

Genesis for Higher Education & Social Justice Policy from Qualitative Research

Joseph Martin Stevenson, PhD

Miles College
5500 Myron Massey Blvd.
Fairfield, Alabama
USA 35064

Jeton McClinton, PhD

Jackson State University
1400 John R. Lynch Street
Jackson, Mississippi
USA 39217

Abstract

The authors have developed a framework for applying the common levels of inquiries relative to the what, the why, the how, the where, and the when of qualitative research against the common forces that surround these inquiries in today's examination of higher education and social policy. The authors provide examples for approaching these levels and forces in higher education settings. However, the examples can be used as paragons for readers of IJSPE to consider in other social and educational settings outside higher education. The writer's conceptualization of the driving forces, counter forces, and restraining forces provide readers with possible rationale and alternative reasoning for societal circumstances and conditions in today's emerging divisiveness

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Introduction

Genesis has been defined as the evolution, creation, origin, birth, inception, and beginning (Macmillian Dictionary, 2019). Policy is defined as a method, practice, platform, principle, procedure, and protocol (Macmillian Dictionary, 2019). Both of these powerful definitions are pertinent to planning for educational and social policy, and both descriptions are relevant to the why, the what, the how, the where, the when and the who of qualitative research. That is, before “beginning” and the “protocols” for academic inquiry, determine WHY qualitative research is fundamental to understanding forces, retraining forces, and counter forces of social justice. WHAT is the challenge of the qualitative research, HOW approaches to qualitative research can be advanced, WHERE can qualitative research have high impact meaning in social settings, communities, conditions, circumstances that warrant qualitative research strategy, WHEN can qualitative researchers use the methodology and design appropriately for applications in social situations, space, stations, time, and WHO qualitative research should reach and respond to for solutions, resolve or remedy?

For and from colleges and universities following the guidelines of the campus institutional review board (IRB), while our International Journal of Social Policy and Education (IJSPE) piece offers qualitative frameworks for stakeholders on campus, students as future qualitative researchers can also apply the qualitative approaches to social justice issues off campus that are related to their awarded degrees and aspiring careers.



This could include the areas where many readers of IJSPE also study, work in, or explore solutions from qualitative research approaches, practices, and applications. This can include, but not be limited to, social policy, human rights, social work and welfare, gender and women studies, religious and faith-based studies, environmental policy, economic policy, health care, human behavior, social exclusion, child protection, and unemployment. The challenges of social diversity and social justice is everywhere, all the time, and across all sectors, institutions, and organizations with impact and implications to humans as stakeholders, consumers, customers, clients, and constituencies. The qualitative research could be included, and not limited to, the “lived experiences” of the following:

- Parents, family members, or caretakers of elementary and secondary students
- Health and wellness promotion professionals and clients
- Special and alternative education students
- Nutrition educators and their clients, customers, and consumers
- Bilingual educators and their students
- International and comparative educators and their students
- Art educators and their students
- Educators of students with learning disabilities and limitations
- Social scientists who work in group dynamics, conflict resolution, troubleshooting, and problem solving
- Educators in experiential teaching and learning
- Social justice advocates, human rights proponents, community leaders, and chief diversity officers
- Professionals in information resources, science, and technology
- Educators of children literature and early childhood education
- Educators of language, linguistics, and literacy
- Educators of political science, public policy, and social scientific inquiry
- Catalysts, change agents, and other groundbreaking or breakthrough leaders
- Educators of classroom management with diverse groups
- Educators or lawyers who teach school law and legal issues in education
- Educators who serve as supervisors or mentors in student teaching
- Leaders in K-12 as well as higher education who lead efforts to advance, elevate, and promote social justice amid the forces we face and confront around and within the educational pipeline.

Qualitative research can be applied in all of the above settings and the methodology has been captured, characterized, and conceptualized as transformative (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch, & Carl, 2015; Silverman, 2011, 2016; Wolcott, 1994); hermeneutic (Wolcott, 1998; Silverman, 2011, 2016); contrasting to positivist (Merriam, 1998); drawn from writing and writing about (Wolcott, (2001); borrowed from the experimental sciences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, 2015); makes theory and contributes to meaning rather than testing theory and meaning (Wisker, 2008); encompasses case study, fieldwork, participant observation and other applications; and is used to manage, analyze, and interpret data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Babbie, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2006, 2015; Macmillan, 1998).

