SAGE Research Methods Video

Kate Wall and Elaine Hall Discuss Visual Methods

Video Title: Kate Wall and Elaine Hall Discuss Visual Methods
Originally Published: 2017
Publication Date: Jun. 30, 2016
Publishing Company: SAGE Publications Ltd.
City: London, United Kingdom
ISBN: 9781473964372
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473964372

[MUSIC]

KATE WALL: I'm Kate Wall from Durham University. [Dr. Kate Wall, Reader in Education, Durham University] I'm interested in how teachers work with kids to look at learning.

ELAINE HALL: I'm Elaine Hall, I'm at Northumbria University, [Dr. Elaine Hall, Reader in Legal Education Research, Northumbria University] and my main interest is in professional learning. [What is practitioner enquiry?]

ELAINE HALL: Practitioner enquiry comes from a tradition, which is often conflated with action research, so action research and practitioner enquiry are often used interchangeably. We would say that the way in which we do practitioner enquiry is less about particular methodological forms, and it's more about a stance, it's more about the practitioner, whether they're the researcher, whether they're a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor, a social worker.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Taking a particular curious and systematic view of their practice.

KATE WALL: So it's basically about teachers asking questions, and being exploratory about what goes on in-- the practitioners, looking at their practice, and what goes on, and think about how they can make it better. It's about that process of tinkering with what they do every day, and try to improve the outcomes for whoever they work with. [How would you define practitioner enquiry for a student?]

ELAINE HALL: Practitioner enquiry is not so much a method, although it's often associated with action research, because action research is a common methodological approach within practitioner enquiry. Practitioner enquiry is about the practitioner, whether they're a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor, or a social worker, thinking about their work in a very curious, but also very systematic way.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So it might be that it follows the cycles of enquiry as in traditional action research. It might be something that looks more complex and organic, from general tinkering in the classroom, or in the office, to something that's an in-depth case study, or autoethnography. So it's-- practitioner enquiry is actually quite broad.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Most of our work in practitioner enquiry has been quite closely liked to action research methods because we've been working with large groups of practitioners, and providing a particular kind of structure.

KATE WALL: So we're interested in practitioners who are questioning, and are wanting to think about how they can make their practice better. And that's by enquiring into, in-depth, either what's going on, or what happens if I change something. And so you see different scenarios playing out, and how they explore what's going on.

KATE WALL [continued]: it's about thinking about evidence, and the evidence they can collect, to know whether what they're doing is making an impact. [What are some of the research projects you have been working on? What research methods have you used?]

KATE WALL: The most substantial project we've worked on for the last 10 years it was a product called, the Learn to Learn Project. And that was a community of enquirers, practitioner enquirers, that included mostly teachers, but from nursery through primary, secondary, special ed, FE and HE, so practitioners across the board, all interested in learning and making better learners.

KATE WALL [continued]: And what was fascinating was that that community of enquirers, was very mutually reinforcing in exploring the learning and learners, and actually ended up with the practitioners exploring their own learning, almost as much as the students in their care. It was 10 years, longitudinal study of everyone exploring.

KATE WALL [continued]: And we explored, too. So we were also exploring our own learning, and the learners that we were working with.

ELAINE HALL: So one of the key things about a practitioner enquiry is that it's collaborative. One of our heroes is Lawrence Stenhouse, and he says, people can think for themselves, but not by themselves. And what we found is that networks, and the kind of talk that happens in there, was particularly-- if you've got very little kind of context in common, you can't complain about the new assessments that are coming for Key Stage 3 geography, if you're sitting next to somebody who teaches about hairdressing, and somebody else who teaches nursery kids.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: You have to talk about pedagogy, you have to talk about learning. And that means that the kind of depth and curiosity gets opened up necessarily through that dynamic. And we learned a lot about what we thought was important, actually being sort of academic noodling, really, because what people actually were interested in emerged from those conversations.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So that's the way in which we were kind of forced into being learners, even if we hadn't been up for that. I don't think you can run that kind of a network without doing it. And Learning to Learn was so successful in terms of what we were interested in, and enjoying it so much, that really almost everything else that we've been involved in since then, has had something of that flavor to it.

KATE WALL: The anecdote I would give about the power of that network was a nursery teacher from Cornwall-- so teaching three, and four-year-olds-- standing in the lunch queue next to a chemical engineer from Newcastle University. And a chemical engineer was saying, you know what, my post-graduates can't problem solve, and they come into my classes, they want me to give them all the answers, and they don't think for themselves.

KATE WALL [continued]: And then the nursery teacher say, you know what, my three and four-year-olds come into my class, they can't problems solved, they come into my classroom, they've had everything done for them by their parents. And then they work together to come up with the scenarios of what they could do to make it better. And the message to take is learners look remarkably similar, whether they're three, or whether they're doing their post-doctorate study.

KATE WALL [continued]: But exploring that together was a very productive space. [What does it take to get practitioners to research themselves and be researched?]

ELAINE HALL: To begin with, there's a real developmental curve, so some people come in with some research knowledge and background, or with a particular idea about what counts as evidence. But most people, we find, come into these sorts of networks curious, but not research savvy. So we put a lot into the early parts of the relationship in terms of basic research training and research support-- now, how can we ask questions in a manageable way?

