Chapter 1

Introduction:
Employing Paradigms in Scholarship and Education Research

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ABSTRACT

Methods and paradigms in scholarship and education research are addressed in this book. Boyer's scholarships of discovery, integration, application, and teaching, along with Boyer's later addition of the scholarship of engagement, and their multifaceted relationship to education research, form a starting point. From there, in addressing methods and paradigm in scholarship and education research, the paradigm is placed front of stage. Paradigm, as used here, refers to a set of concepts that reflect a world view underpinning a particular subject or pursuit. The paradigms applying to education research and scholarship addressed in this book include the traditional positivist and post-positivist - here labelled neo-positivist - paradigms and the interpretivist, transformative, and pragmatic research paradigms, which have been nominated in existing literature. In acknowledgement of the "supercomplex" environment in which education now operates, a novel paradigm, supercomplexity, emerges.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

On the scholarship side, the book can be used by academics and managers in higher education to differentiate forms of scholarship and their relationship to academic work; a matter pertinent to tenure and promotion policies and procedures, and to work-load allocation. Related to this, one purpose of the book is to clarify the relationship between the scholarship of teaching and learning and education research. On the research side, the book is designed for researchers in higher education, for students undertaking post-graduate research and their supervisors, and for academics and students taking courses of study on what is often referred to as "research methods." The book can be used to describe, locate and compare

alternative approaches to education research. It can assist post-graduate students in identifying their own research interests and motivations and locating them within a paradigm. It can assist students and education researchers in the design of research proposals and interpretation of findings. It can be used to critique reports of research.

In approaching research design, implementation and findings, a central consideration is the basis for choices about the research topic, data collection strategies and data analysis techniques, and decisions about the nature and form of the findings and the conclusions that can be drawn. A purpose of this book is to foreground and reflect upon the power of the research paradigm to provide a firm and consistent basis for the design and implementation of research. In this book, this purpose is achieved through a variety of researchers reflecting upon their own research in education, and illustrating how the paradigm has either intentionally, or in some cases, unintentionally, influenced aspects of their research, including the methodologies selected and the data collection methods used, the data analysis and interpretation processes, and the types of conclusions reached.

Research method refers here to elements of a research undertaking including selection of data, the forms of data gathered, and the analytical procedures employed. Method is distinguished from methodology in this book, as methodology is regarded as the rationale for the research approach adopted; for example, the rationale for utilizing qualitative, quantitative or a mixture of both forms of data. The method, then, refers to the tools for gathering data, analyzing data and the means by which findings are generated such as surveys, focus groups, observation, or document analysis.

Paradigm as a term is used here to refer to a world view or to a high-order way of thinking about or categorizing the approach or logic that underpins all aspects of a research undertaking from the intent or motivation for the research to the final design, conduct and outcomes of the research. In both research practice and research literature, research paradigms are often not a focal point. Many researchers do not consider the research paradigm in which they operate or indeed mention it in their research, considering it sufficient to describe the methodology and/or research methods employed. This book is focused on the criticality of selecting an appropriate research paradigm that can inform decisions regarding the design of a research study – including how either or both qualitative and quantitative methodologies will be used – and ensure consistency in the implementation of the research and in the nature of the research outcomes. In this book, a model and framework for understanding the different research paradigms is provided, distinguishing underpinning theories from research strategies, data collection techniques and data analysis tools. Designating the paradigm provides a base for understanding the nature of findings appropriate to a particular form of research and for critiquing research conclusions. The categorization of paradigms employed here is presented in Table 2 below.

This book is focused on the discipline of education and the forms of research and scholarship that occur within it. In particular, the paradigms within which the research occurs and the types of methodologies and methods that are employed are addressed. We use the term "education research" rather than the more often used "educational research" because the book relates to research in the field of education, where educational research could be taken to mean the research that is in itself educational. Education research focuses on research in schools, higher education and vocational education, as well as on the history, philosophy, policy and various discipline areas which contribute to the education field, including sociology and psychology. Education research then may be based on a number of academic disciplines, may be interdisciplinary, or may be adisciplinary (to coin a term).

In this book, the research paradigm takes prime position. That is not to say that a research endeavor needs to start with a paradigm; the particular research exercise is likely to be initiated by a research

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