

# Moving from description to analysis to argument

## Worksheet

### Task 2

**Read the following short texts about questionnaires and face-to-face interviews and say whether they are descriptive/analytical. Then, justify your response by mapping the way they are organised/structured.**

#### Text a)

*Questionnaires and face-to-face interviews are methods of data collection in the social sciences. Questionnaires can be used to sample a large number of people over a wide geographical area. They can normally be conducted by just one person and the only major costs involved are stationery and postage. However, questionnaires do not allow the researcher to ask for extra information.*

*Face to face interviews, by contrast, are relatively small scale. They are labour intensive and time-consuming and consequently costly. But interviews have the advantage of allowing the researcher to clarify questions if necessary. Also, during interviews the researcher can ask additional questions.*

#### Text b)

*Two of the most common methods of data collection in social science research are the questionnaires sent by mail and the face-to-face interview. Whereas the sample size in face-to-face interviews is normally small, the questionnaire can be sent out to large numbers of people over a wide geographical area. Costs, both in labour and money, are high with face-to-face interviews, while questionnaires can be distributed quickly by just one person at a relatively low cost. However, in terms of quality of information, interviews are often superior to questionnaires as the researcher has the opportunity to ask additional questions and explain what questions mean if this becomes necessary. This is not possible with questionnaires.*

Map the structure for each text here.

Text A	Text B

### Task 3

**Read the following texts and identify whether they are descriptive/ analytical/ argumentative.**

#### **Text A**

*Of the two main forms of transport for people, buses are more effective than cars for a number of reasons. The greater passenger capacity of the bus ensures savings on fuel and other costs as well as reducing the amounts of traffic on the road. Secondly, the increased safety of bus travel as a result of ownership being governmental or business ensures that deaths and injuries from accidents are minimal, compared with the numerous deaths and injuries from car accidents. Finally, the accessibility of buses to most areas is strategically possible because buses use the established road system, so that little development is needed in order to extend a new bus route. Indeed, the potential for a bus transport system to be as convenient as private cars, combined with the other advantages of buses over cars, provides a convincing argument for the expansion of the bus transport system, rather than the continuation of a costly, inefficient and unsafe system based on privately owned vehicles.*

#### **Text B**

Of the two methods of data collection used in the social sciences - questionnaires and face-to-face interviews - face-to-face interviews are clearly the more effective. Face-to-face interviews allow the collection of quality data in a field which is more concerned with investigating the whys and wherefores of our social experience than with mere number-crunching.

If quality of outcomes rather than the apparently more satisfying quantity of outcomes is adopted as the criterion of effectiveness in social research, then the advantages of face-to-face interviews are abundantly clear. Quality data outcomes are achieved in situations which allow the researcher to clarify opaque or poorly worded questions, to probe by asking additional questions and to pursue points of particular interest to the researcher or the respondent (Kahn and Cannell 1957).

On the other hand, quality outcomes are unlikely to be achieved where cost-effectiveness and ease of distribution become the primary research considerations (Back and Gergen 1963). Those who promote questionnaires as cost-effective and easily distributable overlook the often poor response rates, the considerable number of partial responses and the significantly lower quality of data so typical of arm's length questionnaires. While it might also be suggested that the higher quality of data yielded by face-to-face interviews is achieved at the expense of uniformity in questioning and with potential interviewer bias (Carlson 1967; Goffman 1969), this criticism is difficult to sustain in a field which pursues primarily qualitative rather than quantitative research outcomes.

While questionnaires have advantages in some research circumstances and undoubtedly have their place in social sciences research, face-to-face interviews are clearly more effective in securing quality data outcomes in the social sciences.

*Adapted from Burgess, R. G. 1984. The Research Process in Educational Settings: Ten Case Studies. London: The Falmer Press.*

#### **Task 4: Read the text in the worksheet and answer the following questions**

1. Identify the position of the author.
2. What is the function of sentence 2?
3. Around which concept the argument is organized?
4. Identify the evaluative language used to strengthen the writer's position and arguments.

5. Identify the arguments in support of face-to-face interviews?
6. What is included in the inclusion? What language strategy has been deployed and why?