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Student Number: _____1817559_____

Student's Name: _____Katrina Sheppard_____

Tutor Name: _____Debbie Winters_____

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Student's Name: _Katrina Sheppard_____Signature 

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Undertaking research in the Workplace BMPF7005

Critically evaluate a range of methodological approaches, research designs, and research methods appropriate to gather data from complex work-based settings, with due consideration to research ethics and issues of insider research.

The way a practitioner researcher approaches an enquiry within a complex work-based setting is influenced by world view, or paradigm (Guba, 1994), with consideration to ontology, epistemology, and methodology, the paradigm acts as the bridge between the aims of a study and the methods with which the researcher achieves their aims (Houghton, 2012). When reflecting on the paradigm that might represent the investigation of a practitioner researcher, I consider 'the consensual set of beliefs and practices that guide a field' (Morgan, 2007, p. 49) and whether there is a separation between the subject and researcher or a relationship between them (Laverty, 2003). As a pedagogue and practitioner researcher, rather than a voice scientist, I consider the two main and opposing worldviews of positivism/postpositivism and constructivism/interpretivism (Feilzer, 2010) as well as the pragmatic view being a compromise between the two (Morgan, 2007) and the methodologies that have arisen from these paradigms. With this in mind, an approach that supports professional development through self-reflection (Bolton, 2014) and a recognition of expertise gained through in-depth study (Flyvbjerg, 2006), a mixture of qualitative research methodologies, embracing the relativist ontology, would be a path way to expertise for voice pedagogue.

PARADIGMS

Positivism and postpositivism are both ontologically realist, although postpositivism recognises that there is a human viewpoint (Guba, 1994), with the opposing metaphysical world view including constructivist and interpretivist paradigm. Voice science follows the positivist paradigm of the natural sciences where certainty is valued (Laverty, 2003), and although this knowledge informs voice pedagogy practitioners, there is more to consider when undergoing research in a complex work-based setting where a more interpretivist paradigm would honour a flexibility of knowledge (Laverty, 2003). As a vocal pedagogue researcher, recognition that information is constantly changing as research informs knowledge and becomes more sophisticated would align with a more constructivist paradigm reflecting a relativist ontology, accepting there are multiple truths which are dependent on context (Guba, 1994). In the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm both the emic and etic points of view are considered, the researcher does not impose knowledge but investigates and interprets with consideration of the subject, the transfer of knowledge can therefore be a vicarious experience (Guba, 1994).

EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY

When pondering the questions of what is known and how that knowledge is learned and communicated, as well as the nature of reality, researchers are describing epistemology and ontology (Cohen, 2007; Kakkori, 2009). Epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and what can be known (Houghton, 2012) where

language and understanding are inseparable (Laverty, 2003). Ontology is concerned with the researchers' beliefs about reality (Houghton, 2012) and the very nature or essence of the phenomenon being studied (Cohen, 2007). When discussing ontology, the work of Husserl and Heidegger are important to consider. Husserl is the father of phenomenology (Kakkori, 2009; Laverty, 2003), a philosophy that discusses the essence of an object or phenomenon, with Heidegger the using the term phenomenology as synonymous with ontology, the question of reality and the meaning of being (Kakkori, 2009). Heidegger's development of hermeneutics stemming from Husserl's work on phenomenology might also be applicable to a voice pedagogue when considering ontology as it encompasses lived experience (Kakkori, 2009). As a researcher in the area of voice pedagogy, I draw on my own lived experience as a student singer, a professional singer and as a voice pedagogue. As these intertwining entities I have struggled to find my voice in both a metaphorical and physical sense (Gilligan, 1982) thus as a practitioner researcher, I will approach my research with a view to the continued finding of my voice, and the enabling of other voices, recognising that my understanding will be deepened through dialogue with my students, as well other teachers and researchers, informed by historical knowledge and current voice science research (Kakkori, 2009; Laverty, 2003).

