

Qualitative research is useful for describing or answering questions that are often unknown. It often has the potential to “illuminate the invisibility of everyday life” (Gay et al, 2000, p. 203). However, what is good qualitative research and how do we as readers decide if it meets these criteria?

The article chosen is called “Teachers’ Views on Technology and the Future of Teaching.” Scott Reid from the University of Ottawa published this paper on September 2002 in the refereed academic journal, International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning, which is published at the University of Calgary. I chose this research paper because it was in a reputable online refereed academic journal and also because of my interest in technology use and its integration in education.

In assignment 3a, five statements were outlined to describe the tenets of good qualitative research. The five statements are listed here:

1. Knowing the right question or set of questions to ask is just as important as understanding the social setting.
2. The data gathered must be full, thick, accurate, and transparent allowing it to be reproduced.
3. The researcher’s philosophical assumptions that guide the research must be apparent.
4. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the research, data should be validated from one or more research procedures.
5. An ethical methodological framework must be apparent in the research.

The purpose of this paper is to critique the effectiveness of Scott Reid's paper using the five statements outlined. This paper will state each of the tenets of good qualitative research, provide and critique examples of each tenet in the research paper, and conclude with an analysis. In doing so, this paper will 'illuminate' what the researcher means by what he says.

*Statement 1 - Knowing the right question or set of questions to ask is just as important as understanding the social setting.*

This first statement outlines the importance of understanding the researched first before any questions are developed. The relationship with the researched is the key to acquiring meaningful data that has depth and breadth. As well, in order for the researcher to get an insider's view, it is important to have a clear understanding of the social setting and nurture the relationship with the researched from the initial contact.

Reid has shown clearly in his writing that he has a true understanding of the social setting. He mentions that "the data are drawn from a larger study of the integration of information and communication technology into teaching." (Reid, 2002). What he suggests in this statement is that there was a more in-depth study of the social setting in a previous study. However, there is no reference to this in the references section nor does he offer other data to support this. He does mention how important that in a "predictive study of a developing field of Information Technology that the participants guide the research process to what they feel is important" (Reid, 2002). This statement shows that he is allowing the participant to develop the questions to the study. Although this is said, Reid still leaves the reader to speculate on how long he spent in the social setting and how true his understanding of the researched.

Statement 2 - The data gathered must be full, thick, accurate, and transparent allowing it to be reproduced.

This statement outlines the importance of having data that is accurate. The accuracy of the data is paramount in describing the researched perspectives of the social setting. Many different perspectives must be shown in order for the tiniest details not to be missed. Full and thick descriptions of the social setting must be presented to avoid misinterpretation of the events. When this is done, there will be no invention of what really happened. Openness and the transparency are also paramount in disclosing what really happened and not to be misinterpreted and invented. This will give depth and breadth to a study.

Reid (2002) stated the reason why he chose qualitative research was that it added “thick and rich descriptions of how these individual teachers perceived the future of teaching.” He also mentioned that because education is in the “early stages of integration of information and communication technology into teaching” that a qualitative in-depth interview was conducted to “allow unexpected and unforeseen issues to arise” (Reid, 2002). His findings do give a broad overview of the divergent views of the teachers involved in the study. Most of it was “recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher” (Reid, 2002). Full and thick details were given in the divergent views of the researched. One theme that emerged was the need for emphasis on character development. The quote read:

“You know I really worry about kids spending 8–10–12 hours a day in front of the T.V. and in front of the computer playing some of these very violent games. So how does that impact upon teaching? Well, one way I think it impacts upon teaching is it makes our role as educators all that much more important. I think there is a real need for more character development. I think there is

a real need now for the teaching of things like values and ethics. My prediction is there is going to be a real emphasis in the future, and I see it starting now, a real emphasis on character development in the schools” (Reid, 2002).

With the use of direct quotes, the details were exact and described the thoughts as they appeared. As well, the thoughts positive or negative were taken from thirteen teachers from various subjects.

The openness and transparency of the research can be seen in the inductive analysis where Reid (2002) elaborated on how he “coded the categories based on the questions asked and the initial categories developed during the transcription.” He also noted that he used analytical notes to facilitate the analysis as suggested in scholarly literature on qualitative research. (Reid, 2002). His candid account of the methods allows for research to be reproduced under certain circumstances.

*Statement 3 - The researcher’s philosophical assumptions that guide the research must be apparent.*

The underlying assumptions of the researcher have to be clear. The researcher should state what he considers valid research and why he chose that particular research method. The personal qualities of the researcher in effect plays a role in what subtleties are kept and which are filtered out during the inductive analysis. Because qualitative research is not objective, the researcher’s biases must be transparent.

Reid (2002) clearly identified his assumptions in his introduction by stating that “teachers who are currently using information and communication technology in teaching have valuable insights and can help clarify some of the issues related to change in education environment.” He also added that “...this paper also moderates predictions made by developers of technology and administrators related to the future use of

information and communication technology. Their prediction are often based on theoretical positions and are overly optimistic whereas the views of frontline practitioners are often more realistic” (Reid, 2002). These statements outlines what his assumptions are and are detailed enough to show where he intends to go with the paper.

*Statement 4 - To ensure credibility and trustworthiness in the research, data should be validated from one or more research procedures.*

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility involves extracting data from different perspectives. Transferability involves generalizing the current situation to other situations. Dependability involves allowing the current situation to be reproduced. Finally, confirmability involves being transparent in the entire research process.

In statement 2, dependability and confirmability was discussed. As for credibility, Reid used semi-structured interviews as his primary method to draw meaning to the social setting. From the initial question, there were also “follow up questions asked based on the themes raised by the teachers” (Reid, 2002). The initial question was contained in the Reid’s paper. However, the entire set of questions from the interview was not added as an addendum. Reid did use other methods such as recordings and transcriptions to draw the themes and patterns from and to form his conclusion.

Transferability is not apparent in the paper. It does mention how this study provides for “insight into the way that the we see the organization of education.” In this sense, there is some reference to be generalized to other situations other than high school education.

*Statement 5 - An ethical methodological framework must be apparent in the research.*

Qualitative research follows the general principles of confidentiality, openness, empowerment, and freedom. These general principles are the basis of good qualitative

research. Because ethical concerns are an important element in this type of humanistic research strategy, these general principles must be clearly stated.

Reid clearly states the ethics involved in the study. “With the permission of the school board and principal, written requests to conduct interviews were made directly to all teachers at the school. In all cases, participants signed consent forms (Reid, 2002). This is very explicit and does not leave room for misinterpretation.

### Analysis

This research paper based on the five statements of the tenets of good qualitative research is an effective qualitative research paper. It contains full, thick, accurate, transparent descriptions of the social context. It clearly shows the researcher’s assumptions. It is trustworthy and has an ethical methodological framework. The only exception is that it does not show the researcher’s true understanding of the social setting. Reid does not give evidence that he was totally immersed in the social setting although the data provided is full and thick. As well, not providing a copy of the questionnaire used leaves us to speculate if he used leading questions or if the follow-up questions generated from the participants that guided the research process was truly generated from them. In short, the context of this paper fits within the qualitative research tradition.

### References

Gay, L.R. and Airasian, P. (2000). Educational Research – Competencies for Analysis and Application (6<sup>th</sup> edition). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Reid, S. (2002). “Teachers’ Views on Technology and the Future of Teaching.”

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