

Contemporary
Approaches to Research
Symposium
2018.

Mature-aged students' experience of learning
mathematics in regional vocational education:
Challenges of insider research.

Research Question: How do mature-aged students experience learning and using mathematics in a regional vocational education and training institution in Australia?

Sub research question 1.

What is the institutional context of mathematics teaching and learning in vocational based courses?

Methodological approach: Ethnographic.

Data collection: Document analysis.

Case study.
Vocational area 1.

Case study.
Vocational area 2.

Case study.
Vocational area 3.

Sub research question 2.

What are the key features of the classroom context of mathematics teaching and learning in vocational based courses?

Methodological approach: Ethnographic.

Data collection: Classroom observations, Journaling, Teacher interviews.

Sub research question 3.

How do mature-aged students characterise the experience of learning mathematics in vocation-based courses and what are the similarities and differences between course types?

Methodological approach. Ethnographic.

Data collection: Student interviews.

Case study data interpretation.

Reporting (contexts and cases).

Difficulties being an insider researcher.

1. *Gaining an intimate understanding of the worksite, feeling like an outsider rather than an insider.*

2. *Conflicting roles as a researcher and a teacher. Navigating these challenges.*

3. *Perceived power differentiation between the students, the teacher and myself as a researcher.*

4. *Being honest and ethical when writing up the study's findings.*

•Difficulties being an insider researcher.

1. *Gaining an intimate understanding of the worksite, feeling like an outsider rather than an insider. What I thought I knew Vs what I didn't know).*
2. *Conflicting roles as a researcher and a teacher. How did I navigate these issues? (Speak about Zoe's data collection saga as an example). Teachers directing students to me for assistance solving maths problems. Also teachers approaching me for resources (although be a researcher I still had a professional obligation as a teacher).*
3. *Perceived power differentiation between the students, the teacher and myself as a researcher. (discuss teacher being employed as sessional and viewing me more as a manager being employed on a full time basis. Also, students still seeing me as a teacher.)*
4. *Being honest and ethical when writing up the study's findings. (As an insider researcher, am I comfortable with what I am writing? Are there ethical/professional boundaries that should not be crossed when reporting? Are there findings that are best left un-said? Is this a conflict of interests as I both work and research in the same setting? Have other researchers encountered the same problem.*