METHODOLOGIES

How to carry out the research, relative to the question and context (Houghton, 2012), are the rules a researcher must follow methodology (Landman, 2006). The differing paradigm, ontological and epistemological perspectives have developed the major methodological approaches for scientific investigation (Houghton, 2012) and can be divided into two main approaches; quantitative and qualitative (Denscombe, 2014). Quantitative methodology is from the natural sciences where data is collected as facts and figures, and hypothesis is tested empirically, and the investigator is a 'neutral' observer (Denscombe, 2014). As a research practitioner, valuing my own experience and beliefs when assimilating information and producing knowledge (Kakkori, 2009), the 'neutral observer' stance is an impracticality. Further, Guba (1994) criticises the quantitative methodological approach as being reductionist and not giving an explanation of the phenomena, thus only describing its existence out of context. Context and subjectivity is important as a work-based practitioner in the world of voice pedagogy as we are dealing with individual voices, as well as contributing a unique perspective and experience to research, utilising methodology as a creative process by which to gain understanding (Laverty, 2003).

Qualitative methodology is a newer approach arising from the metaphysic paradigm which Morgan (2007) describes as a reaction against the received view of the 400 year reigning positivist paradigm. With qualitative methodologies, the researcher can use texts and images as data and acknowledges that the researcher has a perspective which will influence the way in which data is collected and interpreted (Guba, 1994). The traditional view that social sciences are the same as the natural sciences, and can be studied as such, is opposed by the interpretivist view that human behaviour differs from inanimate natural phenomena (Cohen, 2007). A practitioner researcher dealing with voice and people takes into account human behaviour, but can also draw on

quantitative methodologies, utilising a mixed methods design (Denscombe, 2014) ensuring high quality data of depth and detail (Robinson, 2011).

RESEARCH STRATEGIES

In the field of vocal pedagogy research, the practitioner researcher will need to consider the usefulness and feasibility of the investigation (Denscombe, 2014). Reflecting on the access to data sources, time constraints and the audience for the research (Denscombe, 2014) as well as having a clear vision of the aim to be accomplished (Houghton, 2012) shows a research logic (Denscombe, 2014). I have selected three strategies to explore in depth; case study, action research and ethnography. These reflect my ontological perspective as a pragmatic researcher (Bell, 2018) encompassing an ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982) that takes into account human behaviour (Denscombe, 2014).

Case Study

A case study examines one aspect of a problem studied in some depth (Bell, 2018), focusing on just one phenomenon, giving an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes (Denscombe, 2014). Case studies can be used to examine a typical instance where findings are likely to apply elsewhere, or an extreme instance which contrasts the phenomenon with the norm (Denscombe, 2014). A case study can test a theory, or investigate a least likely instance (Denscombe, 2014).

Bassey (2001), who has written widely on the use of case study as a research tool in education, draws on the idea of 'fuzzy logic' to argue that a 'fuzzy prediction', such as that made from a case study, could be given more credence when supported by clear context and evidence (Bassey, 2001, p. 5). Bassey (2001) further argues for the profitability of studying a single event in pedagogy if the reader can relate the content to their own teaching. The term 'fuzzy generalisations' where 'particular events may lead to particular outcomes' argues that although the scientific generalisations used in physical sciences are warranted, a different type of generalisation is needed for the social sciences (Bassey, 2001, p. 6). Bassey (2001) argues that in the social sciences a 'thick' description informs judgement by which the study can be made relatable. 'Imprecisely probable' predictions from a case study could be extrapolated from the findings by people who share similarities with the researcher (Bassey, 2001, p. 17).

Flyvbjerg (2006) also discusses the criticism of lack of generalisability in case study, arguing that the beginner level of learning is rule-governed, analytical and rational but over time 'context dependent knowledge and experience' lead to expertise – thus 'case knowledge is central to human learning' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 5). Flyvbjerg (2006) recounts common misunderstandings about case-studies; that theoretical knowledge has more value than practical knowledge arguing that to only use rule-based learning is regressive as virtuosity and true expertise is attained via the practitioners own practical experience. Another misunderstanding is highlighted by the limitations of only valuing generalisability as a benchmark for research, Flyvbjerg (2006) acknowledges its importance but also that is not the only legitimate method. Case studies can represent extreme or critical scenarios and give unique insight to peoples

viewpoints and behaviours and likens research to human learning where 'the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context of being studied' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 20). Flyvbjerg (2006 p.21) cites Nietzsche (1974, p. 335) regarding science 'one should not wish to divest existence of its rich ambiguity', thus as a voice pedagogue, recognition of the uniqueness of every voice and teaching situation can be reflected in the approach taken for research in a complex work-based setting.

