



Practitioner research

Choosing a Research Question

JANET SOLER:

We both know as researchers that research starts with a question and with a problem. I was wondering if you could comment on that for our students, in terms of how important you see it and what sort of problems are interesting to look at and that may be considered?

MARY KELLET:

You're quite right that research always starts with a question. We don't always find the answers and sometimes we raise more questions than we answer. But it does start with a question. The important thing for practitioner research is that they're going to think of questions that many others who aren't as close to that practice wouldn't even think of. And therefore, their issues, their concerns that they would like to, to research could be unique, could be very important in terms of raising awareness and generating knowledge. They may see a similar issue but see it from a different perspective. So they might be seeing something that someone else may have researched in the past but they're looking at it from a different perspective.

And therefore it's still generating new knowledge. They're in an ideal position to identify what the critical issues are, what those crucial questions are around learning, issues of learning in the classroom; issues of learning in a school environment in the community. I don't think we can underestimate or undervalue the contribution that practitioners can make.

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 you're quite right in that you do need time, it's a bit like the, the mountains and the plateaus, you need those plateaus in between to reflect and to allow things to, um, be processed. So, the first thing I would do would be a brainstorming session. Where I would ask, for instance: Is there anything you feel strongly about? Is there anything you would like to change? Is there anything that really interests you? Because those three prompt questions will lead to something that they would like to research, that they're clearly going to be interested in, either because they feel passionately about something or there's some injustice they want to change.

It's no different I think for, for practitioners. I think you need to take the time to think through what it is that I really want to do research and why? what is it that I want to make a difference with? What do I want to change? Why do I want to change this? Take time to think about that because if you get the right sort of question and you're passionate enough about it, you will find the right method.