MODES OF INQUIRY IN EDUCATION RESEARCH

EDHI 672
Fall 2011
Prof. Steven Klees

Time: Monday, 7:00-9:45
Location: 2102 Benjamin Bldg.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

What is research? How is it carried out? What are the assumptions that underlie it? How do we know if it is "good" research? What is the relationship of research to theory? What is the relationship of research to practice? How can research improve education policy and practice? Such questions have always been difficult to answer. Yet just a few decades ago there was general agreement on how to approach these questions. The model for research in education (and in the social sciences) came principally from the model used in the natural and physical sciences. Educational research used the "scientific method" to test the truth of hypotheses about how education functioned. The methods used were almost exclusively quantitative -- experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational.

This situation has changed dramatically. While this physical science model is still strongly held by many researchers, there has developed a multitude of alternative ways of viewing and carrying out research. Each of these alternative views of research has different, although often overlapping, answers to the questions posed above. Sometimes this change has been characterized as a debate between "quantitative" and "qualitative" research. While this characterization can be a useful starting point, it obscures the variety of theories, traditions, fieldwork strategies, and analytical frameworks that are being used. Moreover, this characterization ignores a whole range of research strategies that come out of critical, feminist, postmodern and other theories. Most fundamentally, in the debates about research methods today, we are facing very different underlying paradigms, in the sense Thomas Kuhn used the term (in The Structure of Scientific Revolution), which have basic and often incommensurable differences.

This course offers an introduction to educational research. It is not intended to make you proficient in any one methodological technique or research paradigm or framework. It is not a course in the philosophy of science nor is it a course in the how-to of research. What it is intended to do is to:

• help you better understand the debates about educational research today, both in theory and in practice;
• provide a foundation for more in-depth study of research methods;

• give you an appreciation of how research is used in education policy and practice;

• sharpen your ability to be a critical reader of other people's research as well as to develop your own research; and

• perhaps most importantly, offer an opportunity for you to reflect on the research enterprise, on the research presented in all your other courses and in your professional life.

This can be a very exciting course. Most fundamentally, it is about how we understand and make sense of the world around us. If you allow yourself to be open to it, the readings, discussions, and exercises will challenge you to re-consider your own perspective and better understand those of others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Regular class attendance, participation, and completion of required readings prior to class are expected. Additional reading and group work will also be expected during the semester. Grades will be based principally on the following assignments (to be described more fully in class):

3 Abstracts/Critiques -- Find a study conducted within the mode of each of the three paradigms examined in the course. Write an abstract of the study and critique it on the basis of how well it meets the criteria and assumptions of its paradigm and then (for #2 and #3) critique the study from the perspective of other paradigms and respond to the critique.
DUE: Oct. 21, Nov. 11, Dec. 2
Length: about 5-7 double-spaced pages

Reflections on Alternative Modes of Inquiry -- Reflect on your own evolving views of the different approaches to research we examine by keeping a journal or writing a short piece towards the end of the course. (S/U grade).
DUE: Dec. 12
Length: about 3-5 double-spaced pages

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are two required texts.

ISBN: 0-7619-2805-7

COURSE EVALUATION

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. You can go to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing the summary reports for thousands of courses online at Testudo.

COURSE READINGS

1.  (9/12) INTRODUCTION

2.  (9/19) COURSE OVERVIEW


Cresswell, Chapter 1.


Shulman, L. “Seek Simplicity…and Distrust It,” Education Week, June 8, 2005.


Mertens, Preface and Chapter 1.

PART 1: QUANTITATIVE / POSITIVIST PARADIGM

3.  (9/26) EXPERIMENTS AND QUASI-EXPERIMENTS

Mertens, Chapter 4.


4. (10/10) **CASE STUDY: VOUCHERS**

**General**


**Critique**


**Critique And Response**


**Pro-Voucher**


**Beyond the Achievement Question**

CEP (2000, June). School Vouchers: What we know and don’t know and how we could learn more. Washington, DC.

5. (10/17) **CORRELATIONAL AND SURVEY RESEARCH**
Mertens, Chapters 5 and 6.


"Pro-Voucher Polls Plagued by Biased Questions and Sampling Problems, Review Finds"


PART 2: QUALITATIVE / INTERPRETIVE PARADIGMS

6. (10/24) QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE: DEBATES AND OVERVIEW


Smith, J. The stories educational researchers tell about themselves. Educational Researcher, June/July 1997, 4-11.

Merten, Chapter 8 and re-read relevant parts of Chapter 1.

Cresswell, Chapters 4.


7. (10/31) ETHNOGRAPHY AND CASE STUDIES

Cresswell, Ethnographic and case study pages in Analytic Table of Contents.

Cresswell, Appendix E, An Ethnography – R. Haenfler, Rethinking subcultural resistance: Core values of the Straight Edge movement.


8. (11/7) PHENOMENOLOGY AND GROUNDED THEORY

Cresswell, Phenomenology and Grounded Theory pages in Analytic Table of Contents


Cresswell, Appendix C, A Phenomenology – E. Anderson and M. Spencer, Cognitive representations of AIDS.


PART 3: CRITICAL / FEMINIST / TRANSFORMATIVE PARADIGMS

9. (11/14) WHAT'S DIFFERENT? DEBATES AND OVERVIEW


Mertens, pp. 16-26, 243-4, 257-260.


10. (11/21) **FRAMEWORKS AND EXAMPLES**


11. (11/28) SOME APPROACHES AND ISSUES


PART 4: IN CLOSING

12. (12/5) ETHICAL ISSUES AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Mertens, pp. 33-38, 119-120, 332-338.

Cresswell, pp. 141-142.


USDOE (Nov. 18, 2002) Report on scientifically based research supported by U.S. Department of Education


Ethical Standards of AERA

University of Maryland Guidelines for Human Subject Review.

13. (12/12) THE PERSONAL IS METHODOLOGICAL: RESEARCHERS REFLECT ON THEIR PARADIGM JOURNEYS


Mertens, Chapter 2.

Heshusius, L. and Ballard, K. (eds.) (1996) From positivism to interpretivism and beyond: Tales of transformation in educational and social research (the mind-body connection). NY: Teachers College. (Foreword, Preface, Afterthoughts, and pieces by Ballard, Guba, Smith and one other – maybe Anglin, Marling, or Heshusius).