The criticism that case study does not produce generalisable findings and so has credibility issues (Denscombe, 2014) can therefore be mitigated by relatability, where the researcher gives as much detail about the project so the reader can relate to the findings (Bassey, 2001), and a respect for the expertise obtained through an in-depth study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Thus, it is important for voice pedagogue researchers dealing with unique situations to give an in-depth account of a particular phenomenon (Denscombe, 2014) which can be used to extrapolate ideas and built upon by other practitioners (Bassey, 2001).

Action Research

Action Research can be a tool for solving problems that involve people, tasks and procedures needing change (Bell, 2018). It is particularly appealing for a practitioner researcher as it is a hands on, rigorous form of research where change is integral, concerned with practical issues and real-world activity (Denscombe, 2014). It is a systematic, reflective process (Hine, 2013) that applies research directly to practice and evaluates its impact with a view to change and professional development (Denscombe, 2014). Cohen (2007) suggests that reflexivity is central to action research requiring a self-consciousness of the practitioner that they are part of the research process. This form of research differs from a more traditional research design with the implementation of the action happening in parallel with the research rather than at a later date (Rowley, 2003).

As a practitioner researcher engaged in action research, implementation and evaluation of an action would be used to improve practice using a feedback loop (Bell, 2018) termed The Action Research Helix (Hine, 2013). This model has three actions 'look, act, think', with 'look' referring to the gathering of information by looking, listening and recording observations (Hine, 2013). 'Think' refers to analysing the gathered information and identifying what features need change, and 'act' refers to the implementation of the identified change (Hine, 2013). Added to these three components are the design of the study and also the communication of its outcomes (Hine, 2013). The Action Research Helix model can be cycled through many times during a project (Hine, 2013) giving a systematic in approach (Dick, 2009) and structure to the implementation of change needed in a complex work-based setting (Hine, 2013).

Action research is pragmatic, facilitates empowerment, can be customised, and has unlimited scope (Hine, 2013), and thus could be a useful tool for a practitioner researcher. It is collaborative and practitioner driven, with power shifting to the insider (Denscombe, 2014) as well as a holistic and mindful approach (Dick, 2009) with

results feeding directly back into the practice (Denscombe, 2014). Further, Rowley (2003) discusses action research as suitable for part-time students. The synergy of work to research is suitable to small scale projects (Bell, 2018) having no constraints on methods of data collection (Denscombe, 2014), and encourages those affected by the research to become collaborators rather than just subjects (Denscombe, 2014) thus democratising the research process (Dick, 2009).

Unlike experimental design, action research is carried out within and not alongside the phenomena being investigated and so has no control (Denscombe, 2014). This can be a disadvantage as a control group is not compared to the group or phenomenon studied. The issue of insider research is another important consideration due to impartiality and involvement of the researcher being part of the project and not a detached observer (Denscombe, 2014). Rowley (2002) also describes some of the practical limitations of action research to do with the time allocated to the project, how much authority the practitioner has for change, and the sustainability of access throughout the project (Rowley, 2003). Nonetheless, as a voice pedagogue, action research reflects a model I currently use informally in my practice as I continually apply and evaluate newly acquired knowledge to my teaching. Thus, adding structure to a philosophy already used would feel a natural fit as a practitioner researcher.

Ethnography (and Autoethnography)

Ethnography is a descriptive study of people within a culture where time is spent in the field living among the culture being studied (Denscombe, 2014). Moreso, personal ethnography, or autoethnography, is synonymous with life history and described by Bolton (2014) as a reflective practice for the professional practitioner. It is an approach to research that both describes and systematically analyses personal experience to further understand cultural experience, recognising that conducting research from an impersonal and objective standpoint is not tenable, due to emotion and the subjectivity of the researcher influencing the research (Ellis, 2011). Golombek (2002) further promotes the use of narrative inquiry for teachers, legitimising the knowledge produced out of their own lived experiences, with teachers being the possessors and creators of knowledge. Thus, the epistemology of teachers is supported by the use of narrative as a research tool, establishing the legitimacy of teachers' experiences and the reflection on them as agent for change and professional development (Golombek, 2002).

