

EDCS 632: Qualitative Research Methods
[Designed for early childhood Master of Education Students]
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Course Syllabus: Summer 2010

Catalog Description: Methods of qualitative research in education or related social sciences, from an interdisciplinary framework. (3 credits) (Graduate Standing)

Intended audience: Graduate students in educational or related social sciences preparing to conduct research in education. This is an introductory course for students to develop an in-depth appreciation of and ability to conduct qualitative research studies.

Instructor: Dr. Helen Slaughter, Professor

Office hours: By appointment

Specific statement of course goals and objectives:

- A. Statement of general goals for learning about qualitative research
1. The student will become knowledgeable about qualitative research paradigms and design.
 2. The student will be able to determine whether or not a qualitative research design is appropriate for a particular study or inquiry.
 3. The student will be aware of a variety of qualitative research strategies and techniques, and be knowledgeable about a number of interdisciplinary resources for further extending his or her research skills.
 4. The student will develop an interest in drawing upon the rich inter-and multi-disciplinary research theories and strategies available for grounding qualitative design in educational inquiry. He or she will begin to develop skills for applying this knowledge to research in education.
 5. The student will become aware of the ethical dimensions and social implications of various decisions, research strategies, and reports made by qualitative and other researchers. Students will commit to conducting research with the highest ethical standards and safeguards for participants.

B. Statement of course objectives for learners

1. The student will be able to critique and interpret published qualitative research publications in his/her area of interest.
2. The students will be able to state the differences between qualitative and or interpretive approaches to research and experimental approaches, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
3. The student will be able to develop a problem statement and research questions, and determine whether or not a specific research question is amenable to a qualitatively based inquiry.
4. The student will become familiar with selected qualitative studies in the field, and participate in class discussions analyzing findings and techniques used in studies of classrooms, schools, districts, and communities, etc., across disciplines or through multi-discipline frames.
5. The student will have actual experiences in carrying out some part of a qualitative research study such as a social science based fieldwork (i.e. ethnographic) experience, writing a research proposal, analyzing qualitative data, and/or developing a well researched theoretical base for a study.

C. Statement of course content

The course will introduce students to the major differences between qualitative approaches to conducting educational research, and experimental or quantitative approaches. The course will also explore various approaches to designing and conducting qualitative research, such as qualitative case study, ethnography, participatory action research, and narrative approaches, and discuss the interdisciplinary and over-lapping nature of research conducted on real world problems, and problems in education related to the student's professional and research interests. Students will learn systematic ways to conduct, record and analyze open-ended ethnographic interviews, and ethnographically designed observations in naturalistic contexts. Students will learn how to analyze qualitative data for the purpose of interpreting their findings, identifying over-arching themes, and constructing theories about their findings emerging from the data. The course will also address the ethical issues involved in research on and with human subjects, and the role that the University of Hawaii, Manoa, Institutional Review Board, (IRB), plays in overseeing all university research. Major topics include the nature of the research enterprise, the role of the researcher in qualitative research, issues of bias, presentation, and politics in research, (and its utilization), the study and critique of published research, the ethical dimensions of research, report writing, and the oral (and audio-visual) presentation of research results.

III. Required Texts*

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Graue, M. Elizabeth, & Walsh, Daniel J. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Selected outside readings will be added and will be listed on the course schedule.

RECOMMENDED STYLE MANUAL

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition, (get the latest, revised version (2nd or later printing) as the first printing of the 6th Ed. contained errors).

IV. Course requirements

20% **Dialogue Journals** are required based upon the required readings and/or Topics covered in the class, to be turned in daily as specified in the course schedule. They are to be typed, and include at least 3 verbatim text entries, and your response to the readings. They will be shared in class, and turned into the instructor daily. The format is: Title or textbook author: Chapter, page no., and or title of the handout, and your name on the top. Construct a three-column, 5 row table with headings as follows (also see the attached example):

The Text	My Response	Peer or Instructor Response.
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10% Oral and written presentation of a summary and critique of a published qualitative research study from an educational journal in your area of research interest.

The oral presentation will be approximately 10 minutes. The critique should especially state whether this is a good qualitative study or not, and why. The student will prepare and distribute to the class a one or two page abstract of the selected study describing the research problem, the study, using the headings of a problem, methods, findings, and critique. A full reference for the study must be included as part of the abstract, using APA style. This may be single-spaced, 12 font.

