

Essential Qualities of a Qualitative Analysis

Artful

Successful analysis is founded on good technique, but this in itself is not enough and there is always more to be learned.

Imaginative

Analysis is not mechanistic. In order to penetrate beneath the surface of things, the researcher must take time to stand back and find different ways of seeing the data.

Flexible

Where, necessary, the researcher must be prepared to find alternative approaches to organizational and interpretive challenges, which means not adhering too rigidly to any one approach.

Reflexive

In order to make the best opportunities to advance the process of discovery, the researcher should keep in review the continually evolving interrelationship between data, analysis and interpretation.

Methodical

Although feeling and instinct may play an important part in all of the above, the researcher must decide on appropriate analytical methods and continue to reflect on these as they are applied.

Scholarly

Analysis should take place in the context of a wider understanding of the relevant literature, whether relating to analytical or interpretive issues.

Intellectually rigorous

The researcher must be prepared to make available the workings of the analytical process and take account of all available evidence, including discrepant cases. This also means that the researcher has to resist the temptation to reduce everything to a single explanation.