Proposal of Field Research Study

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**Brief Description of the Study**

Throughout the United States, many school districts are placing a strong focus on technology integration throughout the curriculum to enhance the levels of active learning in the classroom and improve the overall teaching and learning process.

Even with the focus being placed on the integration of technology, there are still many schools that do not have sufficient technology and therefore students lack accessibility and use of it. In K-12 public schools, students from low-income households and minorities face the biggest disproportion in regards to the lack of accessibility to technology and the use of it. According to studies, when comparing minority students against households of the majority, fewer minorities own computers (Chisolm, 2001). The disparity of technology amongst schools, classrooms, and students is referred to as the “digital divide”. Schools and classrooms that do not use technology throughout their content lessons even though they have technological devices and full accessibility, is an example of what is referred to as the “digital-use divide”. This study will look at the effects of the digital-use divide on active learning as perceived by school administrators.

**Data Collection**

Prior to the collection of data, NJCU IRB approval will be needed to assure that this study meets all ethical standards. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated, “Permission needs to be sought from multiple individuals and levels in organizations, such as individuals in charge of sites, from people providing the data and from campus-based institutional review boards (IRBs) to collect data from individuals and sites” (p. 175). Once IRD approval has been granted, the researcher will seek permission from the Superintendent of Schools to conduct the surveys and interviews in his/her district. This qualitative study will use a semi-structured interview protocol to interview school administrators (Principals and Assistant Principals) along with a survey that will be distributed to school administrators and teachers to explore the effects of the digital-use divide on active learning as perceived by school administrators. The population for this study will be 46 school administrators from the ABC school district, which were chosen through purposeful sampling to target all of the school administrators in the district. The ABC school district is an urban school district with over 17,000 students in 21 schools. The entire district receives free breakfast and lunch and more than 85% of the student population is Hispanic. The sample size will be dependent upon the participation. All 46 potential participants will be contacted via email and through a phone call.

Potential limitations that may occur are a lack of participation by school administrators and teachers due to time, reluctancy to participate in the interviews/surveys, and/or to respond in an honest professional and candid manner.

Professional experiences, perceptions, and biases, have the possibility of influencing participants’ approaches, interpretations, and responses to the study.

**Research Questions**

This study will seek to answer the following three research questions:

1. How do school administrators define the term “digital-divide” and “digital-use divide”?

2. To what extent do school administrators realize that the “digital-divide” and “digital-use divide” exists?

3. What is the relationship between the accessibility and use of technology in the classroom and active learning in terms of student achievement?

**Need of the Study**

To improve the teaching and learning process towards achieving academic success, the integration of technology must be a focal point in the lessons that are being delivered to students. The revision of curriculum across K-12 public school districts must occur to assure that technology is integrated across all content areas to enhance the academic learning environment.

The level of accessibility and use of technology that teachers and students have is vital if the result desired is to have an effective teaching and learning process. If public schools continue to face disproportions in the accessibility and use of technology for both teachers and students, achievement gaps will continue to broaden amongst students from low-income families and minorities. Technology in todays’ society is crucial in the opportunities it provides in the competition of global development of the world. In order for individuals to achieve a higher socioeconomic status in todays’ society, it is obligatory to have technological skills and training (Eisner, 1985).

**Methodology**

This research study will use a grounded theory design. According to Creswell (2015), “A grounded theory design is a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic” (p. 426). Through the approach of the grounded theory design, the researcher will develop a theory supported by the data collected and analyzed to explore the effects of the digital-use divide on active learning as perceived by school administrators.

**Survey Questions**

 The survey questions for this study will be opened ended to allow the participants to feel free to answer in as much depth and detail as they feel necessary. The participants should not feel limited in their responses and should include their feelings, understandings, and perceptions. Below are sample survey questions to be asked to the school administrators and teachers.

**School Administrator Survey**

1. As a school administrator, how do you define the term “digital-divide” and “digital-use divide”?
2. As a school administrator, to what extent do you realize that the “digital-divide” and “digital-use divide” exists?
3. What is the relationship between the accessibility and use of technology in the classroom and active learning in terms of student achievement?
4. How much professional development in technology integration has been provided to your staff?
5. Does your school have technology-related instructional goals? Why or Why not?

**Teacher Survey**

1. How do you define the term “digital-divide” and “digital-use divide”?
2. To what extent does the “digital-divide” and “digital-use divide” exists in your school?
3. What is the relationship between the accessibility and use of technology in the classroom and active learning in terms of student achievement?
4. How often do you have access to technology during your lessons? Why or Why not?
5. How often do you integrate technology throughout your content areas? Why or Why not?

References

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