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Becoming Holistic Teachers and Learners: A Review of Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars

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Becoming Holistic Teachers and Learners: A Review of Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars

Abstract

In this review I offer an alternative perspective on the book *Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars* by emphasizing how the authors propose a holistic approach to learning qualitative research. Departing from the point of view of an emerging scholar, this piece was written as I was transitioning from a doctoral program to the professional world, learning with the authors what it is to teach qualitative research methods while being socialized as a scholar in the doing of qualitative research.

Keywords

qualitative research, emerging scholars, teaching strategies

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Becoming Holistic Teachers and Learners: A Review of Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars

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In this review I offer an alternative perspective on the book *Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars* by emphasizing how the authors propose a holistic approach to learning qualitative research. Departing from the point of view of an emerging scholar, this piece was written as I was transitioning from a doctoral program to the professional world, learning with the authors what it is to teach qualitative research methods while being socialized as a scholar in the doing of qualitative research.

Keywords: qualitative research, emerging scholars, teaching strategies

My first encounter with *Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars* occurred during a capstone seminar required to complete the Certificate in Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies at my home university. At first, I was concerned with the cost of an additional required textbook reading for the class, and I wondered if I could use the strategies Raji Swaminathan and Thalia Mulvihill provided when teaching qualitative courses myself.

Upon reading the first two chapters, I realized this book was piece of crucial reading for scholars interested in engaging students in the practice of qualitative research. In short and clear paragraphs, the authors explained how the teaching of qualitative research needs to be revised based upon new understandings of what it means to teach and learn. Taking a holistic approach to learning, the authors encourage instructors to plan their courses in ways that socialize, from early on, emerging qualitative scholars into the research process.

Coming from a World Language Teaching background, I am accustomed to thinking about the design of curriculum in a way that helps students think in the foreign language and become proficient in it. The book provides the same type of curriculum framework for how to think qualitatively, be critical while doing research, and be reflexive of the research and writing practice.

In the first chapter, Raji Swaminathan and Thalia Mulvihill propose constructing a pedagogical culture for qualitative inquiry. Starting by presenting the book and a current literature review on the debate of what is qualitative research, the authors discuss what defines qualitative research and provide an evaluation of the field.

Heavily based on Bloom's Taxonomy and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), in the second chapter, they present on general course design principles and share sample syllabi for face-to-face and online instruction of qualitative research.

The following chapters (3-10) present ways to teach qualitative inquiry holistically and provide strategies to engage emerging scholars into thinking qualitatively from the early stages of inquiry to collecting, analyzing, reporting on qualitative research data. In less than 200 pages, divided into ten chapters, Swaminathan and Mulvihill lay out what I believe are the most significant concepts in qualitative studies (i.e., participant observation, interview protocols, data analysis, writing up the research, among others).

Their pedagogical approach includes the use of guiding questions, learning objectives, and clear outcomes for each chapter, followed by a revision of concepts and sample teaching strategies instructors can utilize to teach the lessons online or in person. The book offers several exercises and activities, including discussion questions, guided group and individual tasks, and field experiences that will help engage emerging qualitative scholars into the research process.

In terms of content, I think some chapters are more detailed than others and that the final chapters could benefit from further expansion. Despite the limitations, the book provides a solid overview of current literature and does what it proposes - contribute to the conversation about teaching qualitative research by acting, as they describe, as a catalyst for the readers' own journeys. On this note, as the reader experiences and experiments with the entire book or selected chapters, they can reflect and learn from their teaching, just as the authors did.

Because the book offers relevant materials and pedagogical strategies that can be used to teach qualitative methods, it can be applied to different contexts, used by both instructors teaching college level qualitative inquiry or teachers and researchers using qualitative methods.

I also recommend Swaminathan and Mulvihill's *Teaching Qualitative Research: Strategies for Engaging Emerging Scholars* book to current graduate students doing qualitative research. Moreover, it could be quite fruitful for graduate students like me who pursue interests in teaching qualitative research courses. Additionally, I humbly suggest this as a reference for scholars who decide to pursue qualitative studies as well as to researchers who seek practical exercises to experiment with qualitative methods independently. This is an accessible, but intellectually critical, text for a seminar course.

References

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