

Qualitative Analytics

Introduction

At Sports Wizard® we are passionate about the qualitative observation and analysis of performance. We use 'qualitative' in two senses.

The first is that associated with social scientific insights that value personal connections and the conversations that are part of those connections. In this approach, we hope to address the fluid, contextual and relational aspects of life in general [15, 19] and in sport in particular whilst remaining 'professional strangers' [1] in these contexts. We attend to sport performance as a unified whole [2] and seek to uncover interconnections in game play. The qualitative narratives [22] we produce with and for our partners are imbued with thick descriptions [12] characteristic of ethnographic accounts of sport settings.

Our second sense of the word is strongly connected with risk analysis. We are mindful that there is a continuum of risk analyses and we place ourselves at the qualitative end of this continuum. We believe that risk depends on what you do, what you know and what you do not know [18].

We take an 'expert information' approach to our work wherein we share our analyses transparently [17] and share evidence rather than opinion. Our analytical services provide evidence about the decisions people face: "in sufficiently precise terms to identify the information that is most critical to them"; with an understanding of their view of the world; and communicating effectively "to bridge the critical gaps between what people know and what they need to know, in order to

have the best chance of making choices that achieve what they value" [10].

We are mindful that qualitative enquiry, in the social sciences and risk analysis, faces important questions about validity and reliability. We have a continuous improvement approach to our ability to measure what we set out to measure in our analysis (the validity of what we do) and to consistency of our methods, procedures and analysis (the reliability of what we do) [5]. We strive to map the conditions under which we provide our analyses and seek to ensure that our descriptions of our work are detailed and full [9]. We are clear that "It is important that the heuristic process of consolidating expert knowledge to inform modeling or analysis is well documented, reproducible and testable" [5] within the constraints of the intellectual property inherent in our work.

Vulnerability

Our qualitative approaches position us to look at vulnerability in sport contexts. We are mindful that 'vulnerability' has different meanings in the literature [7]. Our use of the term has two dimensions: a state that exists within a system before it encounters a threat that acknowledges that vulnerability is "an inherent property of a system arising from its internal characteristics"; and the amount of damage caused to a system by an event [7]. We take an holistic view of vulnerability and recognise the importance of clarity about 'resilience', 'coping' and 'adaptive capacity' [6].

Our aim is to work with our partners to find ways to anticipate and recognise vulnerability and to transform the system's adaptive capacity. In our long-term engagement with partners, particularly in the context of Championship Ready audits, we

identify obstacles to adaptation [7] and assist with the transition from short-term coping to longer-term strategic adaptation and the learning that comes with the process [21][6].

Risk

We undertake qualitative risk analysis with our partners. We are mindful that there are many ways to define risk [16][4].

Our analysis is informed by our identification of vulnerability and threats in performance contexts. We seek to support decision-making by communicating risk in ways that it can be weighed along with other costs and benefits in the decision process [18].

Our qualitative analysis process is helped by three questions :

- What can happen?
- How likely is it that that will happen?
- If it does happen, what are the consequences? [18]

We are aware that “some form of risk assessment is used to make all management decisions. This includes what needs to be managed and how much effort should be focused towards achieving adequate performance and avoiding undesirable events” [11]. Our qualitative approach examines sources of risk, their consequences and their likelihood [11].

Our desire to provide a comprehensive narrative to assist with decision-making places a high demand on the validity and reliability of our observations and analysis of risk. We are aware that our decision-support in high performance contexts will provide risk evaluations in a data intensive environment

[20]. We recognise “decision-makers need to see beyond the risk evaluation; they need to combine the risk information they have received with information from other sources and on other topics” [3]. We acknowledge that “the way we understand and describe risk strongly influences the way risk is analysed and hence it may have serious implications for risk management and decision-making”[3].

Our observational protocols enable us to provide indices of risk specific to our partners’ contexts and in the process help us build a knowledge base to inform wider and comparative discussions about performance. This enables us to provide scales of assessment for probabilities, likelihoods and consequences [13].

Our aim in providing quantitative risk analysis is to share with our partners with an assessment “when conditioned by prior expert knowledge and identification of attendant uncertainties permits risk ranking or separation into descriptive categories of risk” [8]. In doing so, our desire is to make clear short, medium and long-term decision choices and to support our partners adaptation to the threats to their strategic vision.

Our aspiration is to develop a robust qualitative risk analysis approach that addresses concerns about the validity and reliability of qualitative enquiry [14].

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