Relationship between students and teachers in ethnographic fieldwork education es...

Q1: The researcher says that "[i]ntense observations in the classroom and playground area were completed … [and] detailed observations were conducted in … lessons" (p. 184). What can you infer about the things she observed and the methods she used to record her observations?

The author studies student's resistance to schooling and what creates the resistance through her observation on the students' day-to-day activities. Her observation includes by looking at what are the students' favourite and least favourite lessons and also to the extent of she joins the students during their lunch hour yard-sitting. Lisa assimilates as part of the 'ill-disciplined student' for to be able to obtain clearer pictures on the student's lifestyles. Her action by shadowing and becoming a clique to the student is a way to ensure she would have an easy access during her data collection process. Lisa actions reflect that only by she participate in the 'ill-disciplined' group of students' activities (and not just as an observer) will be her keys to the process of understanding the reason behind students' resistance toward schooling. McNabb (2010: 442) describe ethnography as " the study of group of people in the setting in which they live, work and/or play". Thus, for an ethnographer to gather reliable data, admittance as part of the social setting must be gain and trust of the member must be earned as at later point the ethnographer needs to write story based on what they have observed, listened and experienced. As Lisa managed to improve her relationship and gain their trust, this is indirectly the implication of Lisa's ethnography study on student resistance where this exchange of relationship has somehow turned Lisa into becoming a researched subject to her own research.

Trust is a process of holding certain relevant, positive perceptions of another person, therefore, trust is the becoming the bridge that connects Lisa to the ill-disciplined students whereby these students' trust to Lisa motivates their bonding and relationship and later develops the student's willingness to share all the unspoken rules, personal lives stories and their teenagers' views. To reciprocate this relationship, Lisa in return allows the students to have access to her logbooks. Wheeless in Corrigan and Chapman (2008: 1) describes that " trust and self-disclosure to be related, and that there is a tendency to trust those who self-disclose". Although there is an argument that trust increases when we self-disclose, problem arises for us to decide at what extent that self-disclosure is appropriate because it will be a challenge for researcher to expect the researched will be transparent and honest if the researcher herself is not reciprocating on her part.

By using the common methods of data collection in her ethnographic study, i. e. participant observation; Lisa immersed herself as part of the culture/group and indirectly making the connection is personal and individual. Lisa interviews the " student, classroom teachers, head of years, members of seniors' management, counsellors and learning mentors" (2005: 184) and later documented the data and information she collected and Lisa probably uses her fieldnotes to check the accuracy of her observations. Secondary data collection from the school rewards and disciplinary system; student's academic ability and attendance records are also collected (2005: 184). Obviously, an ethnographer not just participates in the researched surroundings by watching, listening or asking probing question, but also to do data collecting and analysing on the issues or area of concerned.

Q2: The author is a " young ethnographer researching teenagers" (p. 193). What difference does our knowledge of her age and other personal details make to the account?

Spradley (1979: 3) describes ethnography as " the work of describing a culture" with the goal " to understand another way of life from the native point of view". To better describe the studied culture, the resemblances or the similarities of characteristic between the researcher and the researched would be an advantage because this would minimise the gap and differences between them. With similarities, the researcher could prepare herself to adapt to the possible situation awaits them. Describing herself as a " young ethnographer researching teenagers", Lisa uses her gender, nationality, use of language, size and age to take advantage of opportunities of common experiences. " My age helped me engage in and indeed understand discussions'' (Russell, 2005: 194). Making use of her naivety and young age, her own personal 'reserved' disposition and her figure of being 'small in height and build', which is not much difference with the teenagers themselves (Lisa did mentioned that her age is between 23-24 at time of research), these characteristic did influences the rapport Lisa has gained and interaction she has experienced with the teachers and the students.

Lisa experienced the role transaction of moving into least adult role in a different way (Russell, 2005: 193). As memories of her secondary years is not far behind her current phase of life, Lisa surely is not shocked to observe and experience certain situations as she has no problem to recall and relate to her owns schooling 'familiarity' during her secondary years when she describe " my novice naivety acted as a benefit when trying to manage

impulsive and sometimes shocking behaviour of students" (Russell, 2005: 182).

" Age and its associated features also affect the way people react to the researcher along with what he or she is and is not allowed to do" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). This characteristic has worked in Lisa's favour as the students may have felt unthreatened and therefore more open and willing to express themselves. The resemblance they shares has shapes the type of interaction Lisa is having with the students and with this similarity, she is able to avoid the trouble of access negotiations. The same concept is also being practice by other ethnographer researcher conducting study in nursery school children where it is quite common for a researcher who is working with young children to adopt a less adult role for them to be accepted to the children society. Obviously, age factor of an ethnographic researcher makes a difference in the conduct of their research and how they presented their collected data.

Although age is at Lisa's advantage to achieve the purpose of her research, as a young ethnographer she needs to face the impediment of being inexperience in skill and knowledge of handling the ethnography study itself as data collection techniques can be learned but analysing the data is far more challenging for a junior ethnographer. Data collected need to be analysed resourcefully and not just to be accurate of the researched but also it need to be useful to the readers. Maynard & Purvis (1994: 76) states that 'ethnography aims to describe the nature of those who are studied (i. e. to describe a people, an'ethnos') through writing. Therefore, analysing and

putting facts into writing will always be one of the toughest struggles for a young ethnographer.

