A Social Constructionist Approach to Phenomenographic Analysis of Identity Positioning in Networked Learning

Marguerite Koole

Centre for Distance Education, Athabasca University, mkoole@athabascau.ca
Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning*, Educational Research, Lancaster University, UK, (PhD Student)*

Abstract

The aims of this research are to explore how doctoral students on networked learning courses experience challenges to their identities, norms, values, and relationships. Within a relational, social constructionist perspective towards identity and positioning amongst individuals, an individual's identity is shaped through a continual interaction of dialogue with others; they shape each other in a mutual and cyclical process. This process is at work equally in Networked Learning as in face-to-face interaction with the difference that the medium through which communication occurs is different but influences the construction of identity. The author briefly describes the Vygotsky Cycle (Harré, 2010), threshold concepts (Meyer & Land, 2005), and with particular relevance to doctoral learners, conceptual threshold crossings (Kiley & Wisker, 2010). These three elements underlie the idea of 'identity positioning thresholds'--that is, the process in which a learner is confronted by conflicting opinions, behaviours, and/or perspectives that, if sufficiently critical, may cause them to examine these conflicting experiences or re-evaluate their own opinions, behaviours, and perspectives within their own social, academic, and/or professional contexts. The main interest of this research is to explore the kinds of critical stories or troublesome experiences that might lead to identity repositioning and the variations in which this can be experienced. To this end, the primary methodology being used is phenomenography. The main method of data collection is the semi-structured interview. One participant was interviewed for a brief pilot study. Then, 18 participants were interviewed for the main phase of data collection. Although the study is currently underway at the time of writing, the author describes the next steps in the study. Supplementary methods will be used to help the researcher develop an in-depth and sensitive understanding of the interview transcripts. These secondary methods include both discourse analysis and two-person interviews. After describing the data collection procedures, the author identifies and discusses a variety of issues both arisen and arising. These issues are related to the abstract nature of the topic itself, the co-constructed nature of phenomenographic interviews, the de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing of transcripts, and issues to be aware of when the times comes for analysis and the development of the outcome space. Finally, the author then briefly discusses some approaches to trustworthiness in the phenomenographic research process.

Introduction

Post-graduate degrees offered through online communications and learning technologies bring together learners from different geographic, social, cultural, political, economic, and occupational backgrounds. While studying, these learners remain not only connected to but often immersed in these environments. The statement, "I am a doctoral student", positions the speaker amongst others who have attained their own levels of education. As the context of the utterance changes, so does its meaning—that is, the ordering of the world and one's place within it. How do networked learners on doctoral-level courses reposition themselves when confronted with discourses that challenge or conflict with their perceived positions, relationships, norms, and values? In this paper, the author takes a social constructionist perspective within the field of Networked Learning. The author defines the concept of 'identity positioning thresholds' through a brief discussion of the underlying theoretical frameworks, Harré's (2010) Vygotsky Cycle and Meyer and Land's (2005) threshold concepts. The author will outline the

phases of the study and how phenomenography and discourse analysis are being used in this study to mutually inform each other. As the study is currently in progress, the author will conclude by briefly outlining some current and anticipated challenges.

Identity Positioning Thresholds in Networked Learning

To better understand the methodology of this study, a background to the epistemological and theoretical positions is necessary. This doctoral research places an emphasis on relational aspects of online learning. In Networked Learning, learning and identity are seen to emerge from interaction within networks of people and resources (Parchoma, 2011; Ferreday, Hodgson & Jones, 2006). The media of the learning environment influence social positioning by affecting manner of expression. At the same time, participants actively struggle to manipulate the medium and available symbols with which to position themselves (Savin-Baden & Sinclaire, 2007). Epistemologically, this relational approach is complementary to a social constructionist view, especially as it pertains to identity positioning. It is through discursive experience with people and resources that an individual shapes his/her self-conception, goals, and future behaviour. Social positioning itself "is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (Davies & Harré, 1991, p. 57). In this approach, identities are constructed through discourse, reciprocality, and reflectivity; they are in continuous flux, construed differently from different relational positions.

