LOST IN TRANSLATION: USING Q METHODOLOGY IN ISIXHOSA SPEAKING COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Madeleine Duncan, Ruth Watson, Kate Sherry, Mpilo Booi
University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

BACKGROUND: People living in rural settlements in South Africa including persons with disabilities may be marginalised by chronic poverty. The research aims to understand the issues impacting on peoples' lives in terms of disability related policy implementation and service delivery.
METHOD: Q methodology was used in two rural communities to explore perspectives about disability. The concourse was informed by literature reviews, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, participatory rural appraisal methods and focus groups. A 30-statement Q set was compiled merging information from the concourse and an existing Q set addressing disability dynamics within the South African context[1].

PROCESS: The process of compiling the Q-concourse, translating the Q set into Xhosa and implementing the Q sort was fraught with ambiguities. Translation was confounded by literacy, cultural norms, isiXhoza vernacular, impairments of disabled participants and the structural constraints of an under-resourced environment.

CONCLUSION: Q methodology is an appropriate research approach for cross cultural social inquiry provided close attention is paid to multiple levels of translation at each stage of the implementation process.