Q3. Russell claims that her " ethnographic research investigates the complex and sometimes contradictory culture(s) of student resistance to schooling (Willis, 1977)" (p. 181). How is this claim supported in the paper?

Lisa describes how 'Carl continues to chat and jokes by saying, she (the teacher) always picks on me because I'm black; the lads laugh and this provoking conversation, making fun of the teachers and consequently disrupting the teacher's during the class is part of students resistance. Lisa also mentioned that other situations of school breaking rules by the student that could possibly endangered the students themselves such as truancy, theft, vandalism and drugs activities. There is even situation where Lisa herself is being invited to become part of them in these immoral activities. All these rules breaking behaviours are evidences that support the strong presence of student resistance. " Skipping school, cutting classes, making fun of their teachers, or goofing off in class" are instances of students engaging in resistant behaviour at school" (Olafson, 2002: 1).

The selections of students by each school itself are from two different settings and not just on students ranged " from truancy issues and those with negative attitude towards school and learning but also to low self-esteem students" (Russell, 2005: 184). Thus, it is clearly mention that students' resistance could also be in passive manner where students just plainly avoid completing given school works or student ignores presence of teachers in class. According to Olafson (2002: 1) " avoidance of school work

is also considered as one of the central features of student resistance". Although Lisa claimed that her " research investigates the complex and sometimes contradictory culture(s) of student resistance to schooling", there is limited illustration on the demonstrated activities of silent resistance and there is none on the causal root of such behaviours.

This is concurrence with Lisa's own confession that " this research fails to investigate how class, gender, ethnicity, nationality and the surrounding societal milieu interrelate to shape resistance" (Russell, 2005: 182). Earlier in the paper, Lisa describes her 'investigative' research is to gain insight on student resistance to schooling in which this require her to observe and record the demonstrated behaviour of resistances and to identify the reasons they behaves in such performances. As an ethnographer, Lisa needs to emphasis on her primary research's objective and stick to the purpose of her study. Lisa must gain an insider understanding of the situation for her to reveal the reality and rationale behind such behaviours as Lisa need to ensure her readers have comprehensive understanding of the situation. Lisa's 'field notes' should have presented comprehensive evaluation of the occurrence of student resistance amongst the selected students in these two difference continent for it's possibly encompass two different cultural upbringings. " Some field researchers consider field notes to be writings that record both what they learn and observe about the activities of others and their own actions, questions and reflections" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). It is not wrong to takes a lot of reflexivity, but Lisa must not ignores the initial reason why the study of student resistance is being taken up.

2nd Paper:
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Kamenou, N. (2008), Reconsidering Work-Life Balance Debates: Challenging Limited Understandings of the 'Life' Component in the Context of Ethnic Minority Women's Experiences.

Q1: The author appears to have had difficulties recruiting interviewees (see especially p. s102). Why, for example, might an organization withdraw " from the study claiming " restructuring was in progress"? (p. s102)

Kvale (1996: 32) describes 'qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level'. 'Interviewing in the nineties has become a powerful of communications in our society and in social scientific research (Hornberger & Corson, 1997: 153). 'Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences as the interviewer can pursue in-depth information around a topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e. g., to further investigate their responses. Usually open ended questions are asked during interviews' (McNamara, 1999: 1).

In general, participation as an interviewee (either an individual or an organization) is on voluntarily basis. Consent of interviewee need to be sought and the interviewee must be fully informed on the purpose of research and what their participations involves. However, the interviewee is not obliged to continue with their participation if at certain stage they wish to withdraw from doing so. There are many reasons that can lead to a withdrawal of interviewee's participation and of those are highlighted by

Seidman (1999: 65) as " the interview process may lead a participant to divulging information that he or she later regrets having shared".

In an organizational context, the management might worries over the unlimited personal views of the employee and the uncontainable information that might be revealed by these employees for its possible to cause adverse publicity to the organization's reputation. On the other hand, the interviewee is worried that the length and depth of information and view shares with the researcher will have effect on their work position. Hence the access, control and dissemination of information that are consider private and personal are important to the conduct of ethic in doing research. Therefore, it is essential for a researcher to be trustworthy and to hold confidential of any information that is revealed in the context of a professional or research relationship.

Kamenou also describe that her study is aimed 'to investigate best practice equality issue and also to examine whether the reality matched the rhetoric of equality of opportunity within organization' and the identified organizations are those 'publicizing themselves as leaders in diversity' (Kamenou, 2008: s102). With her research focus on views and experiences of " ethnic minority women", she is interfering into a 'sensitive issue' of an organizational career structure. The depressing response of participants and the withdrawal at the eleventh hour by a 'large finance organization' with an illogic reason such as 'restructuring was in progress', is probably an indication that the inequality amongst the ethnic minority and gender discrimination does exist within this finance organization. Restructuring process is not a business strategy decision that is made on last minute call. The excuse given is just to avoid undesirable interview's responses from the

employees. Withdrawal of the 'large finance organization' could be the best decision made to avoid negative publicity as possible result of the study can confirm the 'undeclared' policy and practices of the organisation is being prejudice on gender equality and more so on ethnicity features.