'Identity positioning thresholds' is a term arising from a conflation of the concepts: identity, social positioning, and threshold concepts. Identity, in this study, is very much concerned with how learners conceptualize themselves and their position amongst others. Such conceptualization is not always a smooth process; rather, it may be punctuated by moments of uncertainty and experiences creating internal conflict. Meyer and Land's (2005) threshold concepts can provide a means of understanding how an individual may experience ontological repositioning through a perspective-altering experience. In Meyer & Land's (2005) work, 'pre-liminal variation' refers to the tacit understanding of a phenomenon as an individual enters a learning situation (Savin-Baden & Sinclair, 2007). Entry into a liminal space occurs through a threshold experience or process. Within these processes, values or understandings may "create distinct and incompatible versions of reality" (Davies & Harré, 1991, p. 45). It is possible that this happens when a learner detects a variation(s) that challenges his/her understanding of a given conception to such a degree that it cannot be integrated in a coherent way (thus reaching a threshold point). Within this interpretation, a liminal space may be viewed as an area of transition in which the learner may deliberate between possible interpretations and solutions to the incompatibilities for varying lengths of time before emerging with a new, modified or retrenched perspective (Meyer & Land, 2005). The process can be iterative and messy. Kiley and Wisker (2010) use the phrase 'conceptual threshold crossings' to refer to related processes at the doctoral level in which changes in the learners' understanding of their research and field of study affect "both ontology, their identity, and epistemology, their construction of and contribution to knowledge" (p. 399).

It is helpful to contextualize threshold crossings by looking through a social lens. The Vygotsky Cycle (Harré, 2010, p. 144) supports the view of identity formation as a cyclical learning process within a socio-cultural context, opening opportunities for examining threshold crossings and identity repositioning activity. In this model, there are two axes: manifestation (public or private expression) and location (relational space, people as locations for speech acts). Four quadrants result. Quadrant 1 (Q1) represents the greater social context. Q1 highlights ongoing influence between social and individual processes—processes which cannot be separated in a social view of learning. Q1 represents the social/collective source of all psychological attributions, processes, values, and states. In Quadrant 2 (Q2), the individual internalizes socio-cultural ideals and values, which can be integrated as taken-for-granted objectifications in the sense described by Berger & Luckmann (1966) in which "externalized products of human activity attain the character of objectivity" (p. 60). Moving into Quadrant 3 (Q3), critical incidents or threshold crossings may trigger transformation. If the experience is sufficiently critical, the individual may re-examine him/herself, his/her appropriated values, and/or the critical event. In Quadrant 4 (Q4), actions (intentional behaviors) and acts (interpretations of actions) are made observable—that is, the individual can express or 'publish' the identity. In other words, readjustment of the identity can be visibly enacted, observed, socially endorsed or conventionalized by self or others as they are taken up again in Q1.

Using conceptual threshold crossings and the Vygotsky Cycle as underlying frameworks, we can understand identity positioning to be a discursive or interactional process. "With positioning, the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time is a

Proceedings of the 8th International Conference
on Networked Learning 2012 , Edited by:
Hodgson V, Jones C, de Laat M, McConnell D,
Ryberg T & Sloep P

ISBN 978-1-86220-283-2

489

resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62). Whilst learners engage in discourse with each other in a given context, they may be exposed to conflicting opinions, behaviours, and perspectives. These conflicting experiences may stimulate them to re-evaluate their own opinions, behaviours, and perspectives. If discourses are sufficiently critical, they may explore how to change these facets of their identity. In effect, changes in these elements may change how the social interactions are ordered—that is, their relational position within the social discourse can shift. Hypothetically, in recounting an identity positioning threshold experience, the learner may describe experiencing a state of unknowing, indecision, or conflict at some point in the process. This state of unknowing may indicate a liminal space in which she was unable to decide how to describe herself or how to behave within a given discourse.

Purpose & Methodology

Bearing in mind the theoretical background subsumed within the concept of identity positioning thresholds, the author set out to explore how doctoral students on networked learning courses experience challenges to their identities, norms, values, and relationships. Of particular interest were the kinds of critical stories or troublesome experiences that might lead to identity repositioning, the variations in identity repositioning thresholds that doctoral students experience, and whether or not this variation is related to the learners' field of study. Phenomenography was selected in order to explore the learners' perceptions of experiences as they may approximate or differ from those of other learners. Its aim is to develop an outcome space that reflects "the variation and the architecture of this variation in terms of the different aspects that define the phenomena" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 117). The goal in this study is to develop an outcome space reflecting the qualitatively different, but relationally connected, ways that doctoral students experience identity positioning thresholds in networked learning environments.