10% **Midterm group oral exam.** This will be a dialogic whole group oral exam about the major concepts about qualitative research methods covered in the class. Each student in the class will submit one question to the instructor, along with the answer, to be edited and used by the instructor for the exam. The instructor may add additional questions as appropriate based on course content. Student will get credit for their submitted question and answer, (4) and their oral responses (6).

Two mini-fieldwork experiences are required:

20% **Students will conduct an interview** based upon their research interests in education. The interview will be recorded and transcribed according to a systematic format. The student will share the purpose of the interview, the context, and the transcript with peers in small groups in class during which

time students will engage in open-coding of the interview. Then the student will write up the interview, with an summary interpreting the findings, and also critique their own skills as an interviewer in terms of asking productive open-ended questions or other devices for eliciting information, good follow-up on what the interviewee said, and taking a learner role (i.e. being a good listener).

20% **Students will conduct an ethnographic observation** in an educational context.

For early childhood educators this may include observing children at play, in an early childhood educational program, in a care center for children birth to five, parent and child interaction, etc. The observation should be related to the student's professional and/or research interests and to a possible research project.

20% **Final paper/project.** Students will have the following options for their final paper: 1) A mini-field based project using the data from their interview and observation and written up as a progress report, 2) a short research proposal including reference to the research literature, problem definition, significance of the problem, the research questions, and the methods to be used to conduct the study, or 3) a review of the research related to your research topic with special attention to the methods previously used to address the problem and an concluding statement about the research that still needs to be done on the topic that your propose to do. Final papers will be 5-10 double spaced pages, not including references.

Students will present their final papers on the last few days of the course, orally to the class using either a handout, or a power point, and will turn in their written paper on the last day of class with a self-addressed, stamped mailing envelope so that the instructor can mail the paper back to the student.

V. Course schedule (A separate attachment to be given out later.)

VI. Evaluation and grading of students

Students will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of their writing, thinking, critical analysis of extant research, and their own research, and the quality of their fieldwork. Students will also be graded on their quality and frequency of their participation in class discussions, the quality of their oral presentations, and written reports. They will also be graded on turning in their dialogue journals in a timely basis so that the peer exchange of the journals can be a fulfilling experience for all. The quality of the dialogue journals and their written, oral responses to ideas and issues raised in the class will be considered in grading. Grading will be assigned based on the above, attendance, and instructor judgment with a point system as a guideline: A (90-100); B (80-89); C (70-79); D (60-69); F, below 60%.

A Note on Ethical Behavior. Please be aware that all work you submit as your must include proper documentation and crediting of the source. Failure to properly introduce and document paraphrased material or a borrowed idea is plagiarism. Plagiarism will result in sanctions. A discussion of Academic Dishonest may be found in the UH General and Graduate Information Catalogue under "student regulations". Also see the UH Student Conduct Code for specific guidelines. Furthermore, all research conducted at UH must be approved by the IRB before data is collected from human subjects.

Disability Statement. The University of Hawaii at Manoa provides access or other reasonable assistance for students with recognized disabilities. If you need accommodations, please contact me during the first week of the course or contact KOKUA (Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Students Services, Room 013, 956-7511), the UH office for students with disabilities, for assistance

EDCS 632: Qualitative Data Analysis

Information Regarding Format and Content of Field Assignments

FORMAT FOR INTERVIEW REPORT

Date of interview _____ **Setting** _____

Name of Interviewer: _____
or

Pseudonym for name of interviewee: _____

Problem statement:

Purpose, research question(s) and Context/Place of the Interview:

Sample selection and explanation of the purpose of the interview to the participant:

Full Transcript of Interview and/or Summary for longer interviews with excerpts from the tape-recording; Record the interview if possible, also taking notes if you are able to do this and maintain good eye contact and interaction. (Always ask the participant if they are willing to have the interview recorded and if they are uncomfortable with it, instead keep notes and write up the interview as soon as possible afterwards. Start each turn of talk on a separate line. You may use R for Researcher, and Initials or pseudonyms for the

participants or interviewee. Number each line and/or if feasible, speaker-turn consecutively through the interview; refer to page and line numbers and/or speaker turn number, as appropriate in your analysis. Add glosses regarding non-verbal behavior, if appropriate. Be self critical of your own elicitation skills in your summary. (If sensitive, use code name for interviewee) Do not turn in the audiotape. You may use initials for yourself (i.e./e. R (researcher) and for the participant(s). Start each new turn of talk on a separate line. If you interview more than one person, use a separate tape or separate side of a tape for each one.

