**EDITORIAL Why write about education research methods?**

A new year greets us all with many international uncertainties as Europe grapples with Brexit, and North America with Trump. It is a fitting response that educational research methods should embrace dialogue and value difference. This journal embodies this in every issue with a particular focus later this year in our Special Issue of a collection of papers on a kaleidoscope of perspectives on mixed methods. The papers in this issue aim to go beyond mixing quantitative and qualitative to advance a valuing of difference and a renewal of wonder in how we view mixed methods.

Some of us, including the co-editors of this journal, are fascinated by the topic but spending time writing about research methods is not everyone’s cup of tea. We have noticed that one of the times people get interested in methodology enough to want to tell others about their discoveries is when researching and writing a doctorate. However, these discoveries do not always add to ideas built up in research literature and often stay personal. That is not the case with papers published in this journal. The paper by Rizvi is one example. After a very useful summary of the traditions of feminist research methodology and a reminder of the lack of a definitive definition of feminist research, Rizvi explores three principles: 1) using consciousness-raising methods; 2) making a practical difference to those researched with; and 3) uncovering through data analysis sites of resistance and opportunities for social change. Her context is that of the British-Pakistani mothers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Her ‘treading on eggshells’ (part of her title) relates to the finding that feminist research is not necessarily more ethical.

Many of our papers have points of connection even though they deal with topics in very different ways. Thus it is that Ikavalko and Brunila’s paper, like that of Rizvi, discusses feminism in research but through a discursive-deconstructive reading of gender equality work and policy in Finland. Ikavalko and Brunila consider the impact on equality of either/or thinking rather than both/and thinking about gender. Their thinking is applied to governmental investigations of gender equality in Higher Education in Finland. It is illuminating reading such discussions written from the perspective of researchers in the Nordic countries in which equality and social justice have been almost un-questioned goals of education.

There are some topics that seem so much part of the accepted toolbox of educational research methods that it is not always easy to make a contribution in writing. This is not to say that we do not value discussions on the known and familiar. Quite the opposite – they are most welcome. For example, a robust critical discussion of the social science interview, taking past literature and thinking on to new territories, is overdue. Two papers in this issue make a very welcome contribution to the means by which we engage with research participants. Brown and Danaher note that there is limited guidance that has been analysed in a robust empirical manner for carrying out semi-structured interviewing in a way that builds trust and develops rapport with participants. They explore whether a particular guiding framework that they name CHE, principles of Connectivity, Humanness and Empathy, can help in this regard. Their context is two projects, one in exploring factors affecting parents’ support for their young children’s active play opportunities and experiences in the family home and the other analysing the educational aspirations and experiences of the children and their families travelling with the occupationally mobile Showmen’s Guild of Australasia. Woolhouse’s paper brings some additional perspectives to the use of popular photo methodologies with children. She deals with the challenges of using photos and resolves the ethical dilemma about how to share the photos by turning the photographs into cartoons. Her paper is not afraid to address further challenges of using photos as she discusses them in terms of situated cultural texts.

When teaching research methods to doctorate students I (Liz) am fond of saying that theory and method cannot easily be separated even though methods are often described as if they stand independent from theory. Costa, Burke and Murphy therefore give me much food for thought in their exploration of the use of Bourdieu’s key concept of habitus from a methodological perspective. They take two contexts – graduate employment and digital scholarship practices and find that it is not just about the choice of an appropriate research technique but that the process of application should be paid more attention. Regmi has provided another paper that carefully attends to theory in identifying some of the key underlying assumptions of policy sociology. With empirical examples the paper examines the implications of those assumptions for methodology in undertaking educational policy research.

This journal is well known for its eclectic inclusion of research methods. And so our last paper takes a quantitative approach by reporting the development of the Questionnaire on the Experience and Evaluation of Work – Beginning Teachers (QEEW-BT, study 1) from a Questionnaire on the Experience and Evaluation of Work (QEEW) in order to measure stress of teachers in the Netherlands. This uses a number of techniques including confirmatory factor analyses, principal component analyses and Mokken scaling item reduction. Quantitative methods are indeed the focus of the Special Issue of the next volume of the journal in 2020. This looks at the contribution of multilevel structural equation modelling to contemporary trends in educational research. This issue will seek papers that use multilevel structural equation modelling to make novel contributions to theory, to contemporary debates in educational research and indeed that critique the use of these methods. And so we finish where we started embracing diversity and a renewal of wonder!

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