The constructionist position taken on phenomenography in this research holds that a learner's conceptions of identity are continuously co-constructed, shaped, and reshaped by her ability to discern variation in behaviour and narrative within unfolding contexts of interaction. Within this view, identity is viewed as "fluid, particularistic, and sociohistorically embedded" (Weinberg, 2008, p. 14). Yet, learners can actively direct their own future by constructing who they are in relation to their context. The "constructive nature of conceptualization" reveals differences in how individuals understand the same aspects of the external world (Svensson & Theman, 1983, paragraphs 7-8). For example, witnesses of a traffic accident may report different observations. Social constructionists see individuals' conceptions as constantly changing through language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). At the same time, constructionists recognize that people may perceive their conceptions to make up an already existing, objective reality.

Phenomenographers attempt to describe how individuals experience aspects or objects in their world and how this experience varies. This research approach requires researchers to consider these experiences from the perspective of the research participants in relation to the participants' context. ". . . one of the fundamental epistemological and ontological presuppositions of variation theory is that of the non-dual relation between consciousness and the world, as well as between knowledge and the object known" (Dahlin, 2007, p. 328). Individuals (the subjects) might experience some aspects of the object (phenomenon) in certain ways in one physical-temporal context and in other ways in another context. As the ways of experiencing shift, the subject's awareness of the various aspects of the object changes; that is, her awareness changes. What this suggests for identity researchers is that as individuals interact with each other and the world they perceive around them, they constantly create and re-create their sense of self and their conceptions of their world (their reality). As mentioned, the nature of the technology may also influence how learners express themselves. As such, studies in networked learning, including phenomenographic studies, must consider the unique complexities of networked contexts and the mode of interaction (Booth, 2008).

Phenomenography and Discourse Analysis

Similar to the work of Patrick (2000), this study uses phenomenography to study learners' conceptions of a phenomenon and discourse analysis to explore the "individual's sense of his/her relationship with whatever the focus is, even though the individual may not be aware of it" (p. 122). In this case, the focus is on identity. Discourse analysts are interested in how people use language to achieve desired ends and how they construct their worlds. Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) define discourse analysis as "a theory of language and communication, a perspective on social interaction and an approach to knowledge construction across history, societies and cultures" (p.1). In studies of selfhood and identity, discourse analysis can inform researchers as to how people represent themselves through stories and linguistic acts (Wetherell, 2001, p. 186).

Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Networked Learning 2012 , Edited by: Hodgson V, Jones C, de Laat M, McConnell D, Ryberg T & Sloep P

ISBN 978-1-86220-283-2

490

Säljö's concept of accounting practices as discursive techniques are relevant to discourse analysis. Accounting practices are behaviours that can be observed. They are socio-culturally shaped linguistic practices that individuals employ to achieve particular purposes. Säljö offers an excellent example of a phrase that can easily lead novice phenomenographers astray: "I don't know" (p. 182). In reading a transcript, a researcher might interpret this phrase at face value. However, as Säljö argues, the speaker may just as easily be indicating that she is not concerned about the issue at hand or that she is not interested in discussing it. In this way, a variety of intentions may underlie seemingly simple utterances. Säljö's (1997) argues that phenomenographic interviews may be used to study accounting practices. Perhaps by examining such discursive techniques, researchers can more deeply understand utterances, the intent behind utterances, create more trustworthy categories, and sort utterances into the categories logically and defensibly. Within the context of this study wherein the researcher is drawing upon Harré's (2010) social positioning work, particularly the Vygotsky Cycle, identification of discursive techniques can help inform researchers as to how the participants actively position themselves in conversation.

Whilst the researcher must take great care not to read too much into the speaker's utterances, these techniques allow speculation about where the speaker sees herself relevant to those surrounding her. For example, the level of certainty indicated through nominalization and/or passive voice may suggest the speaker's confidence or her willingness to sound confident within the original context or the interview context. Ways of classifying oneself or others as members of specific groups or classes of people may indicate how a speaker positions herself relevant to other people, ideas, and circumstances. Intertextuality and active voicing (for example, "You know, supervisors, they all say, 'The only good thesis is a completed thesis.'") may suggest how the speaker understands how others view her. Minimizing or exaggerating might suggest that the speaker is manipulating the facts. Although these are but a few drawn from the work of Potter (1996) and Gee (2010), these examples show how such clues can help the researcher to question the transcripts further and look at them through different perspectives. In many cases, the researcher must return to the participants to clarify what they meant.

