

## Quick Tutorial/Rationale for Data Collection and Documentation

### Preface:

*What does it mean to collect data?*

*What does it mean to have a 'documentation strategy'?*

Research does not exist without some type of data; research comes from the analysis of data. But how does one collect the "right" data? What kind of planning is needed to facilitate efficient documentation? And once data is collected, to what extent can it be analyzed objectively?

### Types of Documentation:

There are two main types of documentation. They are described here. Please note that these types are NOT necessarily mutually-exclusive of one another, and analysis techniques can be developed/shared for either/both.

- **Artifact-focused Documentation**
  - Collecting documentation by means of various artifacts (journals, articles, reflections, teaching transcripts, media, interviews, etc.)
    - Pros: Varied mediums of data = opportunity for systemic analysis & review; presentation of many mediums looks 'thorough' and can aid keeping data collection more objective
    - Cons: Difficulty in conceptual organization; presentation format can be a barrier to some (paper portfolio vs. electronic mediums)
- **Topic-focused Documentation**
  - Collecting documentation by means of choosing particular standpoint or perspective.
  - Examples:
    - Choosing 'role of context' as standpoint for documentation
    - Keeping context 'fixed' – how to adapt seminar work towards professional development scenarios
  - Pros: Often easier to conceptualize; gives researcher(s) chance to explore one aspect in depth; well suited towards classroom work where multiple documentation groups can cover many topics at once
  - Cons: Focusing on a specific vantage point can obfuscate perspectives/learning about other perspectives; sometimes more difficult to collect varied data mediums; also to maintain objectivity in data collection & analysis.

### Planning Your Documentation Strategy:

- Use Guided Inquiry Questions.

Sometimes, a hypothesis/statement just doesn't do justice to what the extent of the research is. Enter, the open-ended Guided Inquiry Question ... or a set of them, if/where appropriate. If the topic of study is generative enough, then there should be no problem in thinking of relevant questions.

Tips: Many guided inquiry questions start with the language, "to what extent," "how/how can," and "why," – and are typically not questions that can be answered with a simple yes/no statement. Maintaining objectivity within one's guided inquiry questions (and narrative) is also important; using language such as "x suggests that" or "how could x inform y," as opposed to using words like "always" or "never," helps to suggest an unbiased perspective and keep research questions open-ended.

For example:

*To what extent do appropriately-framed inquiry questions help to inform and facilitate the collection of rich documentation?*

- Choose a Type of Documentation from which to focus your efforts.

Based on the two types described above (Artifact-focused or Topic-focused), choose the Documentation Type that you feel is most relevant to your work. While you can certainly incorporate both into your work, often choosing one from the outset will help to focus your efforts. Here are some sample scenarios, and examples of Documentation Strategies, to help you figure out what your documentation strategy could look like. Again, these scenarios are just a sampling of what is possible.

