

Managing Participation within a Novice Coaching Context

Author

Harris-Reeves, Brooke

Published

2009

Book Title

Educational Planet Shapers: Researching, Hypothesising, Dreaming the Future

Rights statement

© The Author(s) 2009. The attached file is reproduced here with permission of the copyright owner for your personal use only. No further distribution permitted. For further information, use hypertext link for access to the publisher's website. or contact the author.

Downloaded from

<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/30240>

Link to published version

<http://www.postpressed.com.au>

Griffith Research Online

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

Managing Participation Within a Novice Coaching Context

Griffith University

PS 15

Abstract

This paper explores membership within a Research Higher Degree community designed to develop expertise in the field of managing athlete behaviour in a novice coaching context. Employing literature, methodologies and data analysis techniques associated with postmodern ethnography the author provides insights into a journey from novice to expert within a research community of practice. Through relating the dissertation process with professional experience a narrative is presented that captures the tensions, ambiguities and potentialities associated with occupying different forms of membership within a research community of practice. Conclusions are drawn relating to how the structured nature of authoring a dissertation can be informed by the dynamic, sometimes unstructured and unpredictable forms of participation experienced.

Introduction

Due to the fact that communication is an integral part of the RHD journey, it is no surprise that comparisons can be made between the journey of a novice to expert coach and the journey from a novice to expert researcher. Not only is it the researcher's ability to communicate their ideas in written form in the dissertation, it is also the researcher's ability to communicate within a research community of practice (Brown, Finger and Reeves, 2007). Specifically this research community of practice includes fellow RHD students, supervisors, academics and various community members required to act as participants in the RHD journey.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98) a community of practice is, "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice." For this purpose, a coaching community of practice refers to a group of coaches with varying levels of experience ranging from novice to expert coming together around the common interest and profession of coaching. The objective of this community is to seek each other and expand ones' knowledge base through sharing and participating on an ongoing basis. The spirit that holds a community of practice together is the notion of collective intelligence, which within the field of coaching revolves around specific coaching practices, seen as a shared value which is placed on knowledge as a generative process. Rather than believing that knowledge is only acquired and held individually, members of a community of practice believe knowledge is generated through sharing and participation. Likewise, a research community of practice involves a group of researchers ranging from novice to expert coming together and sharing the

knowledge and processes around research practice. Recent research conducted on novice researchers - RHD students, within a research community of practice realised that students come to 'know' and 'do' research within a community of practice (Boud & Lee, 2005).

According to Lave and Wenger (1991) understanding learning within a community of practice entails four intrinsic elements: knowing; doing; participation; and legitimacy. This perception promotes an outlook of knowing as being "activity by specific people in specific circumstances" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 52). The importance placed on 'people' supports the viewpoint that 'knowers' occupy a range of roles in the process of coming to know, most of which involve communication – novice, listener, writer, expert etc. When relating the notion of community of practice to what it means to 'do' research, Lave and Wenger (1991), highlight that the 'doing' relates to operating in an activity system about which participants share an understanding concerning the goals to be achieved and about what achieving those goals means for them and for the communities to which they belong. For this purpose it is recognised that 'doing' research entails more than the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of research designs. Rather it is about highlighting values and beliefs about academic areas of study and about integrating oneself within a shared network of academic support (Gee, 2005). As highlighted by Boud & Lee (2005), it is about 'becoming' a peer.

Researchers (Lave and Wenger, 1991) highlight that coming to 'know' and 'do' within a research community of practice is not merely a condition for legitimate participation. Alternatively, scholarship is a developing form of membership within a community. As such, despite the level of seniority, all members within a research community may employ a process that produces, reproduces and transforms the research culture within the community. Accordingly, the notion of 'participation' and 'legitimacy' within the research community is interconnected with the 'knowing' and 'doing' within the community through the notion of communication.

