Document Analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed. A rubric can also be used to grade or score a document. There are three primary types of documents:

- Public Records: The official, ongoing records of an organization's activities.
  Examples include student transcripts, mission statements, annual reports, policy manuals, student handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi.
- Personal Documents: First-person accounts of an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs. Examples include calendars, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, Facebook posts, duty logs, incident reports, reflections/journals, and newspapers.
- Physical Evidence: Physical objects found within the study setting (often called artifacts). Examples include flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training materials.

Administration methods. (2010). Retrieved March 2, 2012, from Student Voice Web site:
https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/
https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/

Focus Groups

The focus group is a qualitative method of assessment, encouraging a free flow of ideas. It is typically led by one moderator but can sometimes be assisted by a scribe or other team members. For assessment purposes, a focus group will usually consist of 8-12 pre-screened members and can last anywhere from 1-2 hours. Rather than simply analyzing numbers and statistics, a focus group allows researchers to observe and take note of visual aspects such as respondents' body language and facial expressions as they are given topics to discuss.

Administration methods. (2010). Retrieved March 2, 2012, from Student Voice Web site:
https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/

Interviews

Interviewing is a valuable assessment tool because it allows the participant to share their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs in their own words. The use of direct quotations in the assessment findings helps the researcher present an accurate depiction of what is being evaluated. Interviews can be either structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Structured interviews are typically very controlled, with fixed, pre-planned questions. Semi-structured interviews involve some planning, but there is freedom to vary the course of the interview based on the participant's responses. Unstructured interviews are

the least rigid, and involve little to no preplanning.

Schuh & Upcraft, (2001). Assessment Practice in Student Affairs. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Observation

The field observation is another method for collecting qualitative data. The objective of the observation is to collect data in a "natural setting." As with most qualitative data collection methods, the individual identified as the observer is the instrument for the data collection. The observer notes things such as what people say, do, their locations, etc.

Schuh & Upcraft, (2001). Assessment Practice in Student Affairs. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Rubrics

A rubric is a list or chart that describes the criteria that one uses to evaluate or rate student performance. Rubrics are helpful tools in assessing student learning, especially for areas like behavior or performance, which can be difficult to capture in more traditional assessment techniques such as surveys. Types of rubrics include:

- Checklist rubric: A simple list of requirements (dimensions) and whether the requirement was met
- Rating Scale rubrics: Documents the requirements (dimensions) and allows the rater to rate that requirement on a scale
- Analytic rubric: Documents the requirements (dimensions) using a scale and a description of the dimension at each level on the scale, with one dimension per line on the rubric
- Holistic rubric: Includes all of the elements of an analytic rubric but combines them into one large dimension rather than one dimension per line

Administration methods. (2010). Retrieved March 2, 2012, from Student Voice Web site: https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/

https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/

Surveys

Surveys are a common, inexpensive way to collect data about program effectiveness, student needs, learning outcomes, user satisfaction, etc. While paper surveys have long been used to gather information, online surveys provide a more efficient way to collect data. There are two types of online surveys:

- Web-Based Survey: Unlike other methods of data collection, most online surveys have the capability to offer immediate results. Many web surveys are linked directly to an online database.
- E-mail Surveys: E-mail surveys are usually administered as part of the e-mail itself (as opposed to web-based surveys which can be sent out through e-mail, but would typically contain an invitation via web link to take a web survey). Similar to web-based surveys, e-mail surveys can be useful when a surveyor is looking to administer a paperless assessment with quick results.

Administration methods. (2010). Retrieved March 2, 2012, from Student Voice Web site:
https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/

Participant Narratives/Journals

Participant narratives and journals represent a type of document analysis used in order to extract themes in regard to the topic being evaluated. The analysis can range from an extraction of general themes to a tight, specific and detailed analysis. It may use either quantitative analysis (e.g. counting the number of times that a theme occurs) and/or qualitative analysis (e.g. identifying the major themes). In either case it is important to document the criteria which are used to make decisions about rating and analyzing material. To increase the accuracy of ratings, material can be independently rated by more than one rater.

Duignan, P. (2008). Methods and analysis techniques for information collection.
Retrieved from http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/

Visual Methods

Visual methods are a form of research that uses drawings, maps, photo diaries, and other visual collections to elicit information. This research method encourages participation of the subject rather than the researcher therefore diminishing the dichotomy between the observer and the observed. Types of visual techniques include:

- Scientific images: Used for cataloguing and include examples such as physical layouts of buildings, architectural change, and studies on time.
- Narrative images: Tell stories and include examples such as photo essays.
- Phenomenological images: Capture a subject through the experience (or lens) of the source of the image. Examples include photo journaling where a student captures an image and then writes their views on why the image is important.
- Reflexive images –Taken by the person doing the assessment. The key element is that the image is being captured and interpreted by the same person. Examples of these may be photos taken by an event planner at each stage in order to assess the event planning process.

Administration methods. (2010). Retrieved March 2, 2012, from Student Voice Web site:
https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/
https://www.studentvoice.com/app/wiki/

Participant Counters

Participant counters are used to track usage of programs and services, as well as student participation in events. Most often, this assessment method is used to tally the number of students using/participating. However, if demographic data is also gathered participant counters can be used to determine who is using services or participating in events and who is not.