

# Daring to tell my story – social justice in self- study research

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ACRE / CARN

**The researcher should be open to whatever methods 'will help you to understand that part of the social world that challenges and intrigues you' (Luker, 2008, p.5)**

**'the only way we can understand our worlds, and our educational worlds, is through articulating our own stories' (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007, p.547)**

Research Focus

Research Questions

Methodology

Methods

In what ways can a personal belief system about the outdoors influence outdoor learning practices by teacher educators working in Initial Teacher Training (ITT)?

What is my belief system about the outdoors and outdoor learning?

What does my outdoor learning practice look like?

In what ways are my beliefs about the outdoors evident in my actual practice?

First-person self-study (or words to that effect!)

Narratives based on:  
Personal life history, memory and SLE  
Living educational theory

Figure M1: Research focus, research questions, methodology and methods to be used for this study.

# Self-study



‘Self-study provides an approach for practitioners to investigate their practice and contribute to the professional knowledge about what they learn from their research.’

(Vozzo, 2011, p.313)

‘The study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the not-self. It is autobiographical, historical, cultural and political...it draws on one’s life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known, and ideas considered.’

(Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p.236)



# Narratives



‘the lens through which we see our world and the world of others is made of the stories we hear’ (Fox, 2006, p.47)

‘Stories are the raw data of our experience’ (Johns, 2017, p.23)

The stories we tell about ourselves help us to understand who we are and the things that happen to us (Goodson & Sikes, 2001)



Narrative is more than the study of stories – it is the study of how people make sense of and meaning of their experiences (Clandinin et al., 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007)

# What can stories do? Value of telling stories and social justice

Telling stories and expressing perspectives, especially in a public space, 'is a precondition for doing something about perceived injustices' (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007, p.550)

It is not so much about telling the truth about the world, it is more about opening up spaces that enable us to consider how our worlds may be changed.

Telling stories is also about telling particular truths to enable everyone to 'reassess what we understand of the world and so of our own possible actions in it' (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007, p.550)

Searching for these truths can support the finding of 'arenas in which to work for social justice' (Cotton & Griffiths, 2007, p.548)

**‘the ways we go about studying the social world are themselves deeply embedded in that very world’ (Luker, 2008, p.3)**

**‘what happens when the kind of researcher we want to be is bound up in who we are and our lived experiences?’ (Loch & Black, 2016, p.112)**

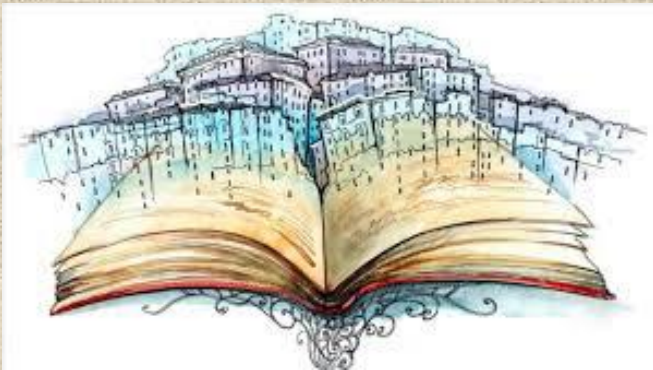


# What are these 'stories'? What can they be? How can they be presented/ told?



'The telling of small tales is personal and expressive; it shows in silences and patterns of life, as well as in straight talk. They are not just narratives but also inclusive of other expressions of self' (Griffiths, 2002, p.166) they can be told in a range of different ways: spoken, written, visually, expressively etc.

Personal stories are 'also inclusive of other expressions of self' (Griffiths, 2002, p.166).



*What forms could these other expressions of self take?  
How can they be generated?*



# Validity of stories – trustworthiness



‘Personal stories are sometimes dismissed as anecdotal. They are also criticised for distorting the wider picture by over emphasising one, perhaps unrepresentative, case.’ (Griffiths & MacLeod, 2008, p.124).

Hadfield & Haw (2000) – stories / voices need to be:

**Critical** - seeks to challenge existing structures and assumptions

**Representative** - raise arguments and issues that may be marginalised in policies

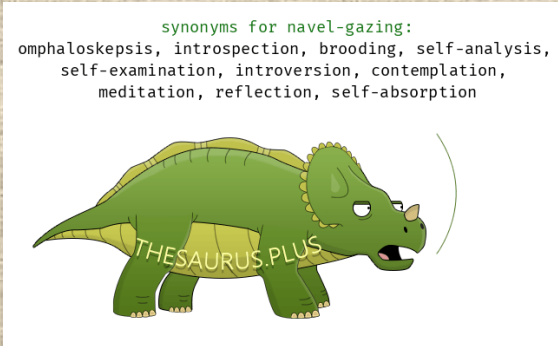
**Authentic** – this comes from the teller being aware of the purpose of telling their story and also the specificity/ particularity of their experience



*How can our stories not be dismissed or even considered as anecdotal?*

*How can we validate our stories? And also validate our work?*

# Importance of ensuring a critical perspective and not just 'telling a story'



For stories to integrate critical perspective it needs to include **'Crucial description'** (Vithal 2002):

- 1) *Transparency* – enable the reader to see through the language of description to the specific context to enable critique
- 2) *Transformacy* – the potential of the story to effect a transformation change in reader – thoughts and actions
- 3) *Generativity* – potential of the story to generating theory and new practices
- 4) *Exemplarity* – the extent to which the story connects the complexity of the content with complexity of theory



*How can we ensure 'crucial description' and critical perspectives are included in our work?*



# Analysing stories / generating meaning



Teachers tend to act without fully understanding why (Koster & van den Burg, 2014)

It is important to look beyond *how* we do something to *why* we do this when attempting to construct professional self understanding (Keltchermans & Hamilton, 2004)



*How can we do this? How can we go beyond what we do?*

*How could these new insights be documented and acknowledged?*



**Thank you for everyone's contributions, and  
your participation in our discussions!**



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