

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research paradigm

The research paradigm used in this study is constructivist paradigm. Constructivists claim that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. This paradigm "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity. Constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality (Searle, 1995). One advantage of this method is the close partnership between the researcher and the participant, which allows participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Moreover, through these stories participants are able to describe their perspectives on reality, allowing the researcher to better understand the participants' actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993).

This study utilized a qualitative research approach. It is intended to deeply explore, understand and interpret social phenomena within its natural setting. (Creswell 2002; Pope & Mays 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This approach involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. Qualitative research is commonly used in the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, etc. Qualitative research methods are based on different beliefs and designed for different purposes than quantitative research methods. (gay et al., 2011).

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A qualitative approach was conducted in this study to provide greater understanding and clarity of the significance of soft skills in education and how to help college students become “career ready”. So that to collect, analyze, and interpret comprehensive narrative data to gain insight into the phenomena.

In this study, the case study analysis was adopted as the research method. Case studies have been largely used in the social sciences and have been found to be especially valuable in practice-oriented fields (such as education, management, public administration, and social work). According to Creswell (2017, pg. 73) "The case study method seeks to explore a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time by collecting detailed, in-depth information from diverse sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents, and reports) and reporting a case description and case-based themes." The key perspectives of these qualitative researchers served as the foundation for my own research strategy. This study employed a case study method because the researcher wishes to investigate the importance of soft skills in education and assisting college students in becoming "career ready" through detailed, in-depth interviews and reports a case description and case themes.

3.2. Research Design

This study utilized a single case study research design. A single case study design involves the researcher identifying an issue and then selecting one bounded case to highlight that issue. (Stake, 1995 in Creswell, 2017). Yin (2009) noted that a single case

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study is the best choice for a researcher who wants to study only one single thing or a single group. In a single case study research, the researcher questions previous theoretical relationships and explore new ones because of that a more careful study is made. This research study makes the researcher get a deeper understanding of the significance of soft skills in education and career readiness.

3.3. Setting

The UCII and ESITH career centers were adopted as a case study and as part of the evaluation. ESITH Career Center was launched in June 2015 as the first of its kind in Morocco. The methodology used to set up the center relied on desk research, holding focus groups with alumni, and individual talks with ESITH management and faculty. The last part of the work was an internship done at George Washington University (USA). The center was the winner of the Founders Award for Innovation during the Global Careers Services Summit by the firm E&Y in 2021.

Career Center UCII is a non-profit structure of Hassan II University of Casablanca that was established in February 2017 by USAID Morocco in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research in order to improve the career opportunities for Moroccan youth. The UH2C Career Center offers diagnostic tools and counseling to assist youth explore their potential, as well as market information on credible career paths, career readiness training, and an opportunity to connect with the private industry.

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3.4. Research Participants

The participants for this study are stakeholders including educators, career counselors trainers from elsewhere from Morocco, and directors of UCHII and ESITH Career services from Casablanca. The technique used in selecting the participants for this study is purposive sampling. A purposive sample of no more than 6 professionals was obtained by contacting them via email and social networking websites specifically LinkedIn, describing the research and requesting them to be a part of this study.

Table 1.1

Profile of Participants

| Participant | Sex (M/F) | Industry | Occupation |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------|---|
| Fatima Ezzahra Jaida | F | Education | Director of UCII Career Service |
| Najib Hamouti | M | Education | Head of ESITH Career Service |
| Abdelkader Hamouchi | M | Education | Lecturer |
| Hala Sedki | F | Education | Elementry School Teacher/ A Phd Student |
| Tagoe Prince | M | Education | Educational Trainer, Coach |
| Khalid Zeryouli | M | Education | Career Counselor, Educational design, |

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3.5. Data Collection Technique

The technique used for data collection is an in-depth email interviewing. Further evolution of qualitative data collection methods occurred in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Researchers began to incorporate data collection methods that made use of technology, such as email, chat rooms, photovoice, and texting (Creswell, 2007). Emailing participants has proven to be an efficient method of conducting large-scale surveys (Hunter et al., 2012). Three articles published in the early twenty-first century captured much of the evolving philosophical and practical stance of email interviewing researchers: Meho (2006), McCoyd and Kerson (2006), and Kazmer and Xie (2006). (2008). The researcher asks open-ended questions to allow participants to voice their experiences unconstrained by any of the researcher's views or previous research findings. The Open-ended response allows participants to create options for responding (Creswell, 2002).

3.6. Procedures

Participants must have at least three years of experience in teaching or evaluating graduate job applicants. Emails with a plain language were sent to prospective participants inviting them to participate in a qualitative e-mail interview. The plain language statement provided information about the study's overall purpose. Email interviews were conducted. Participants were asked about their perceptions of the importance of soft skills in education and assisting graduates for career readiness.

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3.7. Data analysis

All of the e-mail interviews transcripts would be collected and analyzed using the traditional method of hand analysis. Hand analysis states that researchers read the data, mark it by hand, and divide it into parts. Traditionally, analyzing text data involves using color coding to mark parts of the text or cutting and pasting text sentences onto cards. Some qualitative researchers like to hand analyze all of their data (Creswell, 2002).

3.8. Triangulation

Triangulation is a method of improving the validity and credibility of research findings (Cohen et al., 2000). The credibility and validity of this study were determined using both methodological and data triangulation. Methodological triangulation encourages the use of a variety of data collection methods (Denzin, 1970). The use of interviews and study documents in this study proves the research's validity.

The use of multiple data sources is referred to as data triangulation. This includes different locations for data collection, different times for data collection, and various people who may be involved in the research study. According to Flick (2002), "the starting point is to purposefully and systematically involve personas and study groups, as well as local and temporal settings, in the study" (p. 226). In this study, data triangulation entails gathering information from the people involved as well as the researcher's own experiences with a situation.

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