

Using Storytelling to Interrupt a Paradigm of Sameness in Schools

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This qualitative study explores storytelling as a staff development strategy to interrupt the paradigm of sameness and to view cultural differences as essential elements of teaching and learning. Fifty-nine stories were collected from 20 administrators and teachers with a selective sampling of 14 stories used by 5 participants to demonstrate the strategy. Stories, interviews, and observations were the data for constructing meaning of existing school cultures with a long history of promoting reform without attention to cultural differences. Findings suggest that: (a) stories of urban educators contain historical and socio-cultural ideologies that have shaped American education; and (b) storytelling, if combined with opportunities for dialogue and inquiry, can help to interrupt the paradigm of silence within schools and communities.

Social Capital and School Success: Combining Internal and External Commitment With School Functioning Factors

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Schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as part of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) need to examine contributing factors. Poverty and high minority enrollment are inversely related to schools' success, and yet some schools facing these issues manage to achieve AYP on a consistent basis. To explore this phenomenon, interviews with principals from high poverty, high minority, AYP-achieving schools were conducted. Results indicate that a school's social capital functions as a differentiating factor in school success. Specifically, factors of a school's functioning (i.e., pedagogy, school improvement and professional development) operate within larger contexts of internal and external commitments and contribute to overall social capital. A conceptual model exploring social capital's relationship to school success is presented.

Recycling Attitudes and Behaviors on a College Campus: Use of Qualitative Methodology In a Mixed-Methods Study

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Many universities are strengthening existing programs and developing new ones to encourage environmentally responsible behavior. Michigan State University is expanding its recycling program, and researchers are conducting a phased, mixed methods study of faculty, staff, and students to understand their behaviors, values, and attitudes regarding recycling. The first phase consisted of focus groups with students and operational and technical staff. As reported in this paper, the focus groups revealed that students and staff profess pro-recycling attitudes but encounter barriers to recycling on campus. Additionally, we found staff participants to be deeply committed to an educational mandate including pro-environmental components. The results provide a basis to develop further lines of inquiry on campus and inform the development of new recycling initiatives.

Revealing Social Networks in Qualitative Data: An Approach for Increasing Analytic Firepower in Qualitative Data Analysis

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Social network analysis can contribute insight about social relationships that are often embedded in qualitative data, such as found in oral history interviews. Expanding upon a study of African-American migration from various regions of the United States to Saginaw, Michigan, this study examined aspects of the cultural adjustment migrants and their families made as they arrived to the northern city in search of employment. The data revealed that migrants faced race-based discrimination in housing, employment, education, and public accommodations. Furthermore, they survived life in the urban north, in part, through a series of nested social networks. This research demonstrates that social network analysis can provide qualitative researchers insights not easily or even readily gained through simple narrative analysis.

Identifying a Theoretical Perspective to Meet the Educational Needs of Twice-Migrated Sudanese Refugees

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Twice-migrated Sudanese refugees are newcomers to the United States who relocate to cities and towns not prepared to offer services necessary for integrating them into their communities. The purpose of this report is to propose a theoretical perspective to better understand the educational needs of twice-migrated Sudanese youth, a new contribution to the literature useful for practitioners and researchers. The theoretical construct emerged from blending discussions in the literature about immigrant populations and the author's school administrative experiences with twice-migrated Sudanese families. The theory suggests that twice-migrated Sudanese students encounter cultural and peer challenges as well as educational services that do not match their prior schooling and academic aspirations.

Using Qualitative Observations to Enhance the Evaluation of a K-12 Faculty Professional Development Program: What the Numbers Can't Tell You

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This case study demonstrates the importance of using qualitative methods in evaluating K-12 professional development by examining teachers' implementation of skills and knowledge learned, as applied in eighth-grade classrooms. In a workshop format, teachers from middle and high schools learned to create "Integrated Thematic Units" (ITUs). Post workshop survey data of participants showed an increased knowledge about ITUs. To enhance this data, an observational study was conducted following a cohort of eighth graders receiving ITU instruction. Results include: 1) unexpected non-participant teacher enthusiasm for the project in unplanned interactions with students, and 2) high quality of student on-task behavior and interaction with faculty during class time. This study illustrates the importance of using qualitative methods to capture detail in evaluation.

Developing Responsible Learners: Expectations and Accountability are Crucial

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In many college courses students succeed by memorizing facts and principles, but solving ill-defined problems of the future requires critical thinking and continuous learning. The present study examined findings from a phenomenological study of an interdisciplinary community focused on developing responsible learners—students who take charge of their own thinking, actions, and, ultimately, their own learning. Participants described high expectations that impacted their learning and acknowledged that being held accountable for meeting expectations was critical for their growth and development as learners. These findings have implications for educators. Students must be challenged with open-ended, complex tasks relevant to them as professionals and must be held accountable for meeting high expectations.
