Impact Assessment : Study on Qualitative and Mixed Method Approaches

Paul Shaffer

Dept. of International Development Studies
Trent University, Canada

ILO STRENGTHEN Workshop

Outline

1. **Definitions and Scope**

2. **Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method (Q&MM) Approaches**
   i. Incorporating Locally Meaningful Impact Measures and Weights
   ii. Providing Estimates of the Magnitude of Impact
   iii. Incorporating and Unpacking Causal Mechanisms
   iv. Informing Model Specification

3. **Concluding Remarks**

1. Definitions & Scope

• Qual/quant distinction is problematic & hard to sustain

• The actual Q&MM methods reviewed in the paper include:

> participant observation/ethnographies;
> focus group discussions,
> semi-structured interviews
> Self-reports of impact
> Counterfactual thought experiments
> Causal maps
> Life histories
> Etc.

• Some of the examples do not focus specifically on trade or employment BUT the methods do generalize with suitable modifications (for the most part)

• Focus is on micro-level studies ... much more difficult to used mixed method studies with models at higher levels of aggregation or generality (e.g. CGE modelling)

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

1. **Incorporating Locally Meaningful Impact Measures and Weights**

2. **Providing Estimates on the Magnitude of Impact**

3. **Incorporating and Unpacking Causal Mechanisms**

4. **Informing Model Specification**

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.1 Incorporating Locally Meaningful Impact Indicators and Weights

Two Issues:

1. **Determining the Impact Measure and Assessing Trade-offs**

2. **Determining the Relative Importance (Weights) of Different Measures**
   - PRA Ranking Exercises
   - Questionnaires (Ranking Scales)

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.1 Incorporating Locally Meaningful Impact Indicators and Weights

**Example - Determining the Impact Measure and Assessing Trade-offs
        Studies of 'Lived Impact' of Trade Policy Reform**

- Blim's (2006) study of experience of female workers in export processing zones (EPZs) in Mauritius
- Combined econometric analysis of determinants of labour supply with semi-structured interviews on working and living conditions.
- A key tradeoff was between increased income earned at the expense of time to care for children and relatives

- Hancock's (2006) study of female factory workers in EPZs in Sri Lanka.
- Combined fixed-response questionnaire with focus groups and semi-structured interviews.
- Key tradeoff were between increased income on the one hand, and increased health hazards (dust, gases and chemicals), deteriorating health (pain, illness, depression) and social stigma ('society has a very bad perception of women factory workers … people disrespect us').

- Both studies point to the importance of, and tradeoff between, multiple dimensions of decent work including: employment opportunities vs safe work, fair treatment, decent hours, etc.

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2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.2 Providing Estimates of the Magnitude of Impact

Two approaches:

1. Self Reports - What was the impact of x on impact measure y?
(Caveat Emptor – Often difficult to get good answers when many things are going on at the same time + perceptual biases)

1. Counterfactual Thought Experiments (Subjunctive conditional, if/then)

➤ Ex ante – What would you do if x changes? (e.g. Vietnam study (Shaffer 2008) of impacts of tariff reductions on sugar cane growers: 'If the price you are paid for sugar cane falls by 25% would you make changes to the way your household earns income')

➤ Ex post – What would you have done otherwise (e.g. in the absence of x)?

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.2 Providing Estimates of the Magnitude of Impact

Example – Ex post Counterfactual Thought Experiments

Impact Assessment of the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Program in Vietnam (Shaffer, 2012, 2013)

- Impact assessment of Health Fee Exemption Component (free health care to poor households or communes).
- Combined use of Propensity Score Matching (PSM) and 'Counterfactual Thought Experiment' (CTE)'
- Impact measure was health care utilisation was defined as the percentage of persons who used health care facilities over the past 12 months
- PSM drawing on national HHS data found no significant impact (next slide)

- CTE in a 'qualitative survey' asked respondents **whether they still would have sought medical attention when they were ill if they had not received the health fee exemption or reduction**.
- Around 95% of respondents would have sought medical care when they were ill even if they had not benefited from program (accounting for sampling error and 'don't knows (next slide).

