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Final Assignment - Due Tuesday, MAY 1st, 2012 by noon.

Spring 2012—Y521

- 1) What is the purpose of this study? (Do not simply refer to the stated purpose(s) but **explain** what you understand to be the actual aim/goal of the study given our discussion of the issue of purpose in this course). Comment on the importance of the question or problem addressed in this study and how well it is framed and formulated.

In this study, the researcher states that his goal is to “examine how high-stakes testing policies influence instructional content and pedagogy in Chicago elementary schools” (Diamond, 2007). The data and discussion are not limited to only testing, but to pedagogical and content influences in the classroom in general. It is also evident that the researcher is also interested in examining the impact race and SES have on the type of instruction given to students within the school. This can be seen through the data indicated on p.290 (Table 1 – focusing on race and SES), and the interactions between student and teacher on p. 300 (Table 3). The researcher appropriately frames the problem through the lenses of State policy, the standards movement, and the methods used to teach students of different races. Based on the data and discussion, there does seem to be elements missing from the literature – primarily the prior research into factors affecting pedagogical methods (which is item being studied).

[-1]

- 2) Given the research purpose and problem, discuss and **evaluate the appropriateness** of the research strategy used in the study. Make sure to characterize and comment on the type of sample, research methodology and data collection used in this study and whether these are appropriate given the purpose and problem of this study.

In order to address the question regarding the factors affecting classroom pedagogical methods, the author utilizes a multiple case study (of 8 different school districts) to examine this phenomenon of schools with a variety of SES and racial characteristics in the Chicago area. To collect the data, the researchers used several different techniques: Interviews of teachers and administrators, classroom observation, and shadowing of school leaders. Classroom observation and interviews provide the researchers with key

Comment [gd1]: Right, this is what he states but do you think that he can actually do this on the basis of this study?

Comment [gd2]: How does this address race and ses?

Comment [gd3]: This evaluation should be justified, not simply stated.

Comment [gd4]: Ok but this should be elaborated. On what basis are you saying that there are elements missing?

Comment [gd5]: Are the cases the schools or is it the Chicago School District? And how was or were the cases selected?

Comment [gd6]: A variety? Most of these schools have a high % of poor and minority students.

information about pedagogical change; although this change and influences on the change may not be evident should there not be a longitudinal look at changes from one unit/year to the next. It is also not clearly indicated who these school leaders are (not specified to be administrators, curriculum development teams, senior teachers, etc.). It also seems that there ~~is-are~~ other data that ~~is-are~~ missing which may be helpful to analyze factors influencing pedagogical changes – namely observations during planning sessions, curricula and school meetings, and professional development records and attendance.

Ok. you describe what the researcher did but you are not addressing the most important point of the question which asks you to comment on “whether these are appropriate given the purpose and problem of this study” [-1]

- 3) Given the issues of concern in this study and the literature reviewed, **evaluate** the nature and relevance of the Classroom Observation Protocol and of the Interview Questions used by the researcher. How do these questions map to the issues raised in the reviewed literature? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

In examining the Classroom Observation Protocol and Interview Questions, it is difficult to say whether or not the researchers will gain all of the data they need to answer the question about the factors of influencing their pedagogy. The COP, for instance, has a focus on Classroom Discourse, examining only discussion and questioning used in class, which may or may not reflect changes in pedagogical methods, but instead examines student participation and engagement in only discussion. However, question 6 of the instrument (“What types of questions did the teacher ask during the lesson?”) directly links to the research cited in the literature review in the discussion on Didactic vs. Interactive pedagogies, and has the potential to identify trends similar to that noted in the literature on the racial and economic divide of these pedagogical methods (Diamond, p.288). The semi-structured interview questions (particularly for the observed teachers) do allow for the researchers to address the research questions in an effective way, particularly question D1.b and c, which do seem to be exploring the reasoning for altering pedagogical methods within the classroom. The semi-structured interview for the nonobserved teachers, however, may require some tweaking to address the topics the researchers are exploring. While question D5 does address potential factors and influences of

Comment [gd7]: Good point

Comment [gd8]: Why would this be important? Explain.

Comment [gd9]: Ok but it is not sufficient to list these. You would have to explain why these data might be important to collect.

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Comment [gd10]: How can they do this if they only have low SES and minority classrooms?

Comment [gd11]: Specify.

specific people, and D7 addressing resources, there remains a lack of “why” the changes were suggested (for the potential to relate to standards, standardized tests, school policies and vision, etc.).

Comment [gd12]: Right.

So were there issues addressed in the background/lit. review section for which there are no questions/observations?

