

Experiential Method Notes: What, Why and How

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- What is the Experiential Method?

It is a research methodology designed to examine experiences, phenomena and situations from a qualitative perspective.

It is a way to maintain a focal point of interest in qualitative research without “wandering” aimlessly into areas which are not related to the topic.

It is of particular assistance when attempting to investigate topics which do not easily lend themselves to quantitative approaches (i.e., when one is not trying to measure differences or to validate hypotheses or to establish rates or regulate “behaviors”).

The Experiential Method is a structured methodology not a loosely knit series of interviews.

Research findings emerge directly from what has been shared and discussed with participants, then put into a wider, holistic framework and dialogued with existing theory/research.

- Adding this course to the GEDU curriculum will provide the opportunity for students to explore in-depth, one specific qualitative methodology and learn the “nuts and bolts” of its application.
- It will broaden the options for students to select an appropriate research methodology for dissertation work.
- Students who enroll in this course learn to actually apply the method to research projects during the class. As a result they gain a practical, “hands on” understanding of the process before attempting to begin work on a dissertation proposal.
- One of the major critiques of qualitative work done in the School now is that the projects are “all over the place” (meaning that the research methodologies used lack the ability to “focus” on the specific relevant aspects of the topic).
- When a student presents a dissertation proposal using the Experiential Method, faculty serving on the committee have far less revision work to do as the student has a firm grasp on the research process and its

organization. After completing the course, the student has gained a considerable amount of information and is in a position to fully articulate both verbally and in writing, in a clear and precise manner, the research project.

- This methodology has been used at several Bay Area Colleges, Universities and Institutes and is a published text by Peter Lang Publishers (1990). It has been taught as an academic course at USF, both in the College of Professional Studies, the School of Education and at other Bay Area Colleges, Universities and Institutes.

At USF it has and is currently being used by students for both Theses and Dissertations—in the College of Professional Studies (Theses) and in the School of Education (Dissertations).

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