

# Country school research critique

[Education](#), [School](#)



Qualitative Study Evaluation Eleanor Vernice Siyon u7a1 Capella University  
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Qualitative Study Evaluation The one-teacher country school is largely the past practice of the American educational institution. This one teacher setting was characteristic of the recitation process used by students to “recite” to the teacher what one had learned from their lessons.

The teacher characteristically would ask questions of their students during their process to glean the answers and evaluate the progress of their students. Traditionally these classrooms consisted of multi-age, multi-grade level all situated in one classroom with one teacher. This evaluation is about one such educational system in the state of Nebraska. It is an ethnographic study titled “Notes on a Country School Tradition: Recitation as an Individual Strategy” The stated purpose of this study was to view the practices of some of the one-teacher schools and to determine what may be learned from them.

This evaluation will proceed by evaluating the validity and effectiveness of this research in its relation to the following categories within the study. The categories are as follows: the problem statement, review of the literature, the purpose statement and central phenomenon, validity of the data collection, validity of data analysis and findings, and the quality of writing and its consistency with the qualitative criteria. 1 Evaluation of the Title The title of the study “Notes on a Country School Tradition: Recitation as an Individual Strategy” This title does not reflect the central phenomenon being studied.

## Feature ArticleCountry SchoolAllen Curnow

The central phenomenon is the investigation of recitation in a one-teacher school as a patterned and functional response to the conditions of smallness, and its interrelationship to parental and community expectations, along with the inevitable transfer of these students to larger middle and secondary schools in an environment in defense of their way of life at a time of rural social and economic decline. The title does reflect the site (country school) and the people.

## 2 Evaluation of the Problem Statement

The author does have an educational issue to study, though not clearly stated in the problem statement.

It may be assumed due to the fact that many of the children taught in this recitation method in the small schools went on to do very well in the large secondary and middle school settings. Therefore, a comparison of this small school approach and the differing large school approach is worthy of further educational study. I believe that the author has provided evidence that this issue is important because of the research that is stated about the benefits of smaller schools and the success of the students once they leave the one class environment.

There is an indication that the author has located this issue through past research as he mentions the various literature that he has read in the past about this subject matter. I feel that this study may have been more beneficial as a mixed design approach. The ethnographic design did give an excellent insight into the values of the rural people and the day to day

activities of the students and teacher. It was also very helpful to see firsthand how the recitation process worked.

But there are other variables in the problem statement such as: recitation as a functional response to smallness, conservatism toward knowledge and learning, and parental and community expectations. An indication of how these variables correlate to the acceptance of this method of education may have been handled more effectively with a correlational approach. The assumptions of the study seem to be more consistent with a mixed methods approach.

### 3 Evaluation of the Review of the Literature

The author does present reviews on the effects and various studies regarding class size.

I do not believe he provided literature that specifically analyzes his research problem. I also felt his literature base was scant. But he does state that very little if any existed for the one teacher one class school room. The study does follow the APA style.

### 4 Evaluation of the Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose and research questions were not fully apparent to me. I have an idea of what he was attempting to answer but I feel his questions and purpose was lost in the narrative and I felt as if I was reading a very interesting story about a rural school.

Perhaps this author attempted to answer the purpose within the narrative. If he did so, I don't feel the question was fully expressed or answered. I see no evidence of subquestions whatsoever.

### 5 Evaluation of Data Collection

The data collection was quite informative. It gave daily schedules and also listed the children, their ages, grades, studies, and gave backgrounds about family histories, etc. I feel that the data collection is very

understandable and clearly specified with adequate titles and understandable tables. They were an easy read.

The author shows evidence of using protocol as his data is arranged in an orderly and organized fashion that matches what one is reading at the time.

6 Evaluation of Data Analysis and Findings The author did an excellent job in putting the text into themes. I am not convinced that his categories did enough to relate his central phenomenon. The author did get a lot of useful quotes from the teacher, parents, and students which showed support for this way of life. Multiple layered themes were derived in terms of why the parents and the teacher thought this was the best form of education. I did not find that the findings fully answered the research questions. In the end the question of recitation as a functional response to smallness was just not clear to me. In fact I saw it more as a function of tradition and a desire of the community to stick with what works for them. The findings were did not match the research problem therefore they were not accurate. The author in my opinion, started with one central question and somehow put together something else which amounted to a view of a country school and the impact on the city and students and teacher on a daily basis. Multiple perspectives were not explored in terms of those outside of this community.

All findings were represented in narrative discussions.

7 Evaluation of the Writing This account was written persuasively and convincingly. It was written from a first person point of view consistent with the qualitative research design. The writing was lively and there was use of the various literary approaches such as metaphor, simile, and various other literary details. The author carefully and figuratively describes the settings in a

number of instances. He also carefully describes the physical appearance of at least one child to the delight of the reader.

I enjoyed reading it as it read like an exciting story and gave me a delightful look into the educational, and daily life of the participants. The study is written from a personal point of view and it is written appropriately for the intended audience which is a journal entry. 8 Conclusion I really enjoyed reading this study. But in the end I felt that the author did not present his research in such a way that shed any light on his central question. If his purpose was just to show us the workings of the one-class system and why the rural community wanted it to stay he accomplished his mission.

But his central purpose states that: " I investigate the residual form of the recitation in a modern one-teacher school in rural Nebraska as a patterned response to the conditions of smallness. Conservative in its orientation toward knowledge and student learning, the recitation is explored as a functional response to the context of smallness, implicit parental and community expectations, inevitable student transfer to large graded middle and secondary schools, and its symbolic defense of community at a time of rural social and economic decline. I could not find any indication that recitation was a patterned response due to conditions of smallness or as a functional response to the context of smallness. References Barker, R, & Gump, P. (964). Big school, small school: High school size and student behavior. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press. Cohen, D. K. (988). Teaching practice: Plus ca change ... In P. W. Jackson (Ed. ), Contributing to educational change: Perspectives on research and practice (pp. 27-84).

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