Data Collection

The data collection took place at a university in Canada in which the learners rely primarily upon networking technologies to interact with their instructors and peers, exchange information, and discuss ideas. The participants were solicited from doctoral courses in Education and Business. The data was collected in three phases: a pilot study, participant interviews, and follow-up two-person interviews.

Phase 1

The main goal of the pilot study was to determine the trustworthiness of the survey and interview questions. In particular, the focus and range of questions were examined in order to determine whether or not they elicited responses related to experiences of identity positioning thresholds (Dall'Alba, 2000). One participant was selected from the list of volunteers. The participant responded to the letter of information and consent, submitted answers to a brief survey, and participated in an interview. The transcript was transcribed by the researcher. The researcher read the transcripts several time jotting notes and reflecting on what was said. Then, the researcher examined the utterances more systematically looking for various discourse techniques. Because this pilot study involved only one doctoral student, it was premature for the researcher to begin mapping categories. It was felt that attempts to develop the categories too soon may bias analysis of subsequent interviews thereby reducing the trustworthiness of the final categories if they are to be considered representative of the collective experience of all the participants (Kelly, 2002). The pilot resulted in minor updates to the interview questions. The semi-structured interview technique proved effective as it helped the researcher to maintain focus on topic, but also provide room for the participant to express related nuances and details pertaining to the participant's unique and personal experiences. Additional question about the participant's perceptions of the structure and purpose of the doctoral course as well as her topic of study were discovered to be significant in understanding the participant's positioning relative to the course and doctoral studies as a whole.

Phase 2

Trigwell (2000) and Dunkin (2000) suggest that the ideal number of interviews rests around 15 to 20. In keeping with this, 17 participants were interviewed in Phase 2. Semi-structured interviews were conducted as per the interview schedule as modified after the pilot study. The interview transcripts were typed with personal and potentially identifiable information redacted. A readable copy was sent to the participants for comments and reflections which were collected for later analysis.

Phase 3

Proceedings of the 8th International Conference
on Networked Learning 2012 , Edited by:
Hodgson V, Jones C, de Laat M, McConnell D,
Ryberg T & Sloep P

ISBN 978-1-86220-283-2

491

At the writing of this paper, Phase 3 had not yet been completed. However, it was envisioned that the original participants would be invited to participate in two-person interviews (TPIs). In this phase, the intent is to ask the participants to discuss some of the preliminary results of the phenomenographic study (a means of member-checking) and to attempt to gain insights into how the participants actually position themselves amongst each other (a means of comparison with interview statements). This phase would allow some observation of actual interactions amongst the participants. The TPI method is relatively new (Morgan, 2011). In a conventional one-to-one interview, the interviewer communicates with a participant. In a focus group, the interviewer facilitates a conversation. Focus groups allow a researcher to accomplish at least two things: 1) ask questions, and 2) observe interactions among focus group members. TPIs represent a hybrid of the focus group configuration. Naturally, the number of participants is more limited which reduces the logistics problems of gathering four to six people (or more) together for a meeting. One of the main goals is to encourage a *conversation* between the two participants. And, a researcher using an unstructured TPI approach may have more opportunities to observe interactions between the two participants.

Steps in Analysis

At the time of writing this paper, the analysis had not yet been undertaken. Four main steps are envisaged:

1 Read through each of the transcripts to become familiar with the discussion.
2 Examine each transcript through a discourse analysis lens. The work of both Gee (2010) and Potter (1996) were clustered into a limited range of discursive techniques. This process is intended to aid with a more in-depth reading of the transcripts.
3 Examine the transcripts together as a unit. Attempt to understand similarities and differences in the experiences articulated by the participants. Begin a preliminary list of categories.
4 Refine the list through iterative consultation of the original transcripts and the categories of description. Attempt to understand the nuances that delineate the categories in the developing outcome space.

Issues Arising and Arisen

At the point of writing, Phase 2 presented several challenges for reflection regarding the topic of identity, the interview, the transcription, and the anticipated analysis processes.