Within a coaching community of practice, current trends in the literature highlight the role of communication as being a prerequisite to effective coaching (Salmela, 1995; Kellett, 1999). Throughout this paper, the term coach will be referred to in a sporting sense (as in the researcher's PhD studies) and in a research sense, as the journey undertaken from novice to expert can be analogous to development of expertise as outlined by Bloom and Schinke (1997). Bloom and Schinke (1997) administered a study into the communication styles exhibited by sports coaches. Specifically, they investigated the disparity of communication styles in relation to the four developmental stages of coaching. The four stages are recognised by the National Coach Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) as being the: novice coach; developmental coach; national elite coach; and international elite coach. The NCAS designed a framework for coaching accreditation in a progressive manner constituted from beginner to elite level. For this purpose, a novice coach refers to a coach with less than one year of coaching experience and often holds a Level 0 coaching accreditation, which is designed as an introduction to coaching. The

second stage as highlighted above as the developmental coach is recognised as an intermediate level of coaching and in this instance the coach holds a level one or two coaching accreditation certificate and usually has over a years coaching experience. The national elite level coach is an experienced coach involved with the coaching of elite level athletes and holds a level three coach accreditation certificate. The final stage of coaching is recognised by the NCAS as an international elite coach. To reach this stage of coaching, the coach is required to be highly experienced and accomplished and hold a level four accreditation certification, which available by invitation only from the NCAS.

Through analysis of the data, Bloom et al. (1997) identified that when asking elite coaches to recollect various periods of their coaching development, they were able to describe changes in their communication styles and techniques. The same can be said for the RHD journey in the research community of practice (Brown, Finger and Reeves, 2007). The novice researcher's ability to communicate in every sense of the word evolves from simplistic to sophisticated. Recent research conducted surrounding Research Higher Degree (RHD) students has highlighted the fact that students come to 'know' and 'do' research within a community of practice. This is linked with the notion of communication within the research community as participants assist each other through communication to become full participants in the research culture of the community (Boud & Lee, 2005).

Throughout the RHD journey membership within a community of research practice can be identified from three different but interconnected perspectives all of which relate to communication. Membership within a research community of practice can be characterised as an expert-novice relationship. Specifically, this relationship refers to the transfer of knowledge from the expert (supervisor) to the novice (RHD student). It is assumed that through various forms of written and verbal communication, the novice researcher gains knowledge and authority through the guidance from that of the established researcher. However, membership in a research community requires that the contribution of the RHD student to the conversation of 'becoming a peer' be given prominence in the expert-novice relationship (Boud & Lee, 2005).

Membership within a research community of practice can also be distinguished as the relationship between the educational institution, the university within which the RHD students' journey is undertaken and the experiences encountered whilst journeying as an RHD student. The foundational context within which the RHD students' journey is undertaken can provide dominant messages regarding the RHD students' role within the research community of practice. In certain research cultures the idyllic RHD student is seen as amenable and reverent and prepared to follow instruction provided by their research superiors (Williams & Mills, 1995). According to researchers (Bullen & Kenway, 2003), the RHD students' research

superior or supervisor is seen as 'the authority' who utilises effective methods of conveying research practice. These constructed views of the roles of the RHD student and supervisor demand sophisticated communication in order for the novice-expert relationship to be successful.

The third perspective of the RHD students' membership within a research community of practice relates to the processes of social transformation as opposed to social transmission. Again central to the communication process, this perspective refers to the patterns of participation and authority that members, both individual and groups realise within a research community of practice. As highlighted by Renshaw & Brown (1997), these patterns unearth the social and cultural distributions of power, which in turn need to be taken into consideration when unearthing the tension, ambiguities and potentialities throughout the journey of the RHD student. Specifically, it needs to be considered that the experiences throughout RHD journey are a collaboration of the practices of RHD students with the practices of others. These practices merge and evolve within the context of mutual support and appropriation throughout the RHD journey during which the process of 'becoming a peer' is realised.

Further to the role of communication within the RHD journey and the coaching practice, embedded in Bloom et al.'s (1997) research were issues pertaining to the role of communication in coaching. Specifically, questions were raised such as: is communication classified as one of many behaviours required to become an effective coach? This paper explores this question in relation to the development of my expertise in a research community of practice.

Basic Communication

Martens (2004) identified three dimensions of communication: sending and receiving messages; verbal and nonverbal messages; and, the content and emotion of communication. The first dimension highlighted above is imperative for coaches to master.

