

Daniel Townsend

Collected Discussion Board Reflections for EDUC 570, 589, 591, 595

USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

EDUC 570: Research Methods and Data Analysis

Similar to what some others have said, I am still curious about the best practices regarding bridging paths between research and applicability in the field. There are unfortunately sectors of the public that are highly distrusting of research for one reason or another based on their sociocultural beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences, and generally characterize researchers as ivory tower academics out of touch with the real world. In terms of research journalism, it seems that there should be some practices developed that systematically aim to foster a rudimentary knowledge of research among readers, such as consistently including a table that includes basic characteristics like research questions, sampling procedures, and analysis methods. While I knew terminology such as "qualitative", "quantitative", "empirical", and "experimental" prior to this class, as well as concepts such as the measures of central tendency and measures of variability, I had no familiarity with a comprehensive list of research types and purposes, and definitely feel like I would benefit from standardized inclusion of research components into journalistic reports when applying research to my professional practice.

Several times a year, I review the California Standards for the Teaching Profession as a means of realigning my professional practice. As an aspiring administrator, I have started to peruse the California Performance Standards for Educational Leaders as well, and have been intrigued by a frequent mention of terms like "research-based" and "evidence-based" throughout the standards. Examples of this include the expectations for professional learning, instructional strategies, and leadership and management, as well as frequent, systematic data collection regarding staff and student performance to drive the continuous improvement of programs and policies. The standards also assert that educational leaders should actively pursue connections with researchers in order to identify issues and trends that affect teaching and learning. I feel that

Daniel Townsend

Collected Discussion Board Reflections for EDUC 570, 589, 591, 595

USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

this course set a firm foundation for a basic, comprehensive knowledge of research, including how to assess legitimacy through sampling procedures, analysis methods, and consideration of reliability, validity, limitations, and ethics, as well as other aspects. This knowledge will allow me to make informed decisions about my instruction in order to more fully serve my students and their families.

EDUC 589: Human Lifespan Development

The course was, at its core, an exploration of the idea that "one size does not fit all" when it comes to learning design. The designer really has to have the perception and foresight to know whether the planned outcomes and activities are developmentally appropriate for the learners from physical, cognitive, and socioemotional standpoints. Designing learning without development in mind is akin to designing learning without any kind of assessment or evaluation - ineffective and meaningless. It helps to look at adjacent developmental periods, essentially vertical planning, in order to know where the learners have come from and where the learners will go developmentally, so to speak - this is a skill I will put to use consistently when planning for instruction.

EDUC 591: Diversity: Power, Equity, and Inclusion

Thank you all for having the courage to share your experiences and perspectives in such a lucid and impactful way - years from now, I will be able to say wholeheartedly that I would not be the same person without having been on this journey with you all!

While the content of this course was often personally relevant, raw, and revelatory, much of it was at the same time academic, empirical, and/or theoretical in nature. I say this because researchers and their representatives often have to adapt their findings into a more digestible, or comprehensible format in order for the findings to be practically applied in real-world settings.

Daniel Townsend

Collected Discussion Board Reflections for EDUC 570, 589, 591, 595

USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

How can learning experiences effectively draw on the research to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in a way that promotes acceptance and minimizes opposition, especially in our current political climate? How can learning and motivation principles be leveraged to increase value, interest, and attention toward the equity and access principles that then transfers into sustainable practice?

Resistance to change, especially lasting change that involves active self-reflection and habit-breaking, can be found in any field, but for purposes of my own reflection, I can say firsthand that such resistance can be found in elementary education. And just as some teachers are reluctant to learn about any new curricular program, service, or technology, some have an analogous reluctance to genuinely take stock of their positionality and acknowledge their privilege - the events of the last few years have brought that to light as new positions involving DEI are emerging in school districts to the delight of some and the disgust of others. As I reflect, another question emerges: to what extent do we as learning designers explore why such topics elicit such a negative reaction from some individuals? In my own work, I look forward to applying both learning and motivation principles and equity and access principles to the growing set of social-emotional learning and cultural-competence learning activities that are being created for teachers to use in the classroom.

EDUC 595: Instructional Design

Read-alouds are part of a rich oral storytelling tradition that has been part and parcel of humanity for tens of thousands of years. Storytelling, through a variety of media, deeply affects the way we perceive ourselves and how we perceive others, and also how we build knowledge of the world around us. Read-alouds and culture are therefore inextricable. Similarly, McLoughlin and Oliver (2000), citing Henderson (1996), posit that instructional design cannot exist outside

Daniel Townsend

Collected Discussion Board Reflections for EDUC 570, 589, 591, 595

USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

the consideration of culture, because all of the aspects of design - the content being delivered, the manner and form of delivery, the way that learners exhibit their understanding, etc. - are driven by "cognitive, social, and pedagogical needs" (McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000, p. 5) that are all embedded in a cultural context, whether that context is acknowledged or not. For example, the seminal work on pedagogical oppression by Freire (1970) distinguishes between factory models of education that simply focus on information acquisition and regurgitation and agricultural models of education that focus on individuals' needs to construct their own meaning in their own ways; over the course of human history, historically marginalized populations have been much more likely to be subjected to factory models of education as opposed to agricultural models.

In planning my course, I will acknowledge the need for students to hear text read aloud and discuss it in structured, rigorous ways with their teachers and peers. Students who struggle with reading text on their own, such as English Learners/Emergent Bilinguals (ELs/EBs) and students with learning disabilities, often struggle with comprehension as well because their cognitive load is already being devoted primarily to decoding the letter-sound associations on the page. Reading text aloud to students frees up this cognitive load, giving students the mental space to think deeply about what they are hearing and further process it through activities involving writing, speaking, movement, and artistic expression. Through these sorts of tasks, the read-aloud process is much more active, dynamic, and participatory, and can be universally designed, differentiated, and scaffolded to appeal to students' assets and also fulfill their unique needs.

Also key to the planning of this course will be ensuring that teachers recognize the value in bringing students' attention to the cultural contexts in which these read-alouds fit. In advocating an inclusive instructional design approach, McLoughlin and Oliver (2000) warn

Daniel Townsend

Collected Discussion Board Reflections for EDUC 570, 589, 591, 595

USC Rossier LDT Master's Program

against an inverted curriculum design approach that conceptualizes society as inherently unequal, as well as a culturally unidimensional approach that presents culture as homogeneous, almost always with the already dominant cultural subgroups as the norm. If teachers do not value cultural inclusivity with regard to the read-aloud, they may primarily present read-alouds that feature culturally privileged subgroups, such as whites, males, and individuals of higher socioeconomic status. They may also present the read-alouds passively instead of systematically and equitably involving all students in discussion and meaning making. Passive, culturally homogeneous read-alouds can be detrimental to students' reading motivation, and in turn their reading performance. These risks will be well taken into consideration during implementation of this course.