Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research methods are quite widely used in educational research although many national and international bodies are reluctant to accept results as convincing unless they are quantitative. At the same time in many countries there is a demand for research in education to be relevant to the classroom, and also that teaching should be seen as an evidence-based practice. In the UK £3m is given each year to teachers, each grant being less than £3k, to do research in their classrooms. There are some tensions here which we will explore. The issue is one of methodology, or research paradigm. In looking at different ways to do qualitative research we will consider three key questions:

- How 'thick' should descriptions be?
- How can one evaluate qualitative research?
- Where is the researcher in the research?