Central to communication in a research community of practice is that which involves content and emotion (Rodriguez-Farrar, 2006). Specifically, content is the substance of the message and emotion is how you feel about it (Martens, 2004) As a coach in the public eye, it is important to manage both the content and emotion of a communication to remain in control of the situation and the athletes. As an RHD student it is important to manage both the content and emotion to remain in control of membership within a community research practice.

The first dimension highlighted above is imperative for coaches to master. Effective coaching and effective communication go hand in hand. Traditionally, coaches are known for their oral skills than for their listening. Although this is the case, it is important coaches listen to and understand what their athletes are communicating back to them {Martens, 2004 #200}. Likewise, oral communication is important for

an RHD student as they need to be able to correspond with supervisors, fellow RHD students and other members of the research community.

The use of verbal and nonverbal messages is of equal importance to that of sending and receiving messages. Hand gestures, facial expressions, positioning of the body and acts of kindness are all examples of nonverbal communication. It is thought that 70 percent of communication is conducted nonverbally. Subsequently, this highlights the notion that what is signified is of equal importance than what is said {Martens, 2004 #200}. An example of this within a research community of practice include verbal interactions between supervisor and RHD student, mirroring non verbal gestures such as body language and hand gestures that are displayed.

Lastly, as mentioned above communication involves content and emotion {Martens, 2004 #200}. Specifically, content is the substance of the message and emotion is how you feel about it. Typically, content is articulated verbally and emotion nonverbally. As a coach in the public eye, it is important to manage both the content and emotion to remain in control of the situation and the athletes.

Martens (2004) identified six steps to the communication process. This process initiates at the ideas formulated by the coach, progressing through to the reaction and interpretation of the athlete. This chapter utilises Martens (2004) steps to describe my research journey from the ideas initially formulated at Confirmation of Candidature to drafting a PhD thesis. Table 1 outlines Martens' six steps of communication and situates them within a research community of practice.

Table 1 - Six steps in communicating to athletes

(Adapted from Martens, 2004.)

Step	Coaching	RHD journey
Step One	The coach has thoughts, feelings, ideas, intentions, that they wish to convey to the athlete.	Initial stage of RHD journey, developing ideas for topic
Step Two	The coach translates these thoughts into a message suitable for transmission to the athlete.	Theory phase - Designing the research proposal
Step Three	The coach conveys the message through a verbal or nonverbal channel.	Confirmation
Step Four	The athlete obtains the message if they are paying attention to the coach.	Relational phase – relationships with supervisor and other RHD student relationship
Step Five	The message is understood by the athlete. The interpretation is dependent upon whether the athlete comprehended the content and intent of the message.	Implementation of the research project - Method, data analysis

Step Six	The athlete reacts internally to the interpretation of the message.	Communal phase - Drafting of dissertation
----------	---	---

There is a substantial amount of literature and academic interest in the RHD journey which predominately concerns itself with the technical aspects of a doctorate. The literature tends to concentrate in a number of areas including: selecting a topic area; choosing a supervisor; the difficulties of supervision; and the process of writing a dissertation (Graves and Varma, 1997 ; Pearson and Ford, 1997 ; Phillips and Pugh, 2000). There is however limited literature regarding what Bencich, Graber, Staben and Sohn (2002) refer to as emotional or intellectual experiences. It is the intention of this paper to portray these aspects of the RHD journey through the researcher's experiences. As recognised in Table 1, specific areas of interest include technical experiences, emotional experiences and intellectual experiences, which will in turn unearth the tensions, ambiguities and potentialities experienced throughout the researcher's journey. In this instance, technical experiences refer to the development of the research design and data analysis techniques. Emotional experiences refer to the ups and downs encountered during the trials and tribulations throughout the RHD journey. Lastly, the intellectual experiences encountered during the course of the journey refers to the knowledge growth one goes through when undertaking research, both in the information that is unearthed from the data and the learning that takes place surrounding the dissertation process.