Identity as a topic

Within the context of an interview aimed at accessing the learners' perceptions of their experiences, one may question the trustworthiness and credibility of the data. Identity is an abstract concept. The phrase, identity positioning thresholds, is a combination of abstract concepts. The phrase refers to a process in which identity positioning occurs and shifts within the context of discourses. What is sought in this study is the variation(s) in which learners experience this shifting. One of the major challenges is to find ways to open a discussion of such an abstract subject. This was accomplished through attempts to elicit concrete examples of changes in behaviours and beliefs in professional and personal contexts. The researcher also asked the participants to use metaphors to describe themselves before and after starting their doctoral courses. For example, 'What kind of animal would best represent you as you began your studies?' These techniques worked to varying degrees with different individuals.

Interviewing

Interviewing is the most common method for collecting data in phenomenography (Walsh, 2000, p. 19, Marton, 1986). According to Marton and Booth (1997) interviews take place on two levels: the interpersonal contact between the interviewer and the participant and at a metacognitive level in which the participant recounts his/her awareness of an experience (also see Fleming, 1986; Richardson, 1999). The interview itself is co-constructed with the participant. Further, the participant's description of her experiences is also a product of discourse within the interview as participants strive to provide accounts that are appropriate to the interview situation or that meet the desires of the interviewer (Fleming, 1986; Säljö, 1997). Bracketing the researcher's preconceptions and preventing the participant from pre-reflective work can be nearly impossible (Kelly, 2002). As per the constructionist view, the viewpoints of a researcher or participant on a given topic at any given time is formed through interaction between the individual and the phenomenon(-a), the individual and her prior-experience, the individual and her socio-cultural origins, and the individual and the language she uses to express her descriptions. As with the entire research design, the interview schedule, timing, and context have also been shaped by the researcher under these influences. With this understanding of the constitutive nature of the

research interview, it can be challenging to untangle the relationship between discursive practices and the phenomenon being discussed in the interview.

Whilst the researcher attempts to maintain focus on the topic of identity positioning thresholds, she must also provide room for the participant to express related nuances and details. To this end, many phenomenographers use semi-structured questions allowing participants to describe and explore their experiences fully and flexibly. The researcher will often prompt the participant to elaborate through open-ended questions and prompts such as: 'Could you explain further?' 'What do you mean by that?' 'Is there anything else you would like to say about this issue?' (Trigwell, 2000). In some cases, a phenomenographic interview might seem to revolve tediously around the same question. This may be partially true. A phenomenographic interviewer will sometimes ask similar questions in different ways so as to elicit a number of different views on the phenomenon. "Typically, a range of questions is used to provide views of each conception from several angles in order to make the description of the conception as rich as possible" (Dall'Alba, 2000, p. 94). The resulting outcome space is a compilation of categories of description which expresses the variation in experience. As such, the researcher must be vigilant of the necessity to reach a balance between depth of description of an individual and breadth of experience among a group of individuals.

Transcriptions

Analysis of interview transcripts is fraught with its own series of questions. The act of transcription is viewed by some as an act of translation and decontextualization inevitably resulting in loss of meaning (Dortins, 2002; Kvale, 1996). Dortins (2002) argues that it is also a process of recontextualization leaving the door open to different interpretations during analysis. Although the researcher was careful to transcribe the transcripts very carefully, the transcripts can still be interpreted out of context. So, to help maintain the context, the transcripts were transcribed using software called "f4" that enabled the importing of both the transcription and the audio recording into Atlas-TI qualitative coding software. This mechanism will allow the researcher to listen to specific parts of the transcript when and where desired.

Anticipating the Outcome Space

Phenomenographers try to detect variations in meaning within and across transcripts. And, they try to map how those variations might be related to each other structurally (what) and referentially (how) (Åkerlind, 2005; Dall'Alba, 2000). During analysis, the organization of the interview data into the abstracted categories of description must be balanced with the faithful representations of the variations of conceptions from individual research participants across the research sample (Kelly, 2002). As with the design of the research project and the co-constructed nature of the interview, the structure that emerges from the data is contingent upon the researcher's interaction with the data (Åkerlind, 2005; Richardson, 1999). Therefore, the faithfulness of the categories of description in representing the experiences of the participants is mediated through these interactions and limited by the researcher's ability to linguistically describe or otherwise depict the categories.

