



Playing the “Research Game” in Marginalised Fields

Robyn Jorgensen
University of Canberra
<Robyn.Jorgensen@canberra.edu.au>

Mellony Graven
Rhodes University
<m.graven@ru.ac.za>

In this paper we reflect on our combined work in some of the most marginalised educational contexts in the Southern Hemisphere. We do this from our combined (Graven & Jorgensen, 2018; Jorgensen & Graven, 2021) and separate work across our South African and Australian geographically and culturally diverse contexts in which we have proposed a number of principles or rules, that regulate our work in marginalised contexts. Drawing on Bourdieu’s framing, we propose working in marginalised education settings requires a particular habitus or way of being to be able to play the research game. Underpinning our approach is the South African construct of Ubuntu, which is very much about collaboration—I am because we are—so that there is a move away from doing research “on” participants and contexts to one that is very much about doing research with participants and contexts.

We find Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of game as a powerful construct to theorise ways of thinking about the field of educational research. At the outset of this paper we seek to articulate two key points. First, we articulate ways of being and acting in educational research when working in marginalised contexts. Our intent is to provoke researchers to rethink their ways of formulating research and enacting research when working in these contexts. For this research, the paper does not sit well with traditional forms of research publication. Our intent is to disrupt traditional research paradigms with their stylised ways of reporting research. Our second key caveat is that while we use the term “game” to frame the paper, in no way should this be trivialised as a metaphor. Rather, from Bourdieu’s (1991) work with the notion of game, there is a strong sense of how the field of education in general, and mathematics education in particular have certain ways of being and acting within the field and, simultaneously there are certain rules that need to be adhered to determine the winners or losers. From this, certain rewards are bestowed on researchers. These rewards can be in the form of capital, which again is a Bourdieuan construct to signify status. We expand on these constructs in various sections of the paper. In the paper, we draw on the principles that we have adopted in our research programs that attempt to refigure the research game so to better work with marginalised learners and contexts, particularly given researchers’ outsider status.

References

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