Comment [BR1]: Elaborate on what is in table one

Specifically, Table 1 links the stages of the communication process with the stages of the RHD journey. The initial stage of RHD journey and the development of ideas for topic is linked to step one of the communication process, which is the coach has thoughts, feelings, ideas, intentions, that they wish to convey to the athlete. Step two of the communication process identified as the coach translating the thoughts into a message is linked to stage two of the RHD journey, which is the theory phase during which the research proposal is designed. The conveyance of a message by the coach through a verbal or nonverbal channel is the next phase of communication and it is linked to the confirmation phase of the RHD journey. Following on from this, the next step of communication is the athlete obtaining the message and this is closely linked to the relational phase of the RHD journey, during which relationships within a research community of practice are formed and developed. After the athlete receives the message, the next step is the athletes' comprehension of the message and this process of understanding within the RHD journey is identified as the research design implementation and data analysis phase. The final step to communication as highlighted in Table 1 is how the athlete reacts to the interpreted message. The final phase of the RHD journey, the drafting of the dissertation, can be closely aligned with the final phase of communication, as it is how the RHD student reacts to and interprets the data within the drafting of the dissertation.

Methodology

The research design employed in this paper is exploratory. It is about providing new insights, meaning and descriptions in order to clarify, comprehend and interpret or explain my RHD journey from the application to the authoring of the thesis. The focus is on naturalistic inquiry or naturalism, as the research was conducted in natural settings, in which the natural context occurs, the everyday setting of a university research community (de Laine, 1997). The objective of naturalism is to capture the character of ordinarily occurring human behaviour, and the significance of relationships. Interactions of this nature are only effectively observed in natural settings, despite research often conducted in artificial settings such as experiments. Indeed valuable observations should be conducted by being in the field, in this case the field is the journey, and interacting with others {Hammersley, 1990 #210; Jenks, 1993 #211}.

To understand the perception of the novice researcher, an approach was required that would capture contextual dimensions that were embedded within the research community of practice. These contextual dimensions highlight the tensions, ambiguities and potentialities experienced during the RHD journey. In order to achieve this objective a postmodern ethnographic approach (Geertz, 1973) was identified as most appropriate for exploring the researcher's perceptions and experiences. Postmodern ethnography is dissimilar to the more traditional ethnographic research in a number of ways. Primarily, it employs local narratives as evidenced in the form of diary entries, written feedback on drafts and verbal interactions between members of the community of practice, as opposed to meta-narratives. For this purpose, the informants not specifically signified by the central discourses that are heard, and the central disciplinary boundaries are dissected {Giroux, 1984 #252}. Dominant to the position of postmodern ethnography is the transfer from the values, practices and beliefs upheld, to the articulation of marginal perspectives. Researchers {Packwood, 1996 #196} believe that in postmodern research, finding a single common truth is replaced by the awareness that numerous truths exist concurrently. Further, the real concern is which truth is being heard at the time, as opposed to what the truth is.

It is recognised that post modern ethnography shifts toward construction of reality. In contrast, {Tyler, 1987 #194} disputes such understandings and advocates that post modern research rather than moving toward construction and away from life, it moves back to experience. In particular, post modern research endeavours to reorganise the everyday experiences of the individual and seeks out the non-obvious, the ambiguous, the incongruous, the disorganised and the unanticipated {Fine, 1995 #195}. Indeed, post modern ethnography views everyday occurrences as a story from which awareness developed, leading to an engaged relativism which is modified and adapted to a changing world {Tyler, 1987 #194}.

According to Packwood and Sikes {, 1996 #196}, adopting a postmodern approach provides the researcher the opportunity to focus on individual stories while acknowledging the shifting context of the individual. Thus by employing a post modern ethnographic approach in this study regarding the RHD journey, it allows the researcher to recognise the experiences during the journey within a research

community of practice. This approach enabled the exploration of the social situation and cultural practices of a research community of practice. Primarily, it employs local narratives for the purpose of reconstructing the reality of the RHD journey.

In particular, the research endeavours to reorganise the everyday experiences of the RHD journey to construct a story from which themes can be identified for analysis. These themes provided a mechanism for unearthing the shifting context of the RHD journey and for shedding light on the tensions, ambiguities and potentialities involved in the RHD journey.

