Balancing insider-outsider positioning in near-to-practice research


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Researcher positionality

Central premise of the argument in this paper:

- Positionality is **not a neutral aspect** of research methodology or method

- It is a fundamental feature of research design

- It needs to be considered, justified and defended at all stages of the research process
Complexity in near-to-practice research

Ontological and epistemological complexities - truth, knowledge, best/good practice, improving practice... critique/challenge existing practice

- Professional, inter-professional and disciplinary boundaries

- Complex practice-based settings

- Role and identity as a researcher – ‘researcher self’
Traditional binaries and dualities

Insider/outsider

Subjectivity/objectivity

Validity/reliability

Qualitative/quantitative data
Need for more nuanced conceptions

Researchers undertaking near-to-practice research need to navigate complex boundaries:

- need for creativity, reflexivity and \textit{ethical sensitivity} in boundary crossing

- and \textit{nuanced conceptualisation} of the ‘researcher self’
The ‘researcher self’
- able to navigate and balance multiple positionalities

-‘multiple selves’ (Coffey 1999)
-‘transition from outsider to insider’ (Dhillon 2006)
-‘blurred boundaries of insider/outsider’ (Perryman 2011)
-‘insider/outsider continua’ (Obasi 2014)
-‘insider-outsider-inbetween’ (Milligan 2016)
-‘ethics of engagement and insider-outsider perspectives’ (Dhillon and Thomas 2018)
The ‘researcher self’

- examples of empirical research relating to multiple positionalities and change during research process

- ‘transition from outsider to insider’ (Dhillon 2006) ‘Joining-up’: a study of partnership in post-16 learning

Methodology - interpretive paradigm, case study

Methods - observations, interviews and document analysis

Role of researcher – outsider at beginning of study and became more like a member of the partnership by end of fieldwork
The ‘researcher self’

- examples of empirical research relating to multiple positionalities

- Dhillon and Thomas (2018) *Ethics of engagement and insider-outsider perspectives: issues and dilemmas in cross-cultural interpretation*

- Methodology - interpretative, co-researching

- Methods - interviews, co-interviewing, co-interpreting

- Role of researchers - balance between cultural insider and cultural outsider
The ‘researcher self’

- examples of empirical research relating to multiple positionalities


- Methodology - narrative enquiry

- Methods - repeated interviews using visual prompts

- Role of researcher - balance between insider and outsider
The ‘researcher self’

- examples of empirical research relating to multiple positionalities

- Smith (2018) *Doing the portfolio* – *pre-registration training for biomedical scientists and developing the capable practitioner*

- Methodology - constructivist grounded theory

- Methods - stage 1: analysis of professional documents to inform questionnaires, stage 2 : focus groups, interviews

- Role of researcher - balance between insider and outsider
References


Thank you for listening

Questions?

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