner, the interview responses were compared against each other, then against questionnaire results and literature to establish if there is any corroboration or not. This analytical framework is shown in a schematic diagram in figure 3 below.    **Figure 3:** *Analytical Framework for Data*  Lacey and Luff (2001) contend that, comparative analysis works best when adapted to research which has among other things specific questions, pre-designed sample and time constraint. **These considerations fit this study and hence the adaption** of the analytical framework.   * 1. **Research Limitations and Ethics**   This research has limitations and ethical concerns. For a case study, one of the main limitations is that findings cannot be generalised since the case is not statistically representative (**Yin, 2014; Brewerton and Millward, 2001**). But the benefits of snapshot include insightfulness and illumination of meanings that widens readers’ experiences; and its usefulness in structuring of future research (Merriam, 2009). The collection, transcription and analysis of qualitative data can be time-consuming while at the same time unable to warrant validity and reliability (Saunders at al., 2012). Political sensitivity of the research topic may have impacted getting consent and free access into the school and also for the teachers to consent volunteering to take part in the study. This however, was offset by the researcher’s assurance of confidentiality and anonymity to the respondents. In order to conform to research ethics code of conduct, consent was sought for all participants in this research. Participants were provided with consent forms (see appendices 3 and 4 ) clearly explaining purpose of the research, the right they have to withdraw from the study at any time and that UK Data Protection Act 1998 were adhered to during and after the completion of the research (see Table 4, p:54).   * 1. **Summary**   The selected research methods and analytical techniques employed were to address the research questions formulated in section 1.2 of chapter one and gain their in-depth understanding. The analytical framework adopted shed light on the perspectives of teachers on how the process of change towards Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has been managed. The results thereof offer insights that could be useful as prospective hypotheses for future nationwide research on the subject.  Overall, the chapter has addressed in details the research strategy approaches employed in this study and pointed out the potential limitation and ethical issues. The next chapter presents research findings and discussion. | **As highlighted throughout, this writer strikes a clear balance between explaining how they undertook the research and justifying why they did so** |

1. In 2010 and 2011 for example, out of 372 and 367 schools respectively, Lenzie academy ranked among the top 50 (The Scottish Government (2011); The Herald Scotland, 2010 and 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For the past 10 years the researcher has regularly attended parents’ evenings and other social and/ or academic events at the school allowing her to get to know the school and the teachers better. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The researcher will enclose with the questionnaire, a self-addressed envelope with appropriate stamp on it and request that respondent to mail them back as soon as they finish. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)