



Reconsidering Educational Research

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*E*ducation as a field of research is diversified and varied. There are many aspects of the activities involved in education which need inquiry, critique, and development. Education, as a fundamental institution in society, requires robust and relevant research in order to improve and develop. Politicians are more often concerned that educational research is not effective enough, and ask for ‘what works’ in order to make education better. Depending on whether education is thought of in terms of providing an adequate workforce for society and being a lever in the competitive global economy or in terms of what is a good education for an individual seeking a good life, educational research will take on a variety of forms.

Improvements in educational research will always be a never-ending quest. There is no way of finding that ultimate solution, one approach or method which can provide an answer to all the questions raised within education. As societies and generations constantly evolve, education will also change with time. As simple as this might sound, it is an important thing always to remember it, especially when the pressure is on researchers to do effective and cost-productive research. As researchers we might have to become more insistent on the need for a broad variety of educational research in order to be able to obtain good insights into the complexity of education.

As this special issue, titled ‘Reconsidering Educational Research’, shows, there are very different methodological questions which are raised by doing educational research. We are happy that in this issue we have been able to collect papers that show some of the variety within the field. Compartmentalization is often the case when doing research, which means that if



you are a researcher engaged in doing qualitative, let us say ethnographic research, this is what you will specialize in. As researchers we are also prey to habits. As a result, a qualitative researcher will most probably not read quantitative, let us say psychometric research, although they might be engaged to some extent with the same phenomenon, i.e. teaching and learning. For us as researchers to apply a multi-methodological approach in our projects is challenging. Even though mixed methods are often called for with research projects today, specialists are required, whatever method is applied in a research design. We, the editors, do not suggest that all educational researchers have to specialize in the wide range of methodological approaches that exist in education research. But what we would like to inspire all educational researchers to do is to challenge themselves with papers and research which take a different approach from their own home ground, and to engage with research which might challenge and question some of their own assumptions and taken-for-granted 'truths'.

Improvements in educational research will require this. A continuous compartmentalization could result in a sort of disintegration which, in the long run, would be disastrous for the field as a whole. So as an active approach to the call for more effective research, we could, as researchers within education, say that we are engaged in collaboration and communication across different theoretical and methodological approaches in order to develop our field.

In this special issue the variety of texts pose an intertextuality when put together. Questions related to philosophy and theory of science can open up room for critical inquiry when read against questions pertaining to a certain type of methodological approach to research. Also, when education as a field of research is covering new ground, e.g. educational neuroscience, it makes sense also to ask what kind of narratives of research are possible, and if there are any limits to what can be made relevant within education. The five papers published here represent some of the diversity in the field.

The opening paper, "Making Sense of Data" by Paul Standish, introduces the reconsideration of what our research data is. This paper questions some of our assumptions which seem so obvious that we do not scrutinize them when thinking about data collection. The second paper, "Narratives of Educational Research" by Halvor Hoveid and Marit Honerød Hoveid, opens up other perturbing questions related to making meaning of educational research and how facts in educational research have to be grasped together into a story, a narrative, in order to make meaning of what education is about. The next paper, "Educational Neuroscience and Reconsideration of Educational Research" by Frida R. Flobakk, raises concerns in terms of a new research field, educational neuroscience, and how the very different research traditions of the social sciences and natural sciences can communicate and collaborate. The fourth paper turns readers' attention to research on the ways in which students develop their understanding and their competences through content-focused instructional activities. In their paper "Producing



Knowledge for Improvement: The 3A Procedure as a Tool for Content-focused Research on Teaching and Learning” Jan Slavík, Tomáš Janík, and Petr Najvar present a specific research methodology for analyzing real-life teaching and learning situations in the classroom. The final paper, “Creating short forms for construct measures: The role of exchangeable forms” by Knut A. Hagtvet and Kornel Sipos, deals with a rather particular problem. But it opens up the general question whether we pay a price for creating short forms in terms of the reliability of their scores and the validity of the inferences we draw on their basis, and then suggests an approach that we could use to minimize this price, which may strengthen re-consideration of important issues in educational research.