



Practitioner research

Methodology

JANET SOLER:

Is there anything you'd like to say in terms of methodology and what practitioner researchers should be aware of when they're thinking about choosing a particular methodology?

MARY KELLET:

Yeah, I think the first thing to say is that there, there's no right or wrong methodology. There are so many different approaches -- lots of new ways of doing research. It's not just about doing some great big survey and gaining lots of data - there are many many ways, all equally valuable. We're doing a lot more of participatory research now, not just from practitioner participatory research, but research that involves young people participating with them for instance.

JANET SOLER:

Research, educators are engaged in as well research that maybe younger people are engaged in for that, that research to be successful often takes passion and it always seems to take much more effort and longer than, than maybe people anticipate at the beginning.

MARY KELLET:

Yeah, I think the first thing to say is that there, there's no right or wrong methodology. There are so many different approaches -- lots of new ways of doing research. It's not just about doing some great big survey and gaining lots of data - there are many many ways, all equally valuable. We're doing a lot more of participatory research now, not just from practitioner participatory research, but research that involves young people participating with them for instance. Methods that are appropriate to the context and appropriate to the question are the best methods of all. So practitioners shouldn't be afraid of being innovative or different or thinking round problems in terms of how they might choose a methodology.

I've worked with young people, for instance, who've got learning difficulties, therefore we've had to be very innovative in the way in which we think about an appropriate methodology that they can effectively use. That will generate the right data to answer a question, and that they will be able to analyse.

You can get very rich qualitative data from small scale projects with very simple methodologies. Perhaps just using something like photo elicitation, for instance.

So taking sets of photographs and using them as prompts in interviews to elicit responses, emotions, views. Doing qualitative interviews which are not, structured in any way, that are closer to conversations.

And therefore because of that they're going to get very rich data, they're less threatening in some ways; they're more open. Sometimes if you don't ask a specific focused question, and yet the person you interview actually starts to talk about it, it tells you that that is a really important issue for them because they've brought it up themselves.

They've not been prompted to do it. So I'm quite keen on doing unstructured interviews or at, at the very most, semi-structured where you might have a core of questions that you would want to ask, but I wouldn't want to constrain what you might generate in data by having just a script that you would follow in terms of an interview.