Qualitative researchers in today's higher learning settings should convey a mindful, cognitive, introspective, and cerebral need for deeper and “wider” understanding of human conditions, circumstances, and consequences. These days, we could be at a crossroads in higher learning where higher achievement demands in the classroom should be balanced against wider needs outside the classroom for, by, and with research-based interdisciplinary understanding of the complexities of life and the world. When we convey this to type of balance to our students, we ask students and other stakeholders in the academic enterprise for wider thought leadership that finds balance between either and or. Qualitative research can be enlightening, engaging, and empowering in this regard and, frankly, we need more of our students to become transformational qualitative researchers – with the beginnings of growth at the bottom of the pipeline.

As pointed out by Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998) over twenty years ago, “no reason exists to preclude most elementary, secondary, and university students from becoming critical thinking student researchers”.



The driving forces we highlight here for IJSPE have compelling impact within, around and throughout social justice and higher learning in America, and the implications to educational and social policy from applied qualitative research approaches can have profound positive effect on communities, especially marginalized ones. Why we do what we do, where and when we do it, and how and which tools we use in qualitative research can be the genesis, the impetus, and catalyst for positive change at a time of disconcerting, troubling, and turbulent challenges.

In “higher learning”, we should ask students to be informed by what they read, hear, or are told, but only be influenced from “critically” thinking-things-through-thoroughly throughout. We consider this for more accurately using the term “thought leadership” -- a term that loses context, influence and power when not applied more appropriately in today's discourse, vernacular, and lexicon. The first known use of the term for higher learning was in 1826 and was defined as “education, learning, or scholarship on the collegiate or university level.” What should have been added is the manifestation of inquiry when higher learners find themselves confronting and facing human hypocrisy, irony, contradiction or “in between either and or” (Stevenson, Crockett, Jefferson, Walker & Warner, 2015).

In so many ways, the allegoric metonymy, allusive metaphors and transcendental metaphysics of qualitative research can capture the transformational experience in higher learning with the campus serving as the laboratory for students to study the contradictions, mysteries, ironies and hypocrisies that fall within driving forces, restraining forces, and counterforce's.

A great deal of higher learning reflection is occurring across our country not only on college and university campuses but in many other communities, organizations, institutions, sectors, and other pockets in our increasingly hyper-turbulent society ignited often in social or political media, most of time, absent of researched empirical evidences. It seems many, if not most, are operating their living experiences on autopilot without spaciously thinking-things through- thoroughly-throughout. Many are trying to accept things, let things go, and balance things as the country tries to find balance in the middle of human complexity, social divisiveness, political discourse, alarming behaviors, and many other driving forces, restraining and counter forces that thread our everyday lives.

Among the thought leadership tenets students should follow are differentiating between fact and fiction; examining causes, effects and remedies; recognizing and assesses cultural bias and rhetoric; determining accuracy and completeness of information - especially in today's oscillating social and political media; recognizing logical fallacies and faulty reasoning; comparing and contrasting conflicting points of view; applying force-field

WHAT: The Other Broader Isms Local to Global

growing, emerging and intensifying social-demographic multiculturalism, transnational's, internationalism locally, regionally and globally beyond the traditional and the conventional institutional "isms" of racism, sexism, classism, etc.

WHY: study the relationships between societal and institutional "isms"

WHO: minority consumers, customers, clients, or constituencies?

WHERE: selected institutions or targeted organizations

WHEN: weekends away from the workplace or workforce

HOW: focus groups

WHAT: Disparity and Division

expanding disparity and divide between the wage gap, the low wealth and high wealth in uncertain and unpredictable economy -- resulting in higher population growth among the vulnerable devalued, voiceless, under-served, marginalized, impoverished, underrepresented, underutilized, underprivileged, and oppressed people who seek social justice for survival.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of low wage and high wage employees

WHO: full-time employed workers, partial or part time employees, unemployed former workers and

WHERE: selected institutions or targeted organizations

WHEN: weekends away from the workplace or workforce

HOW: one-on-one and/or group interviews

WHAT: Ideology and Idealism

residuals, results and impact from privately funded schools and publicly funded schools often characterized by racial composition, economic status and conflicting ideologies and clashing idealism about "what is an empowered, enlightened and educated person".

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of enrolled first-generation college students

WHO: lower division, freshman and sophomore, undeclared major college students

WHERE: college or university campus

WHEN: between lower division to upper division matriculation

HOW: case studies

WHAT: Crises, Constraints and Concerns

ecession related hardships, economic downturn, employment decline, financial crises, fiscal constraints, national disasters, stress on families, and pressure on organizations and institutions, resulting in growing traumatic concern for future generations.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of college students from lower income and higher income families

WHO: graduating college students who have found employment on a career path

WHERE: college or university campus

WHEN: after graduation

HOW: alumni interviews, record keeping and processes of observations

WHAT: Continuum and Compromise

changing mores for a societal continuum that ranges from ultra conservative/restrictive voices to ultra-liberal/permissive voices with religious, social, and political beliefs that live side by side and must, out of necessity, understand, accept, compromise, and tolerate extreme differences.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of college students from varying diverse groups on campus

