Integrating ethnographic and quantitative research

Science, Anthropology

Integrating Ethnographic and Quantitative Research: A Reply to Kleinfeld with Implications for American Indian Self-Determination. Source

Greenbaum, Susan D. and Paul E. Greenbaum

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Key Words

Cultural differences, Non-verbal communication, Minority students, Ethnographic studies, Psychology and Anthropology.

Methods

Greenbaum and Greenbaum critically discuss the ideas of Kleinfeld regarding the effects of cultural differences on educational achievements. They are very critical of the fact that Kleinfeld's work lacks solid evidence to prove itself; her work lacks data to confirm her findings and she tries to prove her point merely by logic. They go on to state that Kleinfeld denies the magnitude of the problem by labeling it ' sporadic' and easily ' overcomed'; which may be contrary to the reality as she fails to provide supporting research. Greenbaum and Greenbaum discuss communication in a wider sense; they add non-verbal communication to be a part of the communicative process. By providing this insight into communication they are able to point out the deficiency seen in Kleinfeld's work, as she has failed to include this aspect in her work effectively. The study is mainly based on previous works in the field which are either descriptive or analytical in nature.

Summary

The authors argue about some of Kleinfeld's ideas related to the extent of impact of cultural differences on educational attainment of learners; especially among the minority students. They also argue that cultural differences are essential factors that might influence the learning processes, to which Kleinfeld does not appear to be paying attention. Thus, studying and understanding the real situation of cultural differences might improve the learning conditions and ultimately learning outcomes by affecting the cognitive process of the learners. This impact reflects the need to study and address the educational needs. The issue of cultural differences reflects the need for a change in educational practices to improve education achievements.

The authors also stress the importance of using appropriate methods in studying cultural issues because personal attitudes of teachers in schools cannot work as evidence for studying minority students. Ethnographic studies can be taken as an example in this case, but there are other quantitative methods that may help in communicative and non-verbal studies. Thus, it will become clear that non-verbal differences are more obvious than the spoken language. A lack of existence of a common language of communication between two individuals may result in unclear signaling of expressions.

The authors further argue that Kleinfeld in her work has assumed that it is lack of ' motiviation' that affects the learning of minority students. This implies their unwillingness to learn about the cultural values of the majority culture; which in their opinion is far from truth. This need to study the cultural differences demonstrates how Psychology and Anthropology are

important in the field of research since they provide data for the development of knowledge. Therefore, American-Indians have become more familiar with their surrounding cultures because of their interactions with others.

Analysis

Greenbaum and Greenbaum assert the importance of cultural differences in human studies because of their active roles in influencing the educational and cognitive processes. They provide some evidence that explains how the non-verbal communication is considered as an influential factor in achieving educational and cultural goals within the community. They mention that non-verbal communication has a relationship with the cognitive gain of minority children. This refutes the idea that denies the importance of the cultural differences among learners in the fields of study.

The authors appear to be proving the fact that their work has contributed significantly to the fields of Psychology and Anthropology. They have emphasized that understanding cultural differences may lead to improvements in student-teacher relationship, which will prove to be beneficial to students in the long run. And if such cultural variations are not given due importance; this ' myopic' ideology may lead to the destruction of educational aims of the minority students.

It is important for authors to show some empirical studies to point out the weaknesses in Kleinfeld and Cazden's studies. Such studies are also needed to support their claims and recommendations regarding the importance of cultural differences in social studies.

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