Data Collection

It is intended that the experiences of the researcher through her RHD journey to the current time will be explored. Specifically: diary entries of the journey; interactions with supervisors, academics and fellow RHD students; and, feedback both verbally and written on draft submissions of the dissertation. All of these forms of data were analysed and emerging themes were identified. This was accomplished by using a form of thematic content analysis called open coding (Glaser, 1998).

The objective of *open coding* is to produce emergent themes and their properties which fit, work and are applicable for contextualizing the RHD journey. As the specific themes were constructed, they were categorised into the tensions, ambiguities and potentialities experienced during the RHD journey. These categories allowed the researcher to see the context of participation and the forms of membership experienced through focusing on particular experiences recorded in the local narratives constructed within the texts of the diary entries, interactions with others, and feedback from draft submissions of the dissertation.

Results

The data was interrogated until enough information emerged to develop core themes and their properties. The data explored used Martens' (2004) steps to communicating and the adaptations of my RHD journey as situated within a research community of practice as a guide to the different phases of my RHD journey. The different phases of my RHD journey include: the initial phase of the RHD journey; the theory phase; confirmation; the relational phase; the implementation of the research project; and the drafting of the dissertation. The themes extracted from the data are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 – Phases and Themes extracted from RHD Journey

Phase of RHD journey	Themes extracted from data
Initial stage of RHD journey - Developing ideas for topic	Originality Courage
Theory phase - Designing the research proposal	Power of thought Designing and achieving goals
Confirmation	Empowering

	Dimensions of journey: emotional, spiritual and relational
Relational phase – Relationships with supervisor and other RHD student relationship	Relationships – no person’s an island Isolation Being part of a community of scholarly practice
Implementation of the research project - Method, data analysis	Persistence Time pressures – student and supervisor
Communal phase - Drafting of dissertation	Feeling invisible Identity

A starting point for anyone’s journey in life is often a desire or motivation to attain a goal, hence the same can be said for the desire to commence the RHD journey. The goal for some might be the pursuit of financial freedom, a childhood dream, or acceptance into the academic community. Tracy (2003) highlights that goals instil in individuals a sense of meaning, purpose and direction, and that goals may be positioned for one’s pursuit of academic, sporting, financial or social excellence. Nevertheless, as with life journeys that start off with well planned goals, my RHD journey has encountered and been confronted with tensions, ambiguities and potentialities.

In the initial stage of my RHD journey there was a definite sense of excitement. That sense of excitement ranged from curiosity to inspiration to passion. During the initial phase the main objective was to develop ideas for my research, what was it that I wanted to research and how was I going to frame it? As I entered into this phase of my journey I experienced excitement about the infinite possibilities. The main themes that appeared from the data during this phase were originality and courage. Courage is defined in its academic sense referring to the capacity to frame, re-frame and, where necessary discard ideas based on empirical evidence (Lampert, 1990). Traditionally undertaking an RHD journey requires the researcher to produce work that is original. The term original does not in a sense mean the work has to be something the world has never seen before, it does however indicate the work has to be an original contribution to knowledge and understanding in the chosen field (Winter, Griffiths et al., 2000). The quest for originality and the refinement of my topic during the first phase of my RHD journey was certainly one which unearthed tensions.

Whilst embarking on my RHD journey and refining my topic in the pursuit to achieve originality I experienced fear. Fear in the sense of inadequacy rather than in concern for well-being (Kahneman, Diener et al., 2003). These feelings of being afraid and even overwhelmed often led to doubt around the decision to embark on an RHD journey. This led me to question whether I have both the ability and the necessary determination required to charter and navigate my way through this RHD journey and reach my final destination. In order to overcome the feelings experienced during this internal struggle I had to find courage to move forward.

Although during the initial phase of the RHD journey my sense of self-efficacy fluctuated, and courage was required in order to progress into the next phase, the experience was largely one that I would look back on with fond memories. As I entered into the theory phase (see Table 2) it was clear that smaller short term goals

were required in order to achieve the ultimate goal. To ensure the determination and drive to continue remained, it wasn't enough to just revisit the goals set at the commencement of the journey. When faced with major challenges it was imperative to not just look at the journey as a whole as this proved at times to be overwhelming. Designing smaller achievable goals which would ultimately lead toward completion, provided me with a sense of meaning, purpose and direction (Tracy, 2003).