Personal ethnography as a research strategy has an association with feminist methodology (Denscombe, 2014), that Landman (2006) describes as taking into account the lived experience of women, informed by feminist epistemology which looks at who are the agents and validators of knowledge. It acknowledges that social realities are gendered and dominated by men and that women's perspectives are informed by a male construct, thus the context of the investigation is as important as the phenomena investigated (Landman, 2006). Further, Gilligan (1982) describes bringing the experience of women to full light as radical and revolutionary, where historically men's narratives have been taken to represent all humans. This can be further illustrated with a phenomenological recognition of the importance of language to understanding; how we use language to explain concepts colours our

understanding (Kakkori, 2009). If the narrative is not representative of our lived experience, then female voice teachers and researchers will not have an holistic body of knowledge to draw upon. Further, this adds to the critique of quantitative methodologies from mainstream natural sciences research where scientific method, and its 'covert androcentrism' (Landman, 2006, p. 430) is ascribed superior, contributing to the devaluing of more qualitative methodologies. In the relatively young research field of voice pedagogy, being mindful of what research methodology would be supportive of a more inclusive voice is imperative as a practitioner researcher and the use of personal narrative is in keeping with an ontology that values both teachers and women.

Further, in a culture where assertiveness and competitiveness are valued and work is assessed using a model of scientific objective evidence and considered the 'grown-up' world view, embracing uncertainty, questioning, exploration, subjectivity and self-reflection can be a path to progression for a practitioner researcher (Bolton, 2014). This is supported by a hermeneutic approach as it is based in self-reflection (Laverty, 2003). Prior to conducting the research project the researcher would reflect on their own bias assumptions as informed by their history and culture, embracing them as essential to interpretation (Laverty, 2003). Thus, a practitioner researcher would reflectively journal during a project, utilising the hermeneutic circle where the writer moves back and forth between the whole and parts, using imagination, honest and vivid descriptions of experience and rationale and attentive of language used (Laverty, 2003). Issues of rigour are therefore mitigated through discussions of the interpretation process in context to the aim of the inquiry (Laverty, 2003).

Utilising qualitative methodologies such as ethnography that have traditionally not been embraced by the mainstream scientific community (Landman, 2006) and indeed invalidated (Ellis, 2011) would honour, and give authenticity, to my own belief system informing my pedagogical research. Historically, vocal pedagogy has used a language of image, feeling, experience and narrative passed on from teacher to student through the generations. Although this knowledge is now informed by natural science research from the field of voice science, the actual method of passing on knowledge from teacher to student has not changed. Using a hermeneutical philosophy of gaining knowledge through discussion, grounded in history (Kakkori, 2009), and finding a way for the teacher to interpret and voice this knowledge through autoethnography is acknowledging a feminist methodology and aligning with a relativist ontology. Ethnographers use life history as a multi-layered, complex, holistic form of research (Denscombe, 2014) that can further aid understanding by utilising a hermeneutic approach of interpretation, embracing historicity as essential to understanding the phenomena (Laverty, 2003).

Case study, action research and ethnography all share a qualitative methodology which reflects an ontological perspective and paradigm supportive of a practitioner researcher in a complex work-based setting. Further, the hermeneutical approach to methodology as a creative process responding to the needs of the project (Laverty, 2003) is akin to bricolage. Bricolage combines qualitative methodological strategies together as they are needed by actively constructing research methods from the tools at hand, not predetermined by guidelines that may not fit with the inquiry (Kincheloe,

2004). Contextual diagnosis, respecting the complexity and unpredictability of research (Kincheloe, 2004) voiced with language mindful of context to aid understanding, honours the relationship between the subject and the inquirer in a field where a practitioner researcher is dealing with individuals and their own construct of reality (Lavery, 2003). Thus, drawing upon the qualitative methodologies described above, informed by the aim of the project and ontological world view will guide the design of a practitioners research project (Houghton, 2012).

METHODS

Method is the set of rules or procedure by which a researcher goes about investigating a phenomena (Lavery, 2003). Denscombe (2014) describes four main methods of data collection for social researchers; questionnaires, interviews, observations and documents.

