

9. How do you collect information for monitoring and evaluation?

Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods can be used for monitoring and evaluation.

In **quantitative research** the researcher asks questions which will provide information (raw data) in numerical form, using numbers and statistical analysis to provide the basis for understanding. Quantitative data collection methods could include:

- Conducting surveys
- Reviewing data such as attendance, throughput, and percentage of learners that are assessed as competent (annual or block pass rate).

In **qualitative research** the information (raw data) collected is in non-numeric form – for example, reports or transcriptions of interviews with key role-players; stories and explanations; reflection and interpretation. Qualitative information needs to be analysed by the researcher for the purpose of discovering the underlying meanings and patterns in any situation. Qualitative data collection methods could include:

- Questioning people through individual and group interviews such as focus group discussions and community interviews
- Observing people, processes, objects, conditions and situations.

Qualitative and quantitative data work together. Qualitative information can be strengthened and clarified when combined with quantitative data, and qualitative data can explain or illustrate the figures and statistics found in quantitative data.

Purely quantitative data can be misleading, for example, comparing the results of two institutions without giving the context of the catchment area. If the achievement levels of learners ON ENTRY are compared to achievement levels ON EXIT, it may be found that the institution with results that look poorer is in fact achieving better results in terms of the progress made by its learners. So, always place quantitative data in a context and try to ask more illuminating questions that go beyond just figures, for example allowing some space for comments (e.g. **why** is something rated excellent, good, fair or poor?).

[Answer to FAQ 9, The NQF and Learning Programme, the NQF Gateway]