



## 9.1 A Self-Study Research Guidepost

### Self-Study Research Data Collection

**Table 9.1** Self-Study Research Data Collection Tools

Data Technique	Description and Usefulness
<b>Arts-Based Data</b>	Artifacts from classroom and/or school (e.g., books, bulletin boards, school mission, school newsletters); also can include arts projects completed by researcher (e.g., self-portraits, haiku poems, classroom portraits), which provide an alternative format to uncover something that more traditional formats of data collection may not afford
<b>Concept Maps</b>	Visual displays that highlight connections and links of “big ideas”; document your understanding of a phenomenon by visualizing the relationships and complex ideas among concepts and the dynamics and connections between them
<b>Critical Friend Research Memos</b>	Letters you write to your critical friend as a way to more naturally discuss and present your research while also deeply thinking about it. Spark new ideas and promote dialogue to gain another’s interpretations of and perspectives on your research.
<b>Interviews</b>	Notes and/or transcripts from meetings with students, peers, families, or school administrators through various formats: <i>in person</i> —formal or informal interviews with structured or semistructured prompts, audiotaped interviews, videotaped interviews; <i>written formats</i> —questionnaires, surveys, checklists; useful for gaining perspectives of participants and obtaining information on questions related to research; journalist’s prompts— <i>who, where, when, what, why, and how</i> are useful

Data Technique	Description and Usefulness
<b>Narratives</b>	Stories, journaling of your ongoing record, essays, other reflections about your study; can include education-related life history; interpretations of visual data and story of your research process; can include narratives by participants
<b>Observations</b>	An ongoing record of classroom events, student behavior, school events; useful for noting any repeated behaviors, common occurrences, and patterns and also anomalies or things that break away from a usual pattern, outliers, unique events; researcher can be a participant while he or she conducts the observation and/or be a nonintrusive nonparticipant in the observations
<b>Self-Study Teacher Researcher Log</b>	Notebook that documents the self-study teacher researcher’s meta-conversation to himself or herself and to critical friends of an unfolding of questions, reflections, meaning making, and shared insights of his or her self-study research project; can include notes, reflections, and preliminary ideas on the unfolding, enactment, and assessment of pedagogical strategies
<b>Student Records</b>	Examination of student records (e.g., academic progress, transcripts, attendance, promotion and retention records, and discipline referrals); enables you to learn about students’ school performance
<b>Visual Memos</b>	Visual display of data (e.g., sketches, painting, objects); incorporate the arts to assist the researcher in thinking about the research and sorting out relationships and concepts in data



## 9.2 A Self-Study Research Guidepost

### Self-Study Teacher Researcher Guides for Cataloguing

- **Log it, draw it, and/or perform it.**

Cataloguing is an invaluable tool to you as a self-study teacher researcher in collecting data about your self-study and your role inside that research. Cataloging is an ongoing record of your understandings, questions, and experiences during the research process. The Critical Friends Portfolio offers you a chance to write, draw, or perform your data along with

multiple opportunities to share your question posing, questions, and insights with your critical friend as your research unfolds. You are generating theories and meaning of your practice to improve it and trying to make sense of what is taking place. Cataloguing is essential to that meaning making.

The cataloguing data document and make transparent your analysis and serve as an audit trail that will be useful to insert into your final project. As teachers, we take mental snapshots of our actions and reflect on what is working and what is not working all the time. Making that thinking concrete through written and/or visual formats provides a file that you can access again and again and share with others. You will likely see your data “tell” you something while you are collecting them and in your early readings of your data. Those hunches may change, but they are valuable to notice and record. Keep a **self-study teacher researcher log** and memos of your thinking as you move through your research. Memos are your “think pieces” about the research over time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 122). It is very important to document your contemplations about what you are noticing in your early readings of the data or what Glaser (1978) calls “theorizing” (p. 110). Do not hesitate to capture your raw ideas during the research. “You do not have to prove ideas in order to state them; they must be plausible given what you have observed. Do not put off ‘thinking’ because all of the evidence is not in. Think with what data you have” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 172). Memos are in essence your field notes and can be used as data to journey, understand, self-critique, and analyze your data (Maxwell, 2005), albeit in self-study research, the memos are shared with critical friends. Students find their engagement in planned critical friend conversations quite useful in their understanding of self-study and their research project.

- **Embrace critical friend research memos as data.**

You are encouraged to write and receive critical friend research memos, or letters that you write to your critical friend as a way to more naturally talk about your research while also deeply thinking about it. Critical friend research memos can spark new ideas and promote dialogue to gain another’s interpretations and perspectives on your research. The critical friend research memos are data and are useful from the beginning of the research until the completion of your project. Date all memos. You may decide to title your memos and also include artwork to represent your thinking and progress over time. You will also benefit from sharing the critical friend inquiries with your classmates who can further contribute to your thinking about framing and reframing your practice. Critical friend(s) can prove useful in your data collection and analysis as they provide alternative perspectives on interpretation to increase the validity of your research.

The memos provide an open and inviting forum for your questioning, thinking, strategies, and data collected that can be made public to your critical friends and others. Critical friend research memos will serve you well if you take time to be thoughtful and detailed while you are writing and responding to them. *Then tell the story of your research or the process of your coming to understand and interpret your research.* My students have reported that it is quite beneficial to maintain informal communication and memo writing with critical friends as they continue their studies. Many have sustained their work as critical friends and continued to work together on other research projects after our course ended.

- **Purposely organize, index, and store.**

Create a personal system for organizing your data (e.g., computer folders and files, a wiki space shared with your critical friend, an accordion folder or portfolio for student work, a binder that allows you to insert and remove materials). Organize according to your focus. Add pockets for nonwritten sources such as CDs, videos, visual representations, and projects. You are encouraged to store materials electronically and with copies of folders in other locations. As I tell my students, with technology, scanning, digital photography, and free space for storing files on the Internet, we can no longer use the excuse, “My dog ate my homework.”

Design a system for easy retrieval with data purposely sorted, indexed, and organized to align with the components of your query. Be sure you have a master file of what you collected and how you decided to sort each data set. Use color-coding, numbers, or whatever makes sense to you and the way you make sense of things. Place each catalogued item in your critical friends portfolio. These catalogued items are data for your self-assessment of addressing the self-study methodological components after you complete your study.

- **Use technology.**

Use technology to support your data collection management and analysis with computer-based matrices, metamatrices of master charts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consider the use of computer software programs for sorting and storing, spreadsheets, tables, charts, PowerPoint, concept mapping, and data analysis software.

- **Read for purpose, continuously.**

Read your catalogued items during your study to direct and inform your ongoing work.

- **Share.**

Share and review your catalogued items, and especially your critical friend research memos, often with your critical friend to gain alternative perspectives. Look back to inform your looking forward. Examine and discuss what you are thinking about the data during the research process.