Questionnaires collect information that can be used as data for analysis and consist of a written list of questions (Denscombe, 2014) and be either qualitative or quantitative with a vast array of questionnaire designs; structured, semi-structured and unstructured using closed or open questions, multiple choice questions and rating scales (Cohen, 2007). As a practitioner researcher, I will consider the purpose of the questionnaire, the sample size needed, the topics to be addressed, and the types of questions (Cohen, 2007). A pilot questionnaire is recommended (Cohen, 2007; Denscombe, 2014) from which the completion time taken can be assessed (Denscombe, 2014) and refinements can be made (Cohen, 2007).

A questionnaire as a method of data collection for a practitioner researcher in the field of vocal pedagogy has many advantages. Questionnaires are economical, especially when using an online form such as 'Survey Monkey', with a large amount of data collected at a low cost of money and time, easy to arrange, and it is accessible for the respondent as they can take part at a convenient time and place if self-completed (Denscombe, 2014). A questionnaire is standardised data and there is less chance of interpersonal factors such as interviewer effect (Denscombe, 2014). This could be a more quantitative approach to gathering data depending on the design, but used with a qualitative methodology in a mixed methods approach could yield both depth and breadth in an investigation aligned with a more pragmatic paradigm (Robinson, 2011). Some disadvantages to consider would reflect the relativist ontological perspective (Lincoln, 1989) as the respondent is not able to expand on answers if the questions are close ended or multiple choice, and biased as the respondents viewpoint may not be included in the pre-coded answers (Denscombe, 2014).

Observations made during research are another method of data collection (Denscombe, 2014). Observers can be a complete participant, a neutral observer, or somewhere in between, with the data being either quantitative or qualitative (Cohen, 2007). Observations can be highly structured with the researcher predetermining what they are looking for and a hypothesis being tested, semi-structured where the researcher has an agenda but is not so systematic, or unstructured where they will gather data and then decide what might be significant and so generate a hypothesis (Cohen, 2007).

As a research practitioner, this method is advantageous as it records facts, events and behaviours as observed by a researcher within a particular setting (Cohen, 2007). Thus, recording what changes might take place when for example, introducing a new idea to a student as part of an action research model or case study, or as a method of diarising my own observations of acquiring a new skill. As data is gathered live and first hand from naturally occurring social situations, it yields authentic data due to its cognitive immediacy with the researcher fully immersed generating a thick holistic view (Cohen, 2007). It is less intrusive and time consuming for the participant than an interview, as being observed in-situ does not require as much commitment (Cohen, 2007). Being a participant observer is also advantageous as limits the reactivity of the group being studied as the subjects will behave more naturally (Cohen, 2007). A practitioner researcher should recognise this method demands full commitment and can be very invasive and revealing for the researcher (Denscombe, 2014) as well as being conscious of the accuracy of recording data immediately and not relying on memory (Cohen, 2007).

Interviews record what people say, as opposed to observations which record what people do, and in research are a tool to gather data via the answers given by participants to the researchers questions (Denscombe, 2014). Interviews can be structured, where there is a definite format to the questions and answers much like a face-to-face questionnaire, to unstructured, where the interviewee is allowed to follow their own train of thought on the topic but not shaped by the interviewer (Denscombe, 2014). Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility in the order of the questions that allows development of ideas by the interviewee (Denscombe, 2014).

As an empathetic teacher and colleague, a voice pedagogue would have the attributes Cohen (2007) ascribes to successful interviewers; a curiosity and genuine interest in the subjects viewpoint so able to draw out deep and detailed information (Baker, 2012), the bond of shared interest, and awareness to create a positive and therapeutic experience for the interviewee (Denscombe, 2014). Choosing participants with diverse lived experience in relation to the study, and a willingness to express this, would yield a rich narrative if conducted in a setting of trust and safety (Laverty, 2003). An interview with other practitioner colleagues as subjects would be extremely useful in gaining the perspective and insight from others in the same field of voice pedagogy. Interviews have a high response rate, and because facts can be checked within the interview there is a high level of validity to the data (Denscombe, 2014). Nevertheless, an awareness of interviewee fatigue (Cohen, 2007) and that a recording device could be inhibiting to some participants, as well as the time needed to code and process data could be potential disadvantages to this method (Denscombe, 2014) .

