

Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology (RERM)

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology* (RERM). We look forward to sharing this global and virtual space with readers and authors who think methodology matters, and that the concepts underlying how research gets done are sometimes problematic. As a fully refereed and international journal, RERM focuses on reconceptualizing as this connects to the doing and textualizing of projects in educational locations, for educational purposes. We welcome manuscripts about *how* research is done, whether the focus is on early childhood education, schools and other places of learning, or higher education.

As a methodology journal then, RERM aims to present some of the innovative work currently undertaken, as this connects to critical thinking and the questioning of the status quo. By publicizing ways of doing research differently, and considering how research practices might change, this journal strengthens researcher positioning and aims to advance the field of methodology. Not all published educational research is required to openly deal with concepts, by which we mean philosophical concepts. RERM thus provides a publication place for the resistance of research that goes simply from the getting of information to analysis and presentation of findings. By questioning such practices and acknowledging theorized complexity, a reconceptualized methodology makes room for other kinds of writing, and other ways of

getting or constructing 'data' and research materials. It also devises new ways of working with these as self-critical processes of analyzing, interpreting, critiquing or deconstructing.

In putting the word 'methodology' into the name of this journal, RERM challenges what is rule-bound and questions some of the unwanted histories of disciplinary practices. Methodologies are open to the reconceptualized studying of various cases or situations; to the ethnographic possibilities of working within cultures; and to the agendas of change made possible by collaborative and contemporary action research. Within each of these three methodologies are strategies (or methods if you want this word) such as collections of documentations, transcripts and descriptions, from interviews, videos, lived events and sites etc. These collections will differ according to whether the project is methodologically more of a case study, an ethnography or action research. Strategies or methods will differ not only because of methodological stance, but also because of the approach to social science inquiry taken up by the researcher. As qualitative researchers, postpositivists will lean to the following: hermeneutics and phenomenology, with interpreting as a central strategy; critical perspectives and critical theories, with critical analysis or discourse analysis as strategies; postmodern and other post approaches, with deconstructions, innovative writings and juxtapositions as strategies. In contemporary times it is not mandatory that our positionings as researchers are fixed. What we have to do is make clear why we work methodologically as we do, and which concepts drive this work.

As the founding editors of this journal, we are very pleased to be able to focus on methodologies in these ways.

In this first issue, *Gunvor Løkken* considers qualitative research methodology over time, from her own life history as an academic, and from the texts she reviews regarding changes in key themes and long-standing tensions. To this she adds critical perspectives, to question where she herself stands now. In considering what research was like before the postmodern 'excess', Løkken says continuity and change have always marked the field, with validity, generalization and reliability being critical. By asking questions in an everyday voice, Løkken interrogates what qualitative research and methods used to be about, what it is to be critical in academic work, and whether it is possible to take up a position between two opposing camps. There is a detailed examination here of key texts in the methodology and methods debates, from twenty five years ago to the present day.

The concept of ethics, in *Jayne Osgood's* article, regards the researcher's positioning in relation to the practitioners in the nurseries (Children's Centres in the UK) where she conducted the research project. Here power was evident in the encounters, as described in field notes. These include Osgood's writing about an interview she conducted, where narrative methods are supposed to yield a 'mutually constitutive activity'. Who does the listening, says Osgood, is crucially important. The article deals with the practicalities of doing a research project using narrative methods and feminist poststructuralist approaches. Here the critical issue of voice was of key concern to Osgood as a researcher; though how effective the project was in making space available for alternative discursive constructions is questioned.

Taking research methodology into the realm of art, *Ninni Sandvik* works with concepts from Deleuze to suggest a methodological approach inspired by immanent ontology. Sandvik's work decenters the researcher and shifts from investigating paintings, field notes and researcher work to put together an assemblage as a 'thinking machine'. This suggests a reconceptualization of educational research analysis by exploring the relationship between research material, art and philosophy. Appropriately, the conclusions are 'temporary and wobbly'. This is research that

does not shy away from what is chaotic. On the contrary it sees this as a creative force. The project regards pedagogical practices in a *barnehage* (Children's Centre in Norway), and points to not only research methodologies but ethics as a political issue.

From Sweden, *Hillevi Lenz Taguchi* focuses on higher education with doctoral scholars, presenting a collaborative methodology strategy conducted over a seven month period. This explores deconstructive analyses, by taking up Derrida's notion of the 'exorbitant', where one meaning always exceeds another. Formalities and routines were continuously discussed via email conversations and process documentations, with Lenz Taguchi as co-ordinating researcher (and doctoral supervisor) engaged as a writing participant. The agenda was justice as deconstruction, with a transcribed interview with a six year old boy as the focal point of this article. Through a range of readings, research methodology is questioned, with researchers being seen by children as on a par with those adults who come to check or diagnose their behaviour.

In an article dealing with methodological implications of seeing 'the subject' differently, *Bronwyn Davies* presents what poststructuralist theory offers qualitative researchers. By doing so she makes the subject both a concept and a critical issue for methodology. There are implications here for how research is conducted, because the subject of phenomenology is not the erased subject of poststructuralist thought. Davies takes this further by showing where agency is possible. Re-thinking human subjectivity and subjectification is thus of interest to psychologists and social scientists who work against the grain of phenomenology. Davies shows how to do this methodologically, by presenting what she calls 'an exercise in thinking'. This regards some observations she made in a Swedish preschool, where her stories give an analytical entry point to her philosophical questions. This is not, she says, about moments of 'empirical data'. In a complex and necessarily long interweaving of concepts and methodological implications, Davies works with the concept of difference, focusing on continuous difference rather than the discrete difference which is established through categories and binary thought.

We acknowledge the following for their work as referees of the manuscripts the editors have to date sent out for review, for this edition and for those that will follow.

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Notes on a methodological discussion on what it is to be critical in academic work: autobiography, critique and time

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Narrative methods in the nursery: (re)considering claims to give voice through processes of decision-making

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The art of/in educational research: assemblages at work

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Doing collaborative deconstruction as an 'exorbitant' strategy in qualitative research

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The implications for qualitative research methodology of the struggle between the individualized subject of phenomenology and the emergent multiplicities of the poststructuralist subject: the problem of agency

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