

Research Designs and Questions

Mark Rash | markrash@vt.edu | July 18, 2010

1. **What do elementary school teachers in the San Francisco Unified School District think about full inclusion as a practice in their district?**

This question would best be answered through the use of survey research because it involves finding out what teachers think about full inclusion. Using open- and closed-ended questions would allow a mixture of responses to gauge the teachers' thoughts on using full inclusion in their district. Surveys are used to describe characteristics of the target population, which would include thoughts and opinions about full inclusion.

2. **Is there a relationship between students' level of social skills and successful transition into mainstream classes?**

Correlational research would be appropriate for answering this question because the study involves investigation a relationship. Since the study would simply seek to determine whether a relationship exists without attempting to influence the variables, correlational research would be ideal for this question.

3. **How do individuals with physical disabilities perceive themselves in comparison to their able-bodied peers in terms of work-related activities?**

This question would best be answered by ethnographic research because it involves interviewing individuals with physical disabilities to determine their self-perceptions and comparing the results to their able-bodied peers. The study would involve interviewing and/or observing the groups to document their everyday experiences in order to answer the research question – which is the major premise of ethnographic research.

4. **Does a whole-language curriculum lead to higher student achievement than a phonics curriculum?**

Because this question involves manipulation of an independent variable (type of curriculum) to determine its effects on a dependent variable (student achievement), experimental research would be the ideal approach.

5. **How are teachers implementing the whole-language approach to reading in their curricula at Harding Elementary School?**

Answering this question would involve studying an existing group (classes at Harding Elementary School) in order to understand a specific situation (how the whole-language approach is being used), which calls for a case study. Observing the classroom, interviewing teachers, and reviewing instructional materials and strategies would all be appropriate components of the case study in order to answer the research question.

6. **What were the key events that led to the demise of affirmative action in state hiring and college admissions in California?**

Because answering this question involves taking a look at events that occurred in the

past, historical research should be used to answer the question. This approach would involve reviewing relevant documents and interviewing individuals directly or indirectly involved in order to identify the key events.

7. How do magazines targeted at teenagers present information on safe sex practices?

A content analysis would be used to answer this question because it would analyze the written and visual contents of the magazines. Such an analysis could reveal a great deal about how such information is presented and how teenagers respond in terms of behaviors and attitudes.

8. Are the reasons Native American Indian students give for dropping out of school different than those given by non-Native American Indian students?

Since a causal-comparative study investigates the causes or consequences of known differences between or within groups, it would be the most appropriate design for answering this question. The research would involve determining how membership in the studied groups impacts the reasons given for dropping out of school.