Documents are another source of data for social enquiry (Denscombe, 2014) and can be written text or images, either printed or electronic (Bowen, 2009; Denscombe, 2014), interpreted for meaning as well as empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009, p. 29) describes documents as ‘particularly applicable to qualitative case studies...producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon’ with Cohen (2007) placing narrative as highly as interviews as a source for thick, authentic, respectable, live evidence. The use of documents in the form of narrative could be of use for a

practitioner researcher as the descriptiveness of stories is a recognised method for understanding teachers mindsets (Cohen, 2007), drawing knowledge and understanding from the writers experience.

Flyvbjerg (2006, p.25) supports the method of narrative describing it as 'an ancient method and perhaps our most fundamental form for making sense of experience'. Golombek (2002) further prescribes the use narrative interpretations by teachers as having value in describing experiences as they occur with the potential to create a 'new sense of meaning and significance' for teachers experiences (Golombek, 2002, p. 2). Further, Trahar (2009) recognises the value of narrative enquiry for practitioner research in education settings. These authors all present an argument for the value of narrative for pedagogues as a document full of rich data that can be analysed and used by a practitioner researcher.

When analysing narrative created as part of case study, action research or ethnographic study, coding of content to build themes and concepts could be used (Cohen, 2007). Document analysis yields data by excerpts, quotations, or entire passages which are then organised into major themes, categories, and case examples (Bowen, 2009). When evaluating a document, Bowen (2009) recommends establishing its quality by assessing its relevance, authenticity, credibility, accuracy and representativeness as well as the original purpose of the document – how it was produced, who wrote it and the audience intended. Bowen (2009) suggests first skimming the document, then thoroughly reading and organising pertinent information into categories that relate to the central research question being investigated – this is content analysis and is done as a first pass analysis. The researcher would then re-read and do a thematic analysis which would reveal patterns that can be coded and categorised (Bowen, 2009). Moreover, focusing alternately on the parts and whole of the phenomenon, with a historical awareness and attentiveness to language, as well as keeping a self-reflective record of the decision process would be in keeping with a hermeneutic approach to documentary analysis (Laverty, 2003).

As a practitioner researcher using documents as a source of data is advantageous as it is efficient, cost effective and less time consuming than other methods of data collection (Bowen, 2009), as well as being an abundant, accessible and permanent resource (Denscombe, 2014). The document might not have been produced specifically for the research project (Denscombe, 2014) thus discerning the credibility of the source along with the authority and objectivity of the writer are required (Bowen, 2009). With this in mind, the use of documents would be a useful method for a practitioner researcher, particularly if using a case study methodology exploring a single aspect of teaching (Bowen, 2009).

When using documents with other qualitative methods, such as interview, the researcher would have a triangulation of data and thus increase corroboration and validity (Bowen, 2009). Thus, within a case study utilising an action research model written as an autoethnographic account, the documented data could be triangulated against the data obtained in interviews with other practitioners exploring the same phenomena. Triangulation of data uses two or more sources and methods such as documents, interviews and observation (Bowen, 2009). As a practitioner researcher, I

would use more than one qualitative method and source to gain a more holistic view of the phenomena being studied (Bowen, 2009) alongside a record of decision making and self-reflection (Laverty, 2003) to provide greater credibility and rigour.

ETHICS

All research needs to be performed in an ethical manner where the public is protected from harm as 'the ends do not justify the means in the pursuit of knowledge' (Denscombe, 2014, p. 309) even if the findings are valuable. Research cannot be at the expense of the people being studied. The origins of ethics in medical research came as a response to the horrendous experiments performed on people in the Second World War (Denscombe, 2014). Research requires ethic approval before data is collected by a committee of qualified experts if the research is to be conducted on living individuals (Denscombe, 2014) and the researcher must consider the purpose, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes for their project (Cohen, 2007). This includes small scale research and all methods including questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and participant observation with particular care taken for vulnerable people such as children and if the research might cause more than minimal pain, stress, psychological harm or if there are intrusive interventions involved (Denscombe, 2014).

When designing a research project, consideration must be made of the cost/benefit ratio where the benefits of the study are weighed against the personal cost to the subjects participating (Cohen, 2007). Ensuring data is collected and processed in a lawful manner and only used for the purposes originally specified, only collecting the data that is needed for a study, making sure it is accurate, kept secure and anonymised where possible while controlling the distribution and not keeping it longer than needed (Denscombe, 2014). It should also be made clear to the respondent that they have the right to withdraw at any time (Cohen, 2007).