- Scenario 1: David is a student taking the Intro to MIE class. Even though he has never taken an MIE class before, he is also doing an internship at the same time. He has never taught before, and is learning about LQCPR for the first time. His internship is teaching private piano lessons.
  - Artifact-focused: David's portfolio includes notes from MIE class, project plans, and article reflections. It also has recordings from the lessons he teaches and a few transcripts & analyses of those lessons. The breadth of artifact types gives David the opportunity to find examples of LQCPR throughout his internship & class experience, and gives him plenty of food for thought for future MIE work. Since his portfolio provides a broad overview of the course, it allows for a wide selection of guided inquiry questions.
    - Sample Guided Inquiry Questions:
      - *To what extent is the LCQPR framework easily adaptable to different teaching settings?*
      - *How does the LQCPR framework help to address the different types of data I might collect?*
    - Topic-focused: David decides he is most interested in the Q & R portions of the LQCPR framework. He develops specific guided inquiry questions, and even the act of writing said questions is related to his documentation. He frames all of his notes from MIE class and his internship with inquiry questions & reflections, and his documentation from his private lessons also reflects his focus on Q & R. (i.e. coding of transcripts, assignments given to private students, etc.)
      - Sample Guided Inquiry Questions:
        - *To what extent are the acts of Questioning and Reflecting a coupled pair?*
        - *How can I raise my students' comfort level in regards to reflecting on their lessons, and asking questions of themselves and me?*
  - Scenario 2: Larry is a graduate student in his last semester. He needs to fill credits, and so is taking an MIE course for the first time. He doesn't have time to do an internship, but wants to get the most out of his course experience. The MIE course he's taking is more oriented around research and assessment than actual teaching. Most of his classmates have already completed their internships and are taking the course as their final elective.
    - Artifact-focused: Since Larry doesn't have an internship to work in, the choice of artifact-focused documentation probably won't suit him as well; the opportunities to collect and analyze rich media are likely diminished. However, based on the scope of his guided inquiry questions, he may be able to 'design' artifacts that will effectively aid his research.
      - Sample Guided Inquiry Questions:
        - *To what extent is one's documentation strategy defined by the immediacy of available types of artifacts?*
        - *To what extent can the use of multimedia actually impede the collection of data, in certain circumstances?*
      - Topic-focused: Larry could choose to document his class experiences and learning from the standpoint of a topic like 'professional development and collaboration among artist-teachers.' Since he's graduating soon and has no internship, the topic of utilizing course learning in terms of professional development will be particularly germane to him. Larry's documentation includes interviews of classmates, reflections, plans for future work, analysis & adaptation of past learning experiences for future work, and coding of class notes/reflections/articles in a way that helps to inform his guided inquiry questions.
        - Sample Guided Inquiry Questions:
          - *To what extent do the formats of MIE seminars, and the structure of the MIE Concentration, parallel (and/or foreshadow) that of the world of Professional Development?*
          - *To what extent can I use this MIE seminar as a testing ground for my future Professional Development endeavors?*

- Scenario 3: Jenn is a student doing an MIE internship at Boston Arts Academy (BAA), teaching music theory. She has taken several MIE classes but not done an internship before. She is not concurrently taking a MIE class, though she is currently working as a theory TA at NEC.
  - **Artifact-focused**: Jenn's previous MIE class experiences have helped show her what components help to make a successful portfolio. After reviewing portfolios from previous classes, she crafts her guided internship questions such that they incorporate her artifact-focused documentation strategy. Though her MIE Internship doesn't technically include her TA work at NEC, she decides to collect artifacts from that work, in addition to her internship work. Her portfolio helps to reconcile her different experiences and compare the data she has collected.
    - **Sample Guided Inquiry Questions**:
      - *When collecting data from two similar, but different, projects – to what extent can one's documentation strategy remain the same for both?*
      - *To what extent do new forms of documentation need to be designed for this work?*
  - **Topic-focused**: Jenn decides that the context of her internship (high school students in an Arts-based pilot school) warrants re-visiting of past MIE coursework. Her guided inquiry questions suggest that some adaptation of lesson/project plans and rationale statements from other portfolios might be needed, since now she will be applying her work directly to the classroom. Additionally, her choice of topic (context of Intern work) helps her to focus her thoughts when reflecting on her TA position at NEC, and also helps to inform her work at BAA.
    - **Sample Guided Inquiry Questions**:
      - *To what extent do discrepancies exist, between student course work and that for MIE internships?*
      - *What role does context play, in the design and collection of documentation?*

#### Versatility of Documentation & Data Collection

Finally, just a brief few words on the possibilities that are opened up by thinking about documentation and data collection – in other words, how to adapt one's Documentation Strategy towards work in other subjects. Say you are taking Solfege, but are fortunate to not have to struggle with it – in fact, you are quite fluent. And, at some point, would like to be a TA or classroom instructor. Then, perhaps you might consider viewing the class, and collecting documentation, using a Topic-focused approach: All your notes, journal entries, etc. might be centered around the notion of "how would I teach x," and may even include critiques of the way your particular class is being taught. Rather than sit in boring classes and wish you had opted to drop the class, or that you had passed out of it via the placement exam, you could instead spend the time figuring out how it might be taught, and save time down the road.