Positioning Ones-Self in the Research Process: eliminating pseudo-science, a split personality and narcissism in combined arts and science research projects at Wrexham Glyndwr University.

Dr Susan Liggett, Wrexham Glyndwr University

Most researchers are aware of the need to position themselves in relation to other fields or disciplines in order to reveal the particular characteristics of their research. As a supervisor, I have noticed that it is all too easy for the Art and Design research student to lose their identity when combining research methods from different disciplines. In the social sciences, for example, an approach based on professional practise is often used which may not be the case in the arts. At the start of the research process, usually in writing the proposal, it can be confusing to the art student where ‘oneself’ often plays a significant role in the object of an enquiry. It is much easier to articulate the possible new knowledge that may emerge from interviews or surveys than those resulting from the art practice. This is particularly evident when the student is beginning to scrutinize art work in unfamiliar ways and also seeking its validity to a research community in a different discipline. This may be a result of a lack of confidence or it could also be that the knowledge gained tacitly is ‘overlooked because it is subsumed in to the rational logic of discursive accounts of artistic production’ (Bourdieu cited in Barrett, 2003).

How can we help students who want to combine arts and science paradigms of research to bring fresh perspectives and new possibilities to difficult problems? What are the main problems that they face? How can we convince practitioners in other fields of enquiry and our own universities that artists can reflect new objective realities that may be of benefit to society?

The articulation of the possibilities artists have for shaping consciousness and providing cultural capital can be difficult even for the more experienced academic. How can, as Barrett (2007) says, ‘the interplay of disparate areas of knowledge create new analogies, metaphors and models for understanding objects of enquiry’?

This paper will explore how far fine art research at Wrexham, Glyndwr University has progressed in the last five years in creating a research environment that utilizes other departments within the university. It will explores the challenges when acquiring explicit and exact knowledge alongside a more subjective and approach utilizing tacit knowledge from fine art practice in recent research projects. Is that an analysis of objective, subjective, empirical and hermeneutic paradigms, as described by Pierre Bourdieu, can bring about the combining of empirical approaches and individual understandings to re-enforce our understandings of the world without eliciting confusion? This paper will examine disciplinary and inter-disciplinary projects in the fields of dementia and painting, the development of electro-etching of aluminum for printmaking, utilizing film with mental health participants and the potential of holography for art practice.

References


Barrett, E (2004) ‘What does it meme? The exegesis as valorization and validation of creative arts research’ text, special Issue (Website Series) 3 [on-line]