It is apparent in the literature (Bandura, 1977) that a student's high self-efficacy beliefs have a powerful effect on cognitive processes where behaviour, being purposive, is regulated by personal thoughts exemplifying valued goals. The more evident the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal challenged that a student is likely to set and the firmer the commitment to achieving set goals despite such doubt. The second theme exposed from the data analysis during this phase of the RHD journey was power of thought. During times of challenge and self doubt, it was necessary to engage in reflective practice (Bandura, 1994) and draw from inner strengths to work through negative feelings. According to Deci and Ryan (1985) inner strengths and power of thought are both outcomes of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from the pleasure experienced from the mastery of a task or the sense of satisfaction in working on or completing a task. Such an outlook advances intrinsic interest and engrossment in a task even when faced with adversities. During these times of my RHD journey it was important to reflect on the writings of motivational theorists (Kahlefeldt, 2004) that highlight that we become what we think. The belief is if we think failure, we fail; if we fear we will destroy our confidence in ourselves; but if we contemplate success, we succeed (Kahlefeldt, 2004).

As I journeyed into the confirmation phase (Table 2), power of thought underpinned my cognitive processes. However, the ability to work through the adversities that I was faced with during this time did not simply lie with the power of my thought processes. Through reflection on this time and conducting analysis on the data during this phase it was clear there were other dimensions that assisted me through this part of the journey. Such dimensions include emotional, spiritual and relational aspects. Emotional agency relates to using emotions in order to achieve an aim (Kószegi, 2006). Spiritual agency relates to using the resources of a belief system to enact a goal (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000). Relational agency relates to using networks of relations to achieve a goal (Edwards, 2005).

In essence, drawing from all of these dimensions enabled me to meet the requirements of this challenging time. The ability to leap over the tensions does not lie only in beliefs in personal capabilities or even in the strength and courage to persist, but also in staying in touch with emotions, sourcing profound spiritual strengths, and drawing on the support from those around me. When the beliefs in my own ability and my perseverance faded, the only viable assets remaining were my emotions, my spiritual strength and my support network.

RHD journeys are fraught with tensions and ambiguities and as a student I had to learn how to deal with these effectively. One must be determined to overcome the difficulties faced and make virtue of them in order to reach a final destination. During the confirmation phase of my RHD journey overcoming such difficulties required a humbled nature to accept the slow nature of growing, which in turn brought about a real understanding. Humility here is used in the academic sense which requires the recognition of the inadequacy of ideas when necessary (Lampert, 1990). In the confirmation phase, a sense of empowerment was experienced and identified as one of the major themes extracted from the data. Specifically, this empowerment peaked at the acceptance of my confirmation paper. A great sense of achievement was experienced as I was on my way to achieving my ultimate goal and my hard work was starting to pay off. I had been accepted by the examiners which signified to me that I was half way to being accepted into the academic community.

As I entered into the next phase of my journey and the relief of overcoming my confirmation faded, I experienced a period of isolation. While experiencing this isolation, uncertainties appeared. Did I have the ability to complete this journey, was it worth the effort? I felt like an alone individual working on the limits trying to uncover knowledge. Whilst experiencing these feelings it was a time of unrest, however upon reflection I now view those feelings differently. Instead of perceiving them as negative, I believe it is more appropriate to label them as ambiguities. On one hand it was the pessimism of going it alone, and on the other hand it was the feeling that I had come this far, I just needed support. It was during that time I recognised the importance of networking and meeting other people working in a similar area. Tapping into networks such as a community of scholarly practice provided me with the encouragement when things became rough. That encouragement from others improved my outlook and propagated positive thinking. The data analysis of this phase of my RHD journey emphasised the importance of relationships and in turn made me recognise the prevalence of the phase - no person's an island.

As the journey progressed and goals were slowly being checked off, it is was easy to become complacent and to be deceived into thinking that all was well. Once I had completed my confirmation and I entered into the data analysis phase of the RHD journey, further tensions were experienced. Following on from the urgency of meeting the deadlines of the confirmation, I experienced a more relaxed attitude where goals retreated into the background. During this time it became clear that I needed to remain focussed on goals and implement a timeline alongside those goals to ensure I didn't loose track of time. Meeting the requirements of a busy lifestyle and work commitments as well as being immersed within the RHD journey I found it difficult to achieve a balance. One of the major obstacles faced during this phase of my RHD journey was overcoming time pressures.