Phenomenographic researchers focus on exploring the variation of experience at the collective level (Booth, 2008; Trigwell, 2000). The outcome space is partial; it is made up of parts of utterances from various individuals and reconstituted by the researcher into abstract constructs (Åkerlind, 2005; Booth, 2008). Whilst phenomenographers attempt to discover the limited number of ways that a group of people experience a given phenomenon, they cannot truly know if all possible ways have been discovered. Some critics would argue that the faithfulness of representation in phenomenographic outcomes is also problematic because of decontextualization and reductionism (Kelly, 2002). To a degree it is a reductionist process. Meanings can be altered in the process of analysis by further removal of the participants' descriptions from the context of the interview as well as by the reduction of complex, unique expressions to abstract, generalized categories (Dortins, 2002; Kelly, 2002; Säljö, 1997). As such, researchers must make conscious efforts to balance the tendency to focus on individuals against the tendency to drown the individual voice within the crowd.

The depiction of the structural and referential relationships between the categories of description might also be more a reflection of the researcher's way of experiencing the data than a reflection of the way the participants experience the phenomenon. The danger in using discourse analysis to assist with reading the transcripts is that the discursive techniques can themselves become categories of description. There is also some possibility for elements of the underlying theoretical frameworks of threshold concepts and the Vygotsky Cycle to become categories of description. The original intent for using the models was to understand how socio-cultural processes might affect learners' realignment of their identity positions when confronted with facts, beliefs,

Proceedings of the 8th International Conference
on Networked Learning 2012 , Edited by: 493
Hodgson V, Jones C, de Laat M, McConnell D,
Ryberg T & Sloep P

ISBN 978-1-86220-283-2

values, and actions that might conflict with those they originally took for granted. As analysis has not yet begun, it is unknown the extent to which discourse analysis or the underlying theoretical frameworks might affect the phenomenographic outcome space. Great care will have to be taken as to the manner in which these relationships are discovered, described, and depicted. It also raises questions about the ability of the researcher to bracket her own preconceptions during the analysis phase (Kelly, 2002).

Some attempts to resolve issues of trustworthiness may be drawn from the work of Kvale (1999). Kvale offers insights in terms of craftsmanship, communicative practice, and pragmatic application. Craftsmanship involves the processes of checking, questioning, and theorizing; that is, the soundness of the research design and process is dependent on the researchers understanding of the topic and the methods. Issues of objectivity, to an extent, can be addressed through reflexivity (Sin, 2010). Sandberg (1997) argues that reliability (craftsmanship) can best be approximated through interpretive awareness. Interpretive awareness requires that a researcher "demonstrate how he/she has dealt with his/her intentional relation to the individual's conceptions being investigated" (p. 209). Communicative practice can be engaged through member checking or peer debriefing, inter-rater reliability, or dialogic reliability (Bowden, 2000; Collier-Reed, Ingerman & Berglund, 2009). In contrast to inter-rater reliability, which involves the comparison of codes generated by researchers who initially work independently, dialogic reliability permits the researchers to explain and defend how the categories of description were constituted as well as their structural and referential relationships to each other. Kvale's (1999) interest in what he called pragmatic validity connects research to the ability to use or apply the outcomes of research. He argues that there are two ways in which trustworthiness can be assessed in application: the outcome of the research can result in action or change, or the research can stimulate change. Because this study is being conducted by a single researcher, inter-rater reliability will not be used. The two-person interviews will allow a small degree of member checking and observation of peer interaction. However, in the final report, the researcher will strive to be aware of and communicate the complexity and nuances of the design, procedures, analysis, and conclusions.

Conclusion

The study of identity, in particular, how doctoral students position themselves and how those positions change during their studies is indeed challenging. Additional complexity arises as we attempt to understand the variation in how people experience these personal and sometimes subtle shifts in self-conception. In writing this paper, the author hopes to share some of the intricacies and issues associated with the use of phenomenography and discourse analysis in this abstract area of human experience. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research as it reaches completion will inform faculty and institutions of the personal processes and needs of doctoral students as they enter their courses and progress towards membership in the academy as researchers and contributors to their fields. An additional goal is to assist such learners in their own adjustment and understanding of how they, personally, cope with challenges to their values and relationships by helping them become aware and make sense of the different ways that they and their peers can experience identity positioning thresholds.

References

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. Higher Education Research & Development, 24(4), 321-334. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360500284672

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge (p. 219). Garden City, NY: Anchor Books (Random House, Inc.).