Summarize findings descriptively (what did they say?)

Interpret Findings from the Interview: Using an open coding process, and if desired a word by word, or utterance by utterance analysis come to some tentative conclusions about the meanings derived from this interview data relating to your problem and/or research questions. What was learned or summed? What ethnographic hypotheses are emerging? What changes do you need to make in your interviewing questions or strategies? What questions or comments do you wish you had (or had not) made during the interview? How does the interview contribute to the research question you started with? What may have been the “narrative reality” for the interviewee? Will the data and/or insights obtained contribute to you as a professional, researcher, and/or as a person?

FORMAT FOR OBSERVATION REPORT

Name of Observer:

Location of Observation:

Date of Observation _____

Time -- Start of observation _____

Completion of observation _____

Note whether and how this observation was explained to the participants, and whether there was a formal or informal follow-up interview (note this in your introduction or overview)

Part I. Overview and purpose of the observation. Describe the selection of the observation and participants observed. Describe your role on the participant/observer wheel (Hammersley) as outlined in class:

1) Complete participant; 2) Participant-observer (participant first, observer/researcher second); 3) Observer/participant (participant a secondary role but perhaps necessary for access and/or collecting data); 4) Complete outside observer/researcher. In this account use pseudonyms as appropriate for the participants.

Part II. Observation Protocol

This should be a low inference, detailed, description of the observation, including dialogue as needed or feasible. Pages should be numbered; it is highly recommended that paragraphs and/or lines be numbered on this portion of your report. If you need to put in observer comments or insights during the observation process, make these as **OC** and keep it short so that this analyzing doesn't interfere unduly with the observation process.

Part III. Ethnographic/Interpretative Summary (Memoing) (Open coding)

In this section you analyze what was observed, generate hypotheses as to its potential meanings for you as a researcher, as well as the meaning of events from the participants viewpoints. You may also attempt to relate this observation to questions about methodology (the complexity of conducting observations for research) and for the development of research questions, strategies for future work. In some cases, you may “vent” or comment on what you saw as a way to reflect later on what pleased or bothered you when in this situation as an observer, and as a person.

You may be able to develop a diagram showing an original nascent coding schema or format, for example focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding (or core coding) for this observation assignment or for the above interview assignment.

NOTE: SEE ATTACHED EXAMPLE OF A DIALOGUE JOURNAL

Helen Slaughter, Instructor

EDCS 632: Example of a Dialogue Journal

Graue and Walsh, *Studying children in context*, Chapter 5.

The Text	My Response	Peer or Instructor Response
<p>P. 73 Data are not “out there” to be collected by objective researchers. Instead, they come out of the researcher’s interactions in a local setting, through relationships with participants, and out of interpretations of what is important to the questions of interest.</p>	<p>This is a key to understanding the difference between qualitative research and more traditional methods of doing research. The researcher is the instrument and must be careful and skillful in her or his role</p>	
<p>p. 76 The researcher is not the only person making decisions about positions and role. Participants also make and remake these decisions as they come to know more about the situation and realize the benefits and difficulties that were not initially apparent.</p>	<p>The researcher tries to negotiate his or her role so that they fit into the context as naturally as possible, but are still in a good position to do their fieldwork and collect rich data. There are different kinds of roles in different contexts and one must be quick to see what will work out, and try to establish an ethical and positive role as a researcher.</p>	
<p>p. William Hart (1994) criticizes technical approaches for gathering information. He contrasts the child study method, which highlights the science of child observation, with deep relationships with children that build understanding at the level of personal interaction.</p>	<p>This statement is important in critiquing many of the tests used in early childhood education. However, the researcher also needs to be careful to be more of an observer and not a dominant personality when conducting research, more like the concept of the “least adult” person in the situation (see the text, Mandell, p. 77)</p>	
<p>Extra box if needed</p>		