Typologies of Quality

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Totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. Not to be mistaken for “degree of excellence” or “fitness for use” which meet only part of the definition.

Framework for assessing research evidence

**FINDINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How credible are the findings?</td>
<td>Findings/conclusions are supported by data/study evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Findings/conclusions ‘make sense’/have a coherent logic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Findings/conclusions resonant with other knowledge &amp; experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use of corroborating evidence to support or refine findings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How has knowledge/understanding been extended by the research?</td>
<td>Literature review (where appropriate)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aims &amp; design of study set in context of existing knowledge/understanding; identifies new areas for investigation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear discussion of how findings have contributed to knowledge &amp; understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Findings presented in way that offers new insights/alternative ways of thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion of limitations of evidence &amp; what remains unknown/unclear/what further information/research is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does the evaluation address its original aims and purpose?</td>
<td>Clear statement of study aims &amp;objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Findings linked to purposes of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary/conclusions directed towards aims of study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discussion of limitations in meeting aims.</td>
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**FINDINGS**

**Questions**
Scope for drawing wider inference

**Indicators**
- Discussion of what can be generalised from sample
- Detailed description of contexts in which the study was conducted
- Discussion of how hypotheses/propositions/findings may relate to wider theory; consideration of rival explanations
- Evidence supplied to support claims for wider inference
- Discussion of limitations on drawing wider inference

- How clear is the basis of evaluative appraisal?
- Description of any formalised appraisal criteria used
- Discussion of the nature and source of any divergence in evaluative appraisals
- Discussion of any unintended consequences of intervention
**DESIGN**

Questions

How defensible is the research design?

**SAMPLE**

How well defended is target selection of cases/documents?

**Indicators**

Discussion of how overall research strategy was designed to meet aims of study

Discussion of rationale for study design

Convincing argument for different features of research design

Use of different features of design/data sources evident in findings presented

Discussion of limitations of research design & their implications for the study evidence

Description of study locations/areas the sample design/ & how and why chosen

Description of population of interest & how sample selection relates to it

Rationale for basis of selection of target sample/settings/documents

Discussion of how sample/selections allowed required comparisons to be made

Detailed profile of achieved sample/case coverage maximising inclusion

Discussion of any missing coverage in achieved cases & implications for study evidence

Discussion of access and methods of approach
DATA COLLECTION

Questions

How well was the data collection carried out?

Indicators

Discussion of:

• who conducted data collection
• procedures/documents used for collection/recording
• checks on origin/status/authorship of documents
Audio or video recording
Description of conventions for taking fieldnotes
Discussion of how fieldwork methods or settings may have influenced data collected
Demonstration, through portrayal and use of data, that depth, detail and richness were achieved in collection
**ANALYSIS**

**Questions**

How well has the analysis been conveyed?

Contexts of data sources
– how well are they retained & portrayed?

How well has diversity of content been explored?

**Indicators**

Description of form of approach to, and formulation of original data
Clear rationale for choice of data management method/tool/package
Evidence of how descriptive analytic categories, classes, labels etc. have been generated and used
Discussion of how any constructed analytic concepts/typologies have been devised & applied

Description of background or historical developments & social/organisational characteristics of study sites or settings
Participants' perspectives/observations placed in personal context
Explanation of origins of written documents
Use of data management methods that preserve context

Discussion of contribution of sample perspective and design/case selection in generating diversity
Description and illumination of diversity/multiple perspectives/alternative positions in the evidence displayed
Evidence of attention to negative cases, outliers or exceptions
Typologies/models of variation derived and discussed
Examination of influences on opposing or differing positions
Identification of patterns of association/linkages with divergent positions/groups
**ANALYSIS**

**Questions**

How well has detail, complexity (i.e. richness) of the data been conveyed?

**Indicators**

- Use and exploration of contributors’ depth and concepts and meanings
- Unpacking and portrayal of nuance/subtlety/intricacy within data
- Discussion of explicit and implicit explanations
- Detection of underlying factors/influences
- Identification and discussion of patterns of association/conceptual linkages within data
- Presentation of illuminating textual extracts/observations
REPORTING

Questions

How clear are the links between data, interpretation & conclusions – i.e. how well can the route to any conclusions be seen?

How clear and coherent is the reporting?

Indicators

Clear conceptual links between analytic commentary and presentations of original data
Discussion of how/why particular interpretation/significance is assigned to specific aspects of data – with illustrative extracts of original data
Discussion of how explanations/theories/conclusions were derived – and how they relate to interpretations and content of original data
Display of negative cases & how they lie outside main proposition/theory/hypothesis etc.; or how proposition etc. revised to include them

Demonstrates link to aims of study/research questions
Provides a narrative/story or clearly constructed thematic account
Has structure and signposting that usefully guide reader through the commentary
Provides accessible information for intended target audience(s)
Key messages highlighted or summarised
REFLEXIVITY & NEUTRALITY

Questions

How clear are the assumptions/theoretical perspectives/values that have shaped the form and ideas on which the evaluation was based and output of the evaluation?