WHO: students majoring in humanities, social and behavioral science

WHERE: on campus

WHEN: during organized student diversity activity, event or program

HOW: one-on-one or group interviews

WHAT: The Dream and the Diversity

decreasing confidence in the “American Dream” and increasing incidents of human behaviors based on overreactions to events, insensitive reactions to events, sporadic impulses, vulnerable feelings, and episodic emotionalism; unresolved, unraveling and unrevealing historical and human feelings about human diversity, compounded by calamitous attitudes on campus and in the community about “the way we do things around here,” especially as related to campus environments.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of college students from varying diverse groups on campus

WHO: students majoring in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

WHERE: clinical laboratories

WHEN: during organized student diversity activity, event or program one-on-one or group interviews

WHAT: Discontent, Control and Corruption

citizen discontent, frustration, impulse, and inability to control or have impact upon government and corporate decision-making, efficiency, ethics, collusion, conspiracy and corruption.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of college students from varying diverse groups on campus

WHO: college students who have completed the general education and liberal arts curriculum

WHERE: freshman orientations and webinars

WHEN: freshman year

HOW: focus groups or online surveys

WHAT: Voices, Shifts and Values

expanding voice, participation and power of women and ethnic minorities; declining voice, participation and power of many white males; dramatic shifts in demography and social values.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of college students and stakeholders in the local off campus community

WHO: enrolled students and unemployed citizens in the community

WHERE: on and off campus

WHEN: evenings and weekends

HOW: focus groups

WHAT: Clashes and Compassion

divisive discourse about public policy concerning taxation, entitlements, rights and privileges compounded by cultural clashes about values, virtue, rectitude, probity, and morality resulting in declining patience for human imperfection and declining regard for human compassion, human rights, and human justice.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of college students and stakeholders in the local off campus community

WHO: enrolled students and unemployed citizens in the community

WHERE: on and off campus

WHEN: evenings and weekends

HOW: focus groups

WHAT: Security and Safety

growing concerns about national security, self-preservation, turfism and territorialism, domestic immigration, personal alienation, religious conflict, amid unpreparedness for and uneasiness with accelerating globalization

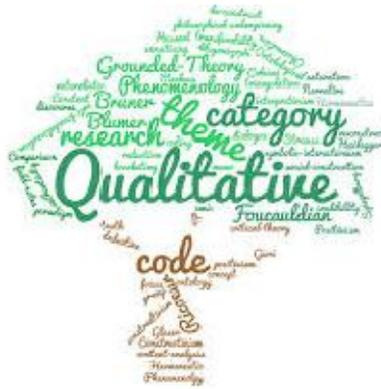
WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of professional school and graduate study students

WHO: professional school and graduate study students

WHERE: research seminars, activities, events, or programs

WHEN: evening or weekend

HOW: case studies



WHAT: Decency and Civility

diminishing respect and regard for freedom of expression with accepted common decency and regard for human dignity and revering civility; ambiguity about the purpose of higher learning for a deeper, greater, wider and human good.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of students majoring in humanities, social and behavioral sciences

WHO: humanities, social and behavioral science students

WHERE: extracurricular diversity activity, event or program

WHEN: evening or weekend

HOW: case studies

WHAT: Deportment and Decision-Making

habitual human behavior and deportment -- concerning judgments, ambiguity, perceptions, and opinions about New South an Old South -- based on ignited historical emotionalism versus vetted, verified, and validated facts, analysis, data driven decision making and critically “thinking-things-through-throughout thoroughly”.

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the lived experiences of students majoring in STEM fields and humanities, social and behavioral sciences

WHO: STEM fields and humanities, social and behavioral science students

WHERE: extracurricular diversity activity, event or program

WHEN: evening or weekend

HOW: online survey and case study

WHAT: Social Media and Digital Distraction

resentment and resistance to socio-progressive change, and older intergenerational influences on younger generations that may or may not have influence, compounded by social media and other digital distractions resulting in high tech versus high touch; and

WHY: study, contrast, and compare the attitudes, deportment, comportment, and disposition of younger and older students as well as off commuting and on campus living students

WHO: younger and older students as well as off commuting and on campus living students

WHERE: extracurricular diversity activity, event, or program

WHEN: evening or weekend

HOW: online survey and case study

WHAT: Fear and Freedom

fear of losing perceived freedom, rights, privileges and entitlements; fear of losing place and position in society; fear of losing identity; fear of losing the ability to make choices and have alternatives based on self-comfort and convenience, personal security, the pursuit of happiness; and fear of the unknown.

