

Epistemicide and Emancipation: Two approaches to professing higher educational research.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on two approaches to epistemology and ontology in understanding the relationship between the way in which we go about researching learning and education and how we understand the nature of learning and education, in higher education research. Epistemicide analyses how the logic and language of the dominant Western academic tradition is killing off the knowledges of indigenous researchers and practitioner-researchers. The emancipatory approach demonstrates how new and innovative lines of research, using digital visual data, are being generated with epistemological and ontological implications for theory and methodology in research on learning and education. The idea of a living-educational-theory is introduced as an individual's explanation of their educational influences in learning. Some 40 publically available, Living Theory doctoral theses, legitimated in different Universities around the world between 1996-2017, are offered as evidence to justify the claims about the emancipatory approach.

Summary

1) Theoretical framework,

Santos' (2014) theoretical framework uses the ideas of 'abyssal line' 'epistemicide' 'sociology of absences' and 'intercultural translation' to explain how the dominant epistemology of the Western Academy is killing off 'knowledges of the south'. This framework is extended to make the case that the Research Excellence Framework in the UK is contributing to epistemicide in higher educational research on learning . The emancipatory theoretical frameworks of Living Theory research (Whitehead, 1989, EJOLTS 2008-2018) are analysed, with digital visual data from educational practices in higher education, to explicate the epistemological and ontological implications for theory and methodology in research on learning and education.

2) Aims and questions,

The aims of the study are:

- i) to question the educational implications of accepting the dominant propositional and dialectical epistemologies in Western Academies.
- ii) To explicate an educational relationship between epistemology and ontology that can distinguish educational from education research and generate valid explanations for the educational influences of individuals in learning.

The research questions focus on the ontological and epistemological implications of exploring questions of the kind, “how do I improve what I am doing?” in generating valid explanations of educational influences in learning.

- 3) Methodology (if empirical; including participants, context, materials and data analyses),

Educational researchers in higher education are faced with a plethora of methodologies to choose from and to use insights from. These include, narrative research, grounded theory, case study, phenomenological, ethnography (Cresswell, 2007), autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2006), a living theory approach to action research (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006), phenomenography (Tight 2016). The methodological foci of Living Theory research use methodological inventiveness (Dadds & Hart, 2001) to generate the unique methodology that is appropriate for the generation of an individual’s living-educational-theory. These methodologies use Popper’s (1975) insight that the objectivity of explanations is enhanced through the mutual rational control of criticism discussion. Living-theory methodologies use a process of validation the includes strengthening the comprehensibility, the evidence, the sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings and the authenticity of the explanations (Habermas, 1976, pp. 2-3). The participants, contexts, materials and data analyses are in over 40 Living Theory doctorates that have been awarded in different Universities around the world between 1996-2018 and are publically available at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>.

4) Results

The emancipatory approach has generated original contributions to educational knowledge of the higher education of individuals, that have been recognised for doctoral degrees by Universities in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Holland, South Africa, Australia, Nepal and Israel.

5) Discussion

- i) Theoretical implications

Ilyenkov’s (1977) question: If an object exists as a living contradiction what must the thought (statement about the object) be that expresses it? (p. 313), is answered with digital visual data from practice that shows a living logic as a mode of thought that can comprehend a living-theory as rational.

- ii) Methodological implications.

Professing higher educational research from an emancipatory perspective involves the generation of a living-theory methodology that emerges in the course of the enquiry, rather than the application of a choice of an existing methodology.

Indicative References

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