

Appendix C: Strengths and weaknesses of each data collection method

Based on Denscombe, 2003 and Yin, 2003.

Data collection method	Strengths	Weaknesses
Questionnaires	• Standardized format and answers • Money and time saving • Pre-coded answers • Wide coverage	• Frustration and lack of motivation for respondents • Bias due to the respondents point of view • Lack of verifiability of answers • Low response rate
Interviews	• Low material requirements • Detailed information through individual and personal contacts • Flexibility and validity	• Data analysis difficulties • Lack of objectivity and consistency • Based on what respondents say • Inhibitions and invasion of privacy • Time and money consuming • Low coverage
Systematic observations	• Based on what people do • Objective, rigorous and systematic • Time saving • Pre-coded data	• Based on behaviour and not intentions • Potential to oversimplify • Contextual information missing • Disrupt the naturalness of the setting
Participant observations	• Based on what people do • Objective, rigorous and contextual • Low material requirements • Rich insights	• Limited options to access • Potential danger • Lack of generalisation • Time and money consuming
Documents	• Cheap and easy access to data • Permanence of data	• Credibility of the sources • Secondary data • Biased selectivity • Social constructions