Further ethical issues to be aware of are to do with covert observation where the observer misrepresents themselves and so informed consent is not possible as disturbs the neutrality of the setting (Cohen, 2007). This is an invasion of the participants' privacy and treats the participant as a research object (Cohen, 2007). If research cannot be undertaken unless covert observation is used, the right to informed consent must be weighed against the value of the research and who it will serve (Cohen, 2007). Ethics must be observed at all four stages of the research project; firstly obtaining approval from the appropriate committee, during data collection taking care that no harm is done, during data analysis being mindful of integrity, bias and plagiarism, and lastly, during the dissemination of the information being aware of its impact (Denscombe, 2014).

Ethical considerations can be inherent in the research methods used, with Lincoln (1989) arguing that a positivist approach can be both deceptive and objectifying for the participant thus suggesting a shift toward research supporting relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. As a practitioner researcher, this further encourages the undertaking of research using methodologies representing a metaphysical paradigm and relativist ontology.

INSIDER RESEARCH

A voice pedagogue undertaking research in a complex work-based setting must be aware of the issue of insider research. An insider researcher is someone who shares characteristics with the people they are studying and so has an innate understanding of them as they are themselves a member of that group (Saidin, 2016). It can be either an advantage or disadvantage for social science researchers, having an effect on the success of the study undertaken (Unluer, 2012; Saidin, 2016). It is important for the researcher to be aware that they need to clarify their role in the study to give greater credibility to their research (Unluer, 2012). The advantages of insider research identified by Unluer (2012) are that the researcher has a greater understanding of the people they are studying, there is a naturalness to the social interaction and an intimacy which can promote truth telling, they are an accepted part of the group and the hierarchical structure of the organisation is known thus the inside researcher knows who and how to approach people (Unluer, 2012). Saidin (2016) concurs that the advantage of common knowledge of the life of the subject studied and all its challenges and issues as well as the ability to cut through any 'red tape' helping to gain access. Criticisms of insider research are to do with lack of objectivity and bias based on the researchers' prior knowledge and assumptions as well as the balancing the dual roles of practitioner and researcher (Unluer, 2012). Following research ethics is therefore very important as this will ensure the objectivity of the insider researcher minimising bias and ensuring the purpose of the research is achieved (Saidin, 2016). Maintaining a detailed journal of decisions made during the project showing a clear awareness of the issues as, per a hermeneutical approach (Laverty, 2003), would be a further mitigation to some of the issues of insider research.

Conclusion

As a voice pedagogue, an opportunity to learn and implement new skills with a view to professional development (Bolton, 2014) through investigation could utilise several research designs. A case study to document an exploration of learning a new skill and its implementation as a teaching tool would be valuable for professional development and of interest and value to other practitioners (Bassey, 2001). Utilising a journal to document decision making along the way with a hermeneutical approach to text analysis (Laverty, 2003) could mitigate any concerns of insider research or rigour and credibility of the data. Moreover, the use of questionnaire or interview to discover other practitioners experiences would combine methods, triangulating data and giving greater confidence of its credibility (Bowen, 2009). Taking an ethical approach to research in a complex work-based setting would be observed through the acquiring of appropriate permission (Denscombe, 2014) and awareness of the cost/benefit ratio to the subjects involved (Cohen, 2007).

The qualitative research methodologies discussed reflect a constructivist paradigm with its relativist ontology (Guba, 1994) expressed through narrative (Ellis, 2011) with a mindfulness of the hermeneutical importance of language in the context of historical and dialogical knowledge (Kakkori, 2009) alongside a recognition of the importance of feminist methodologies (Landman, 2006). As a pedagogue, the approach of self-

reflection within an action research model (Hine, 2013) would be supportive of understanding and professional development (Bolton, 2014). Further, practitioner research can be respectful of the quantitative methodology voice science contributes to the field of voice pedagogy, but recognise that depth of data can be found with case study documented through well-crafted, thoughtful and self-reflective narrative as a pathway to expertise (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Thus, although natural sciences have a very androcentric epistemology and ontology (Landman, 2006), a voice pedagogue can filter that knowledge through their experience using a research model that embraces a bricolage of qualitative methodologies and encourages a feminist view which holds self-reflection, depth, nuance and context with value.

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