Booth, S. (2008). Researching learning in networked learning: Phenomenography and variation theory as empirical and theoretical approaches. Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Networked Learning (Vol. Halkidiki,). Retrieved from http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk/past/nlc2008/Info/confpapers.htm

Bowden, J. (2000). The nature of phenomenographic research. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), Phenomenography (pp. 62-82). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Collier-Reed, B. I., Ingerman, A., & Berglund, A. (2009). Reflections on trustworthiness in phenomenographic research: Recognizing purpose, context and change in the process of research. Education as change, 13(2), 339-355.

Dahlin, B. (2007). Enriching the theoretical horizons of phenomenography, variation theory, and learning studies. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 51(4), 327 — 346. doi:10.1080/00313830701485437

Dall'Alba, G. (2000). Reflections on some faces of phenomenography. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), Phenomenography (pp. 83-99). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Networked Learning 2012 , Edited by: Hodgson V, Jones C, de Laat M, McConnell D, Ryberg T & Sloep P

ISBN 978-1-86220-283-2

494

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 20(1), 43-63. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x

Dunkin, R. (2000). Using phenomenography to study organisational change. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), Phenomenography (pp. 137-152). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Gee, J. P. (2011). An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method (3rd ed., p. 224). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ferreday, D., Hodgson, V., & Jones, C. (2006). Dialogue, language and identity: Critical issues for networked management learning. Studies in Continuing Education, 28(3), July 2, 2009.

Fleming, W. (1886). The Interview: A Neglected Issue in Research on Student Learning. Higher Education, 15(5), 547-563. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. Retrieved from http://0-www.jstor.org.aupac.lib.athabascau.ca/stable/info/3446787

Harré, R. (2010). The social sources of mental content and order. In L. Van Langenhove (Ed.), People and societies: Rom Harré and designing the social sciences (pp. 121-149). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kelly, P. (2002). Validity and discursive phenomenography. Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association. Exeter, UK. Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003084.htm

Kiley, M., & Wisker, G. (2010). Learning to be a researcher: The concepts and crossings. In J. Meyer, R. Land, & C. Baillie (Eds.), Threshold concepts and transformational learning (p. 444). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Kvale, S. (1995). The social construction of validity. Qualitative Inquiry, 1(19), 19-40.

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). Learning and Awareness. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Meyer, J., & Land, R. (2005). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (2): Epistemological considerations and a conceptual framework for teaching and learning. Higher Education, 49(3), 373-388. doi:10.1007/sl0734-004-6779-5

Parchoma, G. (2011). Toward diversity in researching, teaching and technology philosphies-in-practice. In B. K. Daniel (Ed.), Handbook of research on methods and techniques for studying virtual communities: Paradigms and Phenomena (pp. 61-86). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Patrick, K. (2000). Exploring conceptions: Phenomenography and the object of study. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), Phenomenography (pp. 117-136). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Potter, J. (1996). Representing reality (p. 265). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Richardson, J. (1999). The Concepts and Methods of Phenomenographic Research. Review of Educational Research, 69(1), 53-82. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1170644

Säljö, R. (1997). Talk as data and practice: A critical look at phenomenographic inquiry and the appeal to experience. Higher Education Research & Development, 16(2), 173-190.

Sandberg, J. (1997). Are phenomenographic results reliable? Higher Education Research & Development, 16(2), 203-212.

Savin-Baden, M., & Sinclair, C. (2007). Lurking on the threshold: being learners in silent spaces. Ideas in Cyberspace Education (pp. 1-16). Lomond. Retrieved from http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/ice3/papers/savinbadensinclair.html

Sin, S. (2010). Considerations of quality in phenomenographic research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 9(4), 305-319.

Svensson, L., & Theman, J. (1983). The relation between categories of description and an interview protocol in a case of phenomenographic research. Second Annual Human Science Research Conference. Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, P.A.: Institute of Education, Göteborg University. Retrieved from http://www.ped.gu.se/biorn/phgraph/misc/constr/svethe83.html

Trigwell, K. (2000). A phenomenographic interview on phenomenography. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), Phenomenography (pp. 62-82). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

Weinberg, D. (2008). The philosophical foundations of constructionist research. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), Handbook of constructionist research (pp. 13-39). New York: Guilford Press.

Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., & Yates, S. J. (2001). Discourse theory and practice: A reader (p. 406). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd. in association with the Open University.

Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Networked Learning 2012 , Edited by: Hodgson V, Jones C, de Laat M, McConnell D, Ryberg T & Sloep P

ISBN 978-1-86220-283-2

495