Kamenou also describes in her paper that data collected did reflect that female worker from both white and ethnic minority are struggling to balance between work and personal life more than their male colleagues does. However, being an ethnic minority and a woman is far more challenging for them to progress to a higher level as they have to deal with the additional cultural, community or religious demands compare to the white women what more to the male colleagues unless they are willing to transformed and adapt to what the organization 'requirement'. Montenegro & Needham (2010) commented that " the quest for work life balance is a critical goal for workers age 45 - 74, but is more so among racial/ethnic minority workers".

Q2: Would you expect differences between the people in organizations where formal access had been granted and the "'independent' group ... identified through personal networking"? If so, what might these differences be?

Definitely there would be differences especially in term of data richness and disclosure of information between the 'people in organization where formal access had been granted' and the 'independent' group... identified through personal networking'(Kamenou, 2008: s102). Qualitative research interview uses methods of open-ended questioning and this allows flexibility for

interviewer to question and probe further on the answers and likewise, interviewee can respond in sharing their thoughts and experiences.

Nigel King (1994: 253) describes that " a key feature of the qualitative research interview method is the nature of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee". The type of relationship between interviewer and these two different categories of interviewee could also distinguish the level of trust between the interviewer and interviewee for the richness of data can be obtained and depth of information to be disclosed. As names and organization of interviewee are normally cited in the reporting of qualitative report, there is a potential risk that the interviewee would not 'speak'. Therefore, the reality or validity of information collected from interviews is questionable. At certain instances, an interviewee could provide indirect information that requires the researcher to make their own sense making on behalf of interviewees.

Normally, employees nominated by their organization will not disclose elaborates information or deliver direct opinions that could bring undesirable publicity to their organization because this will also cause negative impact to the employee's performance appraisal and consequently has impact to their salary/bonus review and/or career laddering within the organisation. Considering the destructive impact of their confession, the reality remains untold. Unlike information from personal networking sources, interviewee could possibly be one of those employees that have personal dissatisfaction and grievances over the 'unspoken' discriminating policies existed within the organization and the inappropriate conduct of its implementation. Being

sampled as the research subject could be an avenue for this employee to voice out the conflicts responsively.

" Balancing work with personal life demand" is issue faced by every worker in an organization irrespective of their position (Kamenou, 2008: s107). Kamenou give reason why she includes the 'independent group' that ranges from " shop floor, to voluntary workers…chief executives" as this category of employee could " add richness to the data by looking at minority women's work and career experiences in variety of sector and occupations" (2008: s102). If she were to depend on data from the 'people in organizations where formal access had been granted' which is the " nine Managers within RetailCo and the Health Trust", the empirical data that she would have obtain and conclusion she could have made would be different as there is possibility that the data will only represent a one side perceptions and not the working society as a whole.

Q3: From reading the paper, what do we know about the author? How might the identity of the author have made a difference to the research?

There is nothing much known about the author's self-detail except only brief information on her academic career. As there is no personal reflexivity by the author and nowhere mention in the paper that the author is a member of one of the ethnic minority group, still it does not means that the author does not belong to any one of them. " Personal reflexivity is a continuing process of reflection on the part of the researcher about how her multiples identities (her social class, gender, age, status, feminist stance, ethnicity, and so on) influence her work' (Worell, 2002: 752). Probably one of the reasons why

Kamenou does not reflect on her details is because she does not want to influence her readers as researcher's identity certainly has an impact on the reader's interpretation on the research's design and conduct. Although it's would allow the readers to have better understanding on the researcher's personal values and interest, it's could also lead to the concern whether the researcher is being biased or not. Biasness in qualitative research would have effect on the reliability and validity of finding and for sure will affect the reporting of actual situation.

This is dissimilar from Russell's ethnography paper that emphasizes on personal observation and self-reflexivity but less on the statistical information. Through her reflective paper, Russell share more of her personal observation and her feeling of being part of the society but less on statistical information such as data collection and her analysis of the reality. Reflecting on her own experiences during the fieldwork, Lisa argues that " the researcher should employ a reflexive attitude to understand how the interaction between the researcher and the researched, and the researcher's autobiography, influence the data collected" (Russell, 2005: 197).

In contrast, Kamenou's paper provides readers with her interviewee's view and personal life experience; their behavioural responses and the causes of such behaviour in a more structured process. Qualitative research has always aims at understanding the main issue where engagements of probing inquiry strategies to explore reasons and context of interviewee beliefs and actions. Interview conducted will be matched to the data gathered on sensitive matters and it then could provide a deeper understanding of the research and helped to reduce possible biases in the research process.

Richard & Schwartz (2002: 135-139) outline that the " the interpretative nature of qualitative research means the published results are only a version of 'the truth', and the validity of the findings must be judged in relation to the care with which the data were analysed."

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