

Performing the research data: interdisciplinary approaches in the construction of knowledge (0271)

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Background and Methodology

Arts-based methods are useful in health research for both knowledge production and translation (Fraser & al Sayah, 2011). Poetic approaches allow researchers to enhance their research (Richardson, 1994; Glesne, 1997; Cahnmann, 2003). *“Poetic transcription approximates poetry through the concentrated language of interviewee, shaped by the researcher”* and *“creates a third voice”* (Glesne, 1997 p213,215). In a project that explored learning for interprofessional practice images were used to facilitate conversations between professionals from higher education, policy and practice settings for child health and social care. The transcribed interviews were reinterpreted in verse and used by the researchers within their own discussions. Poetry, narrative and dance were then used to communicate the research data at a networking meeting held at the House for an Art Lover in Glasgow. All participants were active within the “performance space” having been invited to write and reflect and not simply observe (Schechner, 1988).

Representing research through dance can *“extend, energize, and bring out previously unseen aspects of the objects of interest”* (Blumenfeld-Jones 1995 p. 400). Rather than separate dance from the realm of language the dancer used spoken words to complement the movements and highlight meaning. A mantón (a very large fringed shawl) was used as a symbol of the child’s healthcare experience. The dancer was conscious of a number of challenges:

*“this was not a performance in the way I would normally do it
I was trying to be true to two things:
I was trying to be true to the data
I was trying to be true to the art as well”*

The traditional movements and deeply expressive elements of flamenco (Washabaugh, 1996) were retained, while elements that might evoke stereotypical views were diminished. In this paper we illustrate two of the themes emerging from the research.

Complexity

This theme emerged strongly throughout the interviews and interdisciplinary discussions. There was reflection on the importance of complex problem-solving and the barriers within complex organisations. A participant from the practice sector selected an image of a galaxy and placed it between an image of tangled wires on the left and a pot of artists paintbrushes on the right, and then reflected:

“the chaotic picture is saying, we are going to try a bit of this, try a bit of that, try a bit of the next thing, try and put it all together. . . and that somehow out of all of that we expect something coherent to emerge. . .

whereas the one on the right says to me you’ve got an opportunity to paint your own coherence, to actually pull it together. . .

and I think the danger is at the moment we are being pushed to the left where in fact we should be paying more attention to the right. .

we are trying to take what is there already and somehow make sense of it all, instead of standing back from it and saying, right, what is it we need to create here and how can we use what we’ve got, but how can we do it in a more coherent way”

A participant from the social work sector also contributed to the theme of emergence:

*“The innovations
and solutions
come from unexpected parts of the system”*

The researchers concluded that the interdisciplinary research approach, which is based in an appreciation of complexity, is well suited to developing approaches to learning for interprofessional practice. In a conversation, for example:

Researcher 1: *it’s about what can
emerge
from*

Researcher 2: *the process
of working through problems
what is that added value
I think that’s a theme about our methodology
it’s aspirational
for the sector*

This theme of complexity was interpreted by the dancer in the following way:

Spoken by the dancer

Movement of the dancer

“emergence”

(dancer reaches and looks up to her left)

“solutions”

(dancer twists and looks down to her right: illustrated)

“in unexpected places”

(dancer “closes” the phrase with a spiral movement)



Child at the centre of care

The importance of the child being at the centre of care was a key theme, and barriers to this were highlighted in many of the discussions:

- Researcher 1: *The pathway's not right for any one person
But for the norm
It's not right for the individual*
- Researcher 2: *The point is
If you work in condition-based ways
It'll only fit about 20%*
- Researcher 1: *Or none at all*
- Researcher 2: *Because the condition is static
It's the human that's the chaotic bit*

One participant from the practice sector, selecting the image of the galaxy said:

*this
is like a multi-disciplinary meeting
lots of energy
kind of mixing
but not really*

*and somewhere
right in the middle there
is the patient*

*I think its' a great thing
it's fantastic
but other times it's awful*

*other times
the patient
falls
straight through the middle.*

This dancer used the mantón to represent the experience of the child. Folded in a neat triangle, it represented the perfect care pathway:

Spoken by the dancer

Movement of the dancer

"we are complex humans"

(dancer unravels mantón from neat triangle and dances swirling unfolded mantón)

"with complex needs"

(dancer allows mantón to conceal her completely and then explores the boundaries of her concealment – illustrated)

*"how does the child
view the team
of professionals around it?"*



Reflections and conclusions

The research data was performed in the beautiful space of the House for an Art Lover in Glasgow. The whole performance energised the networking meeting leading discussions on the role of creativity and by the end of the meeting ideas for a framework of capabilities for interprofessional practice. Creating the right space for conversation was regarded as important for these interprofessional conversations "You've given us this lovely environment in which to be safe and able to speak" (participant from the Policy Sector). We conclude that arts-based approaches, including performance of the data, are helpful in facilitating interprofessional discussions and in the construction of new approaches in learning and teaching.

References

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