

Some Ideas about Record Keeping

Doing qualitative or interpretive inquiry is a systematic way to learn about the world we live in. This process builds on the natural ways most of us learn already. As indicated in Chapter One, the inquirer participates in several activities repeatedly, simultaneously, and continuously throughout the learning process. The inquirer:

1. participates in a social situation (the world) and develops relationships with others there;
2. asks questions about what is going on in that social world;
3. collects information to address those questions (using observation, conversations, etc.);
4. makes sense of the information gathered in order to ask deeper questions, collect more information, interpret that information, and so on; and
5. shares with others the experience of being involved and learning, often through writing.

Keeping field notes or an inquiry journal is a common way to maintain a record of the qualitative inquiry experience. These notes are most commonly written records; but they may also be video or audio tapes, drawings, student work, memoranda, minutes from meetings, or any other artifact that contains useful information. Field notes should be kept consistently up to date because any experience you may have could be relevant to your interpretation of any particular event or idea.



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