

# \* Ethical Dilemmas in Educational Research

## - Safeguarding the confidentiality of teachers - Why and How?

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1. Background of the Researcher and the Study
2. What are the dilemmas?
3. How to reconcile with the dilemmas?
4. Limitation and Constraints
5. Conclusion

## \*Presentation Flow

- English Language Teaching in Hong Kong for 7 years, including 4 years at secondary school (grade 6-12) in Hong Kong
- Interested in in-service teachers identity tensions, and teacher agency in the work context

# \* 1. Background - Researcher

## Research Focus:

- Teacher identity tension - internal struggles between aspects relevant to the teacher as a person and the teacher as a professional; challenge personal feelings, values, beliefs or perceptions (Pilen, Den Brok & Beijaard, 2013)
- Teacher agency - how teachers influence, make choice and take stance in ways that affect their work and/or their professional identity ((Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä & Paloniemi, 2013)

## Dealing with ...


- Teachers personal stories, situation at workplace, school culture, relationship with colleagues, students, parents, management...
- Semi-structured, In depth interviews - Teachers talked about their experiences

# \* 1. Background of the Study



- \* A. The nature of qualitative vs quantitative
  - Rarely designed with pre-determined and measurable outcomes (unlike quantitative method)
  - In the form of iterative, in-depth inquiry
  - The enquiry led by key questions, and plans are fluid.

## \* 2. What are the dilemmas?



\* B. Designing the research- Deontologicalism

- Deontological - what forms of actions are right in themselves. \*Researchers are aware of how to treat others as they wish to be treated

→ Cultural context:

“Taboo questions: How many years have you be teaching (Hong Kong context)? → age, salary, rank

What is your salary as a teacher (Finnish context)? Finns don’t like to talk about money.

- Consequentialism - negative consequences for informants if the information is revealed

## \* 2. What are the dilemmas?

\* A good balance between the two

- How sensitive questions are justified?
- How comfortable the interviewees are answering the questions?
- How “deep” and “follow-up” on the questions should be?

\* → Minimizing harm

\* C. The dilemma in the researcher position

- The researcher personal values VS  
the interviewees' value VS  
The value of the real world
- Listening to answers wanting to listen?
- Providing answers to please the interviewer?

## \* 2. What are the dilemmas?



\* Committed to epistemic values, notable truth; but should be neutral as regards the practical values that its findings might serve.

(Hammersley, 2018)

→ Aware of the reckless framing of the questions, manipulating of the interview situations

## \* 2. What are the dilemmas

## \* A. Minimizing harm and Maximizing benefits

### i. Minimizing harm

- No pressing questions and make good balance on what the study needs to know
- Safeguarding confidentiality
- Power - Not obligatory interviews from the above (principals)

(Classroom observation for teaching method improvement VS Teachers own perspective on school improvement)

# \* 3. How to tackle with the dilemmas

## \* II. Maximizing benefits

- togetherness - Conducting the interviews WITH the interviewees NOT ON them
  - Participants are collaborators
  - Working collaborative with the members in the community.
- not only a harm:benefit ratio; constant reflection  
(Carpenter, 2018)

\* **How to tackle with  
the dilemmas**

## \* B. Respecting autonomy and rights

- Can always quit or refuse to answer certain questions when feeling not comfortable
- Ensuring the confidentiality

# \* 3. How to tackle with the dilemmas?

- \* Availability of safe and comfortable environment
- \* Trust in the academia → an article is published then what?

## \* 4. Limitation and Constraints

## \* Qualitative research ethics

- Not merely the consent forms, ethical committee application

- Virtues of the researcher-

Courage to identify the problems/ gaps

Respect to the participants

Resolute and reflective in analyzing the data

## \* 5. Some thoughts



- \* Carpenter, D. (2018). Ethics, Reflexivity and Virtue. In R. Iphofen & M. Tolich (Eds) Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Ethics. SAGE.
- \* Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P., & Paloniemi, S. (2013). What is agency? Conceptualizing professional agency at work. Educational Research Review, 10, 45-65.
- \* Hammersley, M. (2018), Values in Social Research. In R. Iphofen & M. Tolich (Eds) Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research Ethics. SAGE.
- \* Pilen, M.T., Den Brok, P.J & Beijaard, D. (2013). Profiles and changes in beginning teachers' professional identity tensions. Teaching and Teacher Education, 34, 86-97.

## \* Reference