EDU 7900

Advanced Research

Qualitative Research: Method and Analysis

This course, led by Dr. Dunlop, was an excellent way for me to begin my understanding of the qualitative research process. Nowadays, I can attest to the fact that I have a clear sense of more effective questions in surveys, and I have a better sense of coding information. Through this course I learned how to integrate theories into situations I experienced in my career. First, through a brief observation exercise, I wrote a brief description of my observation using a qualitative approach. Afterward, we began to bring our conceptional frameworks to the fore as we shared our topics to the class. It was telling how Dr. Dunlop introduced to each of us the important theorists in our approach to writing the first three chapters of our dissertations. For example, I presented my topic about middle school models and immediately Dr. Dunlop introduced me to Goodlad. Dr. Dunlop shared new insights into our topics as we began to present a more comprehensive focus of our conceptual frameworks. In fact, Dr. Dunlop was instrumental in utilizing the entire cohort in clarifying our conceptual frameworks after we presented our topics. For example, as I presented my topic of middle school models, through the discussion with the members of the cohort Dr. Dunlop encouraged me to develop a more refined thought process which ultimately led to my first attempt at a conceptional framework; to survey 8th grade students in various middle school models as it pertains to the New York State Standards. The thought process became more refined in the upcoming year and it became a more comprehensive approach to how the effective middle school, based upon considerations of various models (ADC, Turning Points, Breaking Ranks, etc.), are aligned with the ELA and Math score reports in targeted middle schools across Suffolk county. To date, I am sure my conceptional framework will transform into a more refined and yet comprehensive focus of middle schools in Suffolk County. Yet, this exercise was instrumental in encouraging each of us in the cohort to begin to think about our first three chapters, and it gave us a focus for more targeted research.

Afterward, I was part of a large group of students who answered questions in a three part process that ultimately became a paper about the qualitative research process. It was a tremendous undertaking and it felt like a monumental task at the time of the exercise. As usual for the cohort model of instruction, Dr. Dunlop was true to form as the third leg of the triumvirate, with Dr. Hughes and Dr. Smith as the other two legs that completed the group of individuals who most influenced my philosophy of education at St. Johns University. Dr. Dunlop first gave us the assignment, and then modeled a few of the answers to give us an indication of how to integrate our experiences in our careers as a model for answering the comprehensive questions in the assignment. The questions were divided into three categories: fundamental issues, in-depth review, and probing further. The intriguing aspect of the exercise was the uncanny ability of how we negotiated, and ultimately compromised, in presenting one voice in the paper. There are so many ways to complete work in groups, we utilized the process of working together on the entire assignment after each of us completed a portion of the assignment independently. It was truly a great lesson in working together. Also, in this paper we were able to utilize the conceptual frameworks of so many theorists in the thought process of answering the questions. It was truly a good lesson of utilizing a conceptual framework for answering questions that made an impact in our careers as educators.