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

Example – Ex post Counterfactual Thought Experiments (Cont).

Table 3 Propensity Score Matching: Impact of Health Fee Exemption/Reduction on Utilisation of Healthcare

	Mean Difference	Standard Error[a]	95% Conf. Interval
Nearest Match	-0.09	0.06	-0.23 - 0.02
Nearest Three Matches	-0.08	0.05	-0.20 - 0.01
Nearest Five Matches	-0.08	0.05	-0.18 - 0.01

[a]Standard errors were bootstrapped with 100 replications
Data source: Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey, 2002

Table 2 Use of Medical Care in the Absence of HEPR (Population Proportions, Standard Errors in Parentheses)[a]

	1 Yes	2 No	Total
Total Vietnam	91.8 (0.40)	7.3 (0.11)	100

[a]Data do not sum to 100 because "Don't Knows" have been removed
Data source: HEPR Impact Assessment Qualitative Survey, 2003-4

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.3 Incorporating and Unpacking Causal Mechanisms

1. Best and most frequent way that mixed methods have been used in impact assessment

2. What are Causal Mechanisms? – Typically: causally variables + causal tree + explanation of how variables are doing causal work

Three Issues

1. **Unpacking/Thickening Mechanisms: Detailed studies of causal pathways between policy changes and micro-level effects** ('thickening' the account found in models, especially behavioral response to change)

2. **Combining Outcomes and Mechanisms: Reliance on dialogically-derived information to understand/explain model results**

3. **Combining Reasons and Correlates: Including 'reasons for action' in econometric models**

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.3 Incorporating and 'Thickening' Understanding of Causal Mechanisms

Example - Combining Outcomes and Mechanisms

Weinhold (2013) Study of Soybean Cultivation for Export in Brazil's Amazon

- Combined census data with ethnographic work
- Econometric results found soy cultivation increased income and reduced poverty
- Yet – soybean cultivation ed to strong political opposition and violent protests. Why?

- Newly arrived farmers were of Northern European descent with greater financial resources
- There were pronounced cultural differences re. housing style, behavioural traits which were fuelled by media and religious groups.
- Authors conclude that hostilities/resentment was driven by ethnicity, cultural rivalry and historical differences

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.4 Informing Model Specification

Three issues

1. Variable Selection (including the search for 'instruments')

2. Variable Interpretation (getting the choice of 'words' right)

3. Relationships between Variables

2. Four Contributions of 'Qual' & Mixed Method Approaches

2.4 Informing Model Specification

Example – Facilitating Understanding of the Relationship between Variables

Study of the Determinants of Welfare Changes, Kagera, Tanzania (de Weerdt, 2010)

- Econometric analysis of panel data (1994/2004) combined with life histories
- Econometric analysis estimated 2004 poverty status based on 1994 asset holdings and compared it to actual outcomes
- Significant disparities resulted – only 50% of expected exits happened.

- Life histories helped to explain why
- One key finding – the interaction between remoteness and initial conditions (and not their individual effects) was critical
- That is, non-remote village could overcome low initial condition due to trade (employment for labours, business relationships with traders, etc.)
- Accordingly, the causal structure in the original model was incorrectly specified.
- A new interact variable of remoteness and initial conditions was introduced and found to be statistically significant

3. Concluding Thoughts

Against Qual & Mixed Method Imperialism:

1. Choice of methodology should be driven by objectives of research - what kinds of data are needed for what purposes at what cost over what time frame (i.e. consideration of external validity, numerical vs. narrative information, precision/scale of estimates, outcomes vs. processes, etc.).

Also

1. Mixed methods are neither necessary nor sufficient
2. Many examples of shoddy work and practical challenges (translation, details, etc.)

STILL

1. For the purposes of many impact studies they are quite relevant (e.g. mechanisms and outcomes)
2. When done well, they make for better and richer analysis
3. Many examples of value-added in the broader literature

Ultimately, they should be part of the methodology choice set when embarking on impact assessment studies.