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Reflection Paper 5

**Candidates demonstrate their understanding of social and behavioral research.**

Social research can be either qualitative or quantitative in nature depending on the nature of the research and what is being measured. Qualitative research is often achieved through direct observation and is related to quality. For example, observing how happy something makes someone is qualitative and thus subjective. Quantitative research on the other hand is based on measurable, statistical data that is easily defined and is related to quantity. An example of this would be how often a student raises their hand or goes to sharpen a pencil. In both examples the result is an objective number that can be analyzed for statistical data.

Behavioral research attempts to explain why we do what we do, what drives our motivations, and what forms our habits. It often involves direct experimentation to discover what people will do in specific situations and identify why people act the way they do in these situations. As a classroom teacher I do not engage in any kind of formal behavior research but I do try to identify causes of disruptive behavior to minimize it. For example, at the beginning of this year our class hamster was located on a bookshelf and students were often distracted trying to watch him play. I moved my pet center to a new location and removed the distractor which decreased my student’s tendency to be distracted.

Identifying contextual professional problems and issues within education and conduct related research is my first indicator. Project 1 shows my ability to research educational issues and identify relevant means of addressing them. This project shows my exploration of media literacy, and teachers as literacy leaders and how this information could be incorporated into a classroom. It was developed for CIRG-644 helped me discover new ways to address literacy issues and problems in a classroom.

Critically analyzing and evaluating research findings and related implications is my second indicator. Project 2 is a qualitative research paper I wrote to research the topic of inclusion of special needs students in general education classrooms. It includes both the interviews with other teachers and exploring current research in the field. I developed this paper for EDF-625 while teaching preschool special needs and the research and interviews required helped me find my way in this challenging environment. Unfortunately, this paper focused on the results of my research not the journey my research took me on and therefore missed some of the rubric for this assignment. It did however, teach me the importance of carefully scrutinizing the rubric before writing a 17 page paper.

Protecting the rights of human subjects by implementing ethical research practices is my 3rd and final indicator. Project 2 demonstrates the types of research that I conduct and demonstrates my commitment to ethical research practices even though I do not personally participate in any form of human research which could have ethical implications. Ethics played a large part in my interviews since unethical conduct or questions could bias the data gained by asking leading questions focused on how I wanted the data to come out instead of allowing the data to speak for its self.

EDF-625 placed almost as much emphasis on ethics, and the importance of ethics in research, as it did on the various methodologies used to generate the data. While this seems self-evident it was amazing to see just how hard it was to conduct an interview without introducing my own personal biases into the questions. For example, a question as innocuous as “Do you enjoy teaching math more than English?” can be seen as unethical since it pre supposes that the interviewee has a preference. It also limits the interviewee to only two options neither of which may be their personal favorites. This class allowed me to discover just how many personal biases and preconceived notions that I had and helped me to limit my projection of them onto others.