

ANALYSING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Analysing qualitative data involves making sense out of the data through interpretation that can yield meaningful and symbolic content. Qualitative analysis seeks to understand. For example, it may seek to understand the way an educator feels about a specific initiative, problems of practice, questions and issues related to professional growth, etc.

Coding provides an opportunity to reduce the amount of data while also learning and knowing the data more fully. Coding qualitative data should be conducted through a cyclical process, spending lots of time with the data. It is important to code the data multiple times and include multiple people in the process. This allows a breadth of perspectives to be brought to the data.

Key considerations when analysing qualitative data

1. **Own your data!** Consider the source, description, research questions, etc. to help inform your analysis.
2. Once your data is organized, **use investigative skills** such as prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing and theory building.
3. **Record your thinking as you go.** Reflect, question, and wonder. Write reflective notes as you work through your data or try keeping a detailed concept map that outlines connections and ideas.
4. **Keep track** of your data and your decisions as you code in case you need to refer back or are asked to explain your actions. This can be done in a simple document file or notebook.
5. Look for **broad themes** that transcend and link the specific codes.
6. Employ **multiple coding strategies** until you learn which one works for you and with which research question(s) to focus on. This can include highlighting, documentation notations, qualitative data software, and concept mapping.
7. Focus on strategies to help you **clarify your analysis**: a top 10 list, a graphic organizer, devising headings and subheadings. Seek out data saturation and identify any multiple comments and contradictions.

For further information, consider the following:

Ellen Taylor-Powell & Marcus Renner, Analyzing Qualitative Data,
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-12.pdf>

Douglas B. Reeves & Tony Flach, Data: Meaningful analysis can rescue schools from drowning in data,
<http://learningforward.org/docs/august-2011/reeves324.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Kate Seers, Qualitative data analysis,
<http://ebn.bmj.com/content/15/1/2.full.pdf+html?sid=92c1b05a-1a1e-4799-9167-2fb3df4ba675>

Helen Noble & Joanna Smith, Qualitative data analysis: a practical example,
<http://ebn.bmj.com/content/17/1/2.full.pdf+html?sid=92c1b05a-1a1e-4799-9167-2fb3df4ba675>

P. Burnard, P. Gill, K. Stewart, E. Treasure & B. Chadwick, Analysing and presenting qualitative data,
<http://www.nature.com/bdj/journal/v204/n8/pdf/sj.bdj.2008.292.pdf>