When you set out on a journey, the expectation is that you will make steady progress and edge closer toward the ultimate goal (Senn, 2002). When undertaking the RHD journey there are two options to choose: to either circum to the tensions faced and give up, or persist. The definition of persistence (Pavlina, 2005) is the

ability to maintain action despite the emotions experienced. In a research environment in which students are required to be productive, the experience of feeling stuck and unable to move can lead to feelings of anxiety. It's persistence that enabled me to keep moving forward in the journey despite the lack of motivation and anxieties experienced.

Such persistence enabled me to move into the latest phase of my RHD journey, the drafting of the dissertation. During the transition from university graduate to RHD student, I was struck by the sense of being temporary that surrounded me and continues to surround me and my identity as a researcher. This transition during the course of what was in many ways one continuous journey, highlighted my status and identity as a researcher as something problematic and to be negotiated, rather than fixed and dependable.

Another emotional aspect of the RHD journey, categorised as a tension, was the feeling of invisibility experienced during the latest phase of the journey, the drafting of the dissertation. This feeling of invisibility is closely linked to the previously discussed development of a sense of identity. Given the tensions, ambiguities and potentialities, and the years involved in the RHD journey, a feeling of ambivalence arose around the journey to me being accepted and taken seriously as a researcher. Hence the feeling of invisibility was experienced as there often seemed to be a gap between those who had already obtained their research higher degree and had been accepted by fellow academics, and those navigating their way through unknown waters. This acceptance is one which isn't easily achieved by the novice researcher and often led to experiencing mixed emotions about the RHD process.

If nothing else is gained from this exploration into my RHD journey, I have established an understanding that a Research Higher Degree extends beyond the technical aspects encountered, to the relational, emotional and intellectual experiences. For me this has been a journey of: leaps of faith; struggles with my perception of my true potential, capabilities and values; and a life changing experience. The membership that I hold within the research community of practice at my university has enabled me to engage in formal and informal exchanges of ideas and interactions with fellow novice researchers as well as expert researchers. These interactions and experiences have been educative, empowering and engaging and have provided me with affirmations and assurances which in turn have helped me to stay positive through my RHD journey. There is no doubt I encountered many challenges and adversities along the way, however such experiences enabled me to recognise my true potential as a member within a research community of practice.

Concluding Comments

Feelings surrounding the experiences of the nature of the RHD journey tend to fall into three categories: tensions, ambiguities and potentialities. The visions offered by such experiences can be identified as intertwined and interconnected negative, positive and mixed. These experiences tend to have decisive phases starting with

those that are positive such as the feeling of empowerment and designing and achieving of various goals, followed by subsequent feelings of invisibility and isolation. Despite experiencing these up's and down's, the drive to achieve academic excellence offers a romantic notion of the researcher as a lone individual working at the frontiers uncovering knowledge. Although the themes unearthed from my RHD journey are valid and certainly have their value, in isolation they provide an inadequate explanation of the significance of the research journey and how they shaped me into the researcher that I have become.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review* **84**: 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1994). *Self-efficacy. Encyclopaedia of human behaviour. R. V. Ramachaudran. New York, Academic Press. 4*: 71-81.
- Bench, C., E. Graber, et al. (2002). Navigating in the unknown waters: Proposing, collecting data, and writing qualitative dissertation. *College Composition and Communication Dec 2002*.
- Bloom, G. and R. Schinke (1997). The development of communication skills by elite basketball coaches. *Coaching and Sport Science Journal* **2**(3): 3-10.
- Boud, D., & Lee, A. (2005). 'Peer learning' as pedagogic discourse for research education. *Studies in Higher Education, 30*(5), 501-516.
- Brown, R., G. Finger, et al. (2007). *Educational research - Who needs it?: Changing membership within a research community of practice. Educational research: Who needs it?* G. F. R. Brown, and C. Rusthon. Brisbane, Post Pressed.: 7-20.
- Bullen, E., & Kenway, J. (2003). Real or imagined women? Staff representations of international women postgraduate students. *Discourse: studies in the cultural policy of education, 24*(1), 35-49.
- de Laine, M. (1997). *Ethnography: Theory and applications in health research. Sydney, Australia, MacLennan and Petty*.
- Deci, E. and R. Ryan (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour*. New York, Plenum.
- Edwards, A. (2005). Relational agency: Learning to be a resourceful practitioner. *International Journal of Educational Research* **43**: 168-182.
- Fine, G. & Martin, D. (1995). Humor in ethnographic writing: Sarcasm, satire, and irony as voices in Ervine Goffman's asylums. *Representation in Ethnography*. J. V. Maanen. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage: 165-197.