- 4) Researchers use a number of strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of their data and research claims. **Explain and evaluate** the ways in which this researcher has used reliability and validity checks in his study? (Support your answer with evidence from the article).

In this study, the researcher utilized four strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the data and claims. This includes the use of Peer Debriefing (as identified on p. 312-313 where the author thanks those who assisted in data collection, management, and analysis, as well as draft editors and conference respondents), triangulation of data (as identified through the use of classroom observations and interviews with observed teachers, as well as that of teachers not observed), member-checking (as noted in the open-ended interview questions, particularly questions D1a, D1c), and the adherence to a protocol (COP and Interview protocol)(As suggested by Carspecken). These strategies allow for consistent reporting of data in relation to that collected by the researchers from a variety of sources, and checking on data gained to ensure reliability. Some of the questions relate to the relevant research explored in the literature review, though this section is not as strongly related to the instruments as it could be.

Comment [gd13]: Wow! That is a big leap. Assisting with data collection or anything else does NOT mean that there was “peer debriefing.”

Comment [gd14]: Again, how is this “member-checking”??

Comment [gd15]: Well we really do not know whether the people doing data collection adhered to the protocol, do we?

You seem to have some misunderstanding about validity checks here. There are also other validity and reliability checks that could have been considered [-2]

- 5) What method of data analysis is used by the researcher in this study? Describe and support your answer with evidence from the article. Also, **evaluate** the strategies used by the researcher to support the validity of the claims he makes and how these contribute to supporting the validity of the researchers’ claims. Specify and justify the validity framework you use to evaluate this study. What else could the researcher have done to enhance the validity of his claims?

In order to analyze the data collected, the researcher utilized topic coding for influences based on Richards, 2005. In their coding structure, the researchers allowed for an inclusive influences category, which allowed for multiple influences to be reported and coded. Additional coding was done on the focus, who, and what influential factors in order to specify the sources and instructional targets of each influence. Observations and interview analyses were conducted using the Nu*DIST 4.0 software (and, as indicated, the N6 software later) to identify patterns. The framework identified in the response to the previous question allows for the researchers to check for data consistency across their variety of sources (through member-checking during interviews, combination of observation and interview data, and peer debriefing during data analysis and during the coding process). In order to strengthen the validity of this data and claims, the researcher should also be explicit about their previous assumptions, beliefs, and biases (Researchers Reflexivity), particularly related to race and SES, though this may be partially accomplished through the supporting foundations list and conference submissions. The researcher should also be explicit on how the data was collected and stored – particularly with the use of recording devices (video and/or audio) to be able to analyze interactions deeper and more completely than just face-to-face observations.

The is only a very partial answer to this question [-3]

6) **Evaluate** the *discussion and conclusion, and the policy implications* of the study in light of the issues discussed in the previous questions and with regard to the generalizability of research findings.

The researcher makes no claims to generalizability from the results of this study, focusing on the contextual implications and policy implications for the Chicago school district. The researcher does relate his own research to data and findings from other, earlier studies (Smith et al. 2001; Anyon 1980, 1981; as cited in Diamond, 2007) regarding pedagogical methods of instruction in schools with a higher rate of minority and low SES students, which do suggest that the findings may be more generalizable towards these types of schools. The researcher further goes to explore the policy implications for schools with these characteristics, suggesting that there be accountability

Comment [gd16]: You are not identifying any framework in the previous question, just a set of procedures.

Comment [gd17]: Except that the study does not focus on this. No data is collected regarding different pedagogical approaches in different racial and social backgrounds.

Comment [gd18]: Ok so this is one reliability check.

Comment [gd19]: Is this appropriate given that this study does not address this issue at all other than in the background section?

Comment [gd20]: No!

and support structures for teachers to adapt their own classrooms to that of a less didactic, more interactive environment. These implications do make sense given the context and previous studies, however, for a more concrete generalizable claim, data identifying a positive correlation between student racial make-up and teacher pedagogical methods would strengthen any claims to generalizability, and act as a base to further explore the factors for pedagogical change, should teachers be found who have successfully adapted their pedagogical methods from didactic towards a more interactive environment.

Comment [gd21]: There is no data in this study to support this recommendation.

Comment [gd22]: This is not a generalizability question here though. You simply should not make a recommendation for which you have no supporting evidence.

This reads like a very rushed brief set of responses to complex questions. I am not sure what the problem is. At times it seems like you did not review some of the readings or notes before answering. At other times you seem to misunderstand some of the concepts. And yet at other times you are mostly descriptive and non-evaluative even when the question asks you to do so.

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