



Collaboration Workshop

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Why Engage with Practitioners?

- Getting access? Quid pro quo??
- Typically other motivations beyond this
- Why engage is therefore a critical question as the answer in terms of rationale and motivation affects the research design
- Not necessarily the same as action research (in fact probably not the same as)

Why Engage?

- Belief in research as means of informing practice: genuine interest in engagement and joint knowledge development
- Belief in benefits of collaboration: means of two-way “knowledge transfer”
- Higher quality?? data:
 - Better proximity to actors and their actions (at all levels)
 - Legitimacy in eyes of research participants and therefore more willing provision of data and access
 - Wider engagement within organisation: becoming an insider
- Shared reflection and interpretation and insight
- More possibility to inform practice within immediate empirical context (a developmental concern) & beyond

Creating the Research Design

Methodological Implications (From Johnson, Balogun & Beech, Forthcoming, 2010)

Figure 1: Methodological Implications

DESIGN PRINCIPLES				
Longitudinal Engagement	More than 1 Performance		Access to Back-Stage	
DATA COLLECTION				
Emergence: Going Fishing	Qualitative & Relationship Based Multi-faceted Design: Primary & Secondary sources		Close-with Relationships	
PILLARS OF PRACTICE				
Legitimacy Researcher	Relationship / Trust Building	Positive-Growth & Actualisation Oriented	Reflective Practice	Drawing Inferences

Practical things to Consider

- Practitioners are the sponsor: you need to provide value in feedback and knowledge, yet negotiate the data you need too
- Need to build trust (e.g. Chinese walls) and integrity (keep promises)
- Need to build long-term relationships of mutual value
- Need to value individuals: can't do “smash and grab”, need to believe in research that informs practice
- Don't forget this is research: what is your theoretical framing?

Move away from the traditional

- Always need observation and interviews and documentary evidence but also:
- Senior Managers:
 - move from interviews to conversations: be prepared for many “off tape” encounters
 - Access as many different performances as possible: front stage and back stage
- Others: move from interviews and surveys to focus groups, diaries

What makes it work?

- Valuing people
- Intention to share knowledge (and learn off them as well as the other way round)
- Strong relationships
- Being able to offer something of value: expertise, informed insight, “therapy”, reflection and learning, bouncing of ideas: why would a senior manager regularly give you an hour if his / her time??

Dangers of Being Close

- Ceasing to listen / explore / reflect / test through dialogue: getting slack
- Going native: becoming too emotionally engaged with participants and losing objectivity
- *Imposing* ideas
- Not being there enough / knowing what is relevant and what is being tracked
- Becoming taken-for-granted by them: not getting adequate flow of material
- Getting tangled in politics: erecting and managing Chinese walls

Maintaining Links to Theory

- Principles of Action Research helpful here: constantly thinking which theories are applicable and therefore what data should be gathered
- Looking for broad patterns / themes in data
- Considering the different story paths through the data
- What concepts best account for what is happening?
- Sharing with other academics

What Collaboration Enables

- Reflections & research ideas: possible explanations – practitioners also develop theories
- Ideas for partial analysis
- Constant testing / challenging of developing ideas
- Better informed practice (practitioners), better knowledge of practice (academic)
- Opportunity to test theories and concepts: experimentation legitimate in the lab why not in the field?