- Gee, P. G. (2005). Meaning making, communities of practice, and analytical toolkits. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 9(4), 590-594.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture*. New York, Basic Books.
- Giroux, H. (1984). Public Philosophy and the Crisis in Education. *Harvard Educational Review* 54(2): 186-194.
- Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory. Issues and Discussions*. Mill Valley, CA, Sociology Press.
- Graves, N. and V. Varma, Eds. (1997). *Working for a doctorate: a guide for the humanities and social sciences*. London, Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. (1990). *Classroom ethnography*. Milton Keynes, UK, Open University Press.
- Kahlefeldt, B. (2004). *90 minutes to success*. Speciality Press.
- Kahneman, D., E. Diener, et al. (2003). *Well - Being: The foundations of hedonic psychology*. Manhattan, Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kellett, P. (1999). Organisational leadership: Lessons from professional coaches. *Sport Management Review* 2: 150-171.
- Kószegi, B. (2006). Emotional Agency. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 12(1): 121-155.
- Lampert, M. (1990). When the problem is not the question and the solution is not the answer: Mathematical knowing and teaching. *American Educational Research Journal* 27(1): 29-63.
- Martens, R. (2004). *Successful Coaching*. Hong Kong, Human Kinetics.
- Meyer, J. and R. Jepperson (2000). The 'Actors' of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency. *Sociological Theory* 18(1): 100-120.
- Olds, T., J. Dollman, et al. (2004). *Children and Sport in South Australia : A report prepared for the Australian Sports Commission*, University of South Australia.
- Packwood, A. and P. Sikes (1996). Adopting a Post Modern Approach to Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 9(3): 335 - 346.
- Pavlina, S. (2005). "Self-discipline: Persistence." Retrieved 23 July, 2007, from <http://www.stevepavlina.com/blog/2005/06/self-discipline-persistence/>.

- Pearson, M. and L. Ford (1997). *Open and Flexible PhD study and research*. Department of Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs Evaluation and Investigation Program, Canberra.
- Phillips, E. and D. Pugh (2000). *How to get a PhD: a handbook for students and supervisor*. Buckingham, England Open University Press.
- Renshaw, P.D., & Brown, R.A.J. (1997). Learning partnerships: The role of teachers in a community of learners. In L. Logan & J. Sachs (Eds.), *Meeting the Challenges of Primary Schools*, (pp. 200-211). London: Routledge.
- Rodriguez-Farrar, H. (2006). Three Magic Letters: Getting to PHD. *Harvard Educational Review* **76**(3).
- Salmela, J. (1995). Learning from the development of expert coaches. *Coaching Sport Science Journal* **2**(2): 3-13.
- Senn, C. (2002). Journeying as religious education: The shaman, the hero, the pilgrim, and the labyrinth walker. *Religious Education* **97**(2): 124-140.
- Tracy, B. (2003). *Goals: How to get everything you want: Faster than you ever thought possible*. San Francisco, Berret-Koehler Publishers.
- Tyler, S. (1987). *The unspeakable: Discourse, dialogue and rhetoric in the post modern world*. Madison, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press
- Williams, L., & Mills, C. (1995). Serving international student markets: a challenge to educational management. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, **23**, 43-51.
- Winter, R., M. Griffiths, et al. (2000). The 'Academic' Qualities of Practice: what are the criteria for a practice-based PhD? *Studies in Higher Education* **1**: 25-37.