Indicators

Discussion/evidence of the main assumptions/ hypotheses/ theoretical how these affected the form, coverage or output of the evaluation
Discussion/evidence of the ideological perspectives/values/philosophies of research team and their impact on the methodological or substantive content of the evaluation
Evidence of openness to new/alternative ways of viewing subject/theories/assumptions
Discussion of how error or bias may have arisen in design/data collection/analysis and how addressed
Reflections on the impact of the researcher on the research process
ETHICS

Questions

What evidence is there of attention to ethical issues?

Indicators

Evidence of thoughtfulness/sensitivity about research contexts and participants
Documentation of how research was presented in study settings/to participants
Documentation of consent procedures and information provided to participants
Discussion of confidentiality of data and procedures for protecting
Discussion of how anonymity of participants/sources was protected
Discussion of any measures to offer information/advice/services etc. at end of study
Discussion of potential harm or difficulty through participation, and how avoided
Auditability

Questions

How adequately has the research process been documented?

Indicators

Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of data sources and methods
Documentation of changes made to design and reasons; implications for study coverage
Documentation and reasons for changes in sample coverage/data collection/analytic approach; implications
Reproduction of main study documents
Defining Quality Criteria in Social Policy Research

Hierarchy of quality criteria

1. Research accessible to appropriate audiences
2. The research design addresses the research question(s)
3. Data collection and analysis are transparent
4. An explicit account of the research process is provided
5. The research makes a contribution to knowledge
6. Informed consent given
7. The safety of participants assured
8. The research conforms to ethical codes & protocols
9. The safety of researchers has been assured
10. Data stored and protected according to protocols and legislation
11. The researcher sought to be as objective as possible
12. An explicit account of ethics and governance provided
13. The research should help achieve better outcomes for ‘service users’ of social policy
14. The research has the potential to develop the capacity of policy makers / practitioners to make informed & ethical decisions
15. The research has potential value for policy makers
16. The researcher provides clear value position
17. The research has the potential to develop the capacity of policy makers/practitioners to take appropriate actions
18. The research has potential value for ‘service users’


19. Research participants have been given the findings of the research study
20. Details provided about the funding body
21. Service users consulted about the aims & objectives
22. The research has produced recommendations for policy/practice
23. The research achieves a synthesis between theory and knowledge
24. Research informed by a theoretical position
25. Research has potential value for practitioners
26. The research should help bring about change
27. Service users involved appropriately in all stages of the research
28. The potential to empower ‘service users’

Contribution to theory
30. The research published in a prestigious refereed academic journal
31. The research provides value for money
32. A randomised controlled design used
33. A publication deriving from the research cited in prestigious refereed academic journals
34. The research published in a professional journal/magazine
35. The research is published as a chapter in a book
RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia

Underlying principles

• **Transparency:** process and results are clear and open to stakeholders, including the use of reliable/repeatable measures/metrics;

• **Acceptability:** broad acceptance of the approach and measures;

• **Effectiveness:** the applied model achieves the purposes of valid and accurate assessment, and avoids a high cost of implementation and the imposition of a high administrative burden; and

• **Encourages Positive Behaviours:** improving the quality and impact of research and further developing and supporting a vibrant research culture in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality sub-dimensions</th>
<th>Epistemic: methodological &amp; Theoretical robustness</th>
<th>Technological</th>
<th>Capacity development &amp; value for people</th>
<th>Economic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Purposivity</td>
<td>Plausibility</td>
<td>Marketability and competitiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Builds on what is known + contribution to knowledge</td>
<td>Salience/timeliness</td>
<td>Partnership, collaboration and engagement</td>
<td>Cost-effectiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explicitness</td>
<td>Specificity &amp; accessibility</td>
<td>Reflexivity, deliberation &amp; criticism</td>
<td>Auditability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Propriety</td>
<td>Concern for enabling impact</td>
<td>Receptiveness</td>
<td>Feasibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method-in-depended criteria</td>
<td>Flexibility &amp; operationalisability</td>
<td>Transformation &amp; personal growth</td>
<td>Originality</td>
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Key recurring themes

Originality
Contribution to knowledge
Rigour
Insight
Impact
Trustworthiness/reliability
Explicitness
Conformity – ethical
Paradigm dependent
Relevance/fitness for purpose/suitability/
Timeliness
Accessibility

Reflexiveness
Verifiable
Feasibility
Transparency
Objectivity
Value
Clarity
Significance/meaningful
Defensible
Coherence

Explicitness
Clarity
Conformity – ethical
Paradigm dependent
Relevance/fitness for purpose/suitability/
Timeliness
Accessibility

Explicitness
Clarity
Conformity – ethical
Paradigm dependent
Relevance/fitness for purpose/suitability/
Timeliness
Accessibility
But does this reductionism lead to a rigid checklist?