

Article Critique: *Qualitative Research In The Foreseeable Future: No Study Left Behind?*
By David J. Flinders, Indiana University

The **premise** of the article is that there are significant concerns about the U.S. Department of Education's *Strategic Plan 2002-2007*. Flinders believes that the report "substitutes government oversight for scholarly exposition." Current administration is far too data driven. One form of research does not provide us with the whole picture.

The **problem statement** asks the effect of the recent U.S. Department of Education policies that privilege quantitative, experimental research.

Author's Answers: Flinders believes that there are ways in which research can better clarify the aims of the works of educators. Namely, he suggests that contemporary trends of school reform, trends focused on federal regulation, national standards, high-stakes testing, and threats of privatization are not the ultimate answer for our schools. The article suggests that there is a danger in relying solely on quantitative research in education. Flinders says "From an educational perspective, research is about learning to see and to hear. It is about elucidating the qualities and meanings of human experience, not all of which can be put into operation and then "tested" in the form of specific hypotheses." He proposes that a qualitative approach to the research would enhance our understanding of what's happening in our schools. Flinders suggests that qualitative research gives education a human face, rather than just a number crunching, alienating approach.

Questions: More than having questions about the article, I am in agreement with Flinders' ideas. I believe that relying on quantitative research gives us only part of the picture. The question I would have, ultimately, is why the Department of Education supports this kind of "one form of research?" My question then would be why does the Department of Education not apply a more balance approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research? I am very skeptical about *Strategic Plan 2002-2007*. The current administration clearly has an agenda and is pushing its NCLB agenda forward by using one particular frame for education reform. I like the way Flinders chooses to end the article, referencing Dewey's idea that quantitative research "rests simply upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements." Dewey believed that "the only enduring types of reform, the only reforms that are worth our time and sustained efforts, are reforms that educate." I would concur.