ELAINE HALL [continued]: How can we use data that already exists? So we do a little bit on traditional research methods, but we do mostly work on reexamining environmental data, because most workplaces are incredibly data-rich environments, and that data is used managerially, but not to ask research questions, and it already been collected, so why would you use it.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And then, because we've been working mainly with teachers, and also with some very young children, or children and young people who have literacy issues, or English as a second language, we started to develop a range of catalytic tools, as we talk about them, because they have a pedagogical role. So something like a pupil views template, which is Kate's particular area of expertise, you can use that in a lesson to give you feedback about how the learners are doing, and how they're thinking.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So it's a pedagogical tool, but it's also a research tool. Helps you to reflect, and to use this data over a number of periods of time. So lots of things like that were developed

through the project. Often sometimes, through happenstance, again, people were using things, and saying, with this kind of data we've come to the point where we think, everything counts as data?

ELAINE HALL [continued]: In a lot of learning situations, portfolios of evidence are collected for assessment, for example, and it took quite a lot of convincing, I think, for some of the teachers in our project to recognize that these were data that were answering, not just attainment questions, but also dispositions questions.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: The learners' orientation to learning, how they were feeling about themselves, the complexity of the language that they were using in pieces of written work that were being stored. That might not have been the criteria on which that piece of work was marked, but it could be used in a secondary analysis of children developing more science language, for example the work of Paul Black, for example, looking at children's talk and writing, to see how those concepts get embedded.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So, it was very fertile, we just think everything is data now.

KATE WALL: So we work hard to try to demystify the research process, that it is something that can be useful, and is not just for clever people in universities. That it's for clever people in schools and workplaces, as well. There are useful tools that we can bring from academia into the practice, but they're also good practice tools that we can take into academia, which is why we've moved into visual methods.

KATE WALL [continued]: These are tools that primary teachers use all the time to get-- to elicit responses from children, and academia just starting catching on with visual methodology. So it's about thinking about tool evidence that will support their enquiry, what is enough evidence to convince you that you've found an answer to your research question? And that might be evidence that comes from a very traditional form of data, like an interview or a questionnaire, but it might also be evidence that is much more practice-based, so work samples, or mind maps, or video of classroom lessons or practice.

KATE WALL [continued]: So therefore, it's just trying to open teachers' and practitioners' minds to it being something much broader, and useful. Useful is the key word, in this, to them and thinking about what they do every day. [What would you expect a new teacher to do as part of this research?]

ELAINE HALL: So the first thing we would want to know would be, what's your question at the moment. And you might not have it in the form of a question, so we would say, what's going on in your work at the moment? What's bothering you? Either because you're not quite sure why something's going wrong, or has ceased to work, that used to work. Or because something's working really, really well, and you're not quite sure, how did it all go so right-- is a question that quite a lot of teachers sometimes have.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So we work very much on refining a question for a first cycle of enquiry. And then say, OK, so how can you answer that with the data that you already have? So we really start from not making it burdensome, not making it overwhelming. And sometimes people are able to answer questions perfectly well without doing additional data collection.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: But on the whole because they've been long and they've had a day out of their work context, and they've met some other people, and they kind-- so they want to do something else, as well. So they normally adds another layer of data collection in. And that again provides them with a bit of reflective space-- I'm doing something different, I'm doing something consciously, and that goes back to what I was saying about the practitioner enquiry stance.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: It is about moving on from just doing my work, to kind of being, and thinking in my work.

KATE WALL: It's very inherent to being a professional, I think. A professional should always be trying to update their practice, and think about how they can make it better. And so thinking about how you can do that, and that the tools that can support that sort of professional updating, and improvement, is really fundamental to what we do.

KATE WALL [continued]: I mean, if you go back to Schon's work on, what is a reflective practitioner, that's what we're talking about. I would add that a reflected practitioner is part of the story. What we also need is a reflective and strategic practitioner, so someone who does something about those reflections. And I think finding the space to do that is what we're talking about in these projects. We are supporting teachers and practitioners in finding the space to change something, to do something about their hunches, about what happens in their classrooms and work space every day.

KATE WALL [continued]: So it's just about being a professional, would be my--

ELAINE HALL: And there's this sort of contradictory element to that because, at one level, what somebody chooses to enquiry into, it's absolutely up to them. And there have been for us serious conflicts where somebody wants to investigate into something that we've actually done primary research, and we think that's actually a waste of your time. There is no there, there. You're going to spend six months looking at learning styles, and it's not going to help you, really.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: But if that's their question, we've had to let go of that because if that's their question, that's their question. And we have to let that go. So we will let the content aspect of it go, but the process-- so they have to come to the meetings, they have to submit reports, they have to engage with us, and there's a really strong contract around that.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Because otherwise, the space that's needed gets pushed in by the immediate practice concerns. So whether it's children, or clients, or whoever they're working with, the immediacy of those people means that the space for research just gets crushed in. So we have to be very, very controlling in some ways, and very, very liberal in others. And it's an interesting paradox for us, because it tends to be a flip to the way that traditional research projects work, in that, the content is normally set by the researchers.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: You know, you go into a community and say, we're going to do some work on forms of assessment, would you like to join in with us? We actually going to say, we're going to do some work, and we're going to do it in a particular way. It can be about whatever you'd like, would you like to join in with us? And so that's what's different about the way we work. [Would the methods you have described be useful for a researcher who is just starting out?]

KATE WALL: I think you have to remember that a lot of, particularly in education, a lot of our students are part-time, and they are working full-time. And so these kinds of methods fit very well with their studies and their practice. And for the majority of my students, who are working part-time-- studying part-time, working full-time, it's about making a Venn diagram, and the closer they can get the two to overlap, the more likely they are to be successful.

KATE WALL [continued]: So these kind of approaches open up the idea that they can support their practice while studying, and that the two should not be a separate sort of indulgence that study could become. And that opens up doors for them. And that's very different to what maybe they expect when they come to university to do master's study. They expect to do master's study, which is something that you do in the university, which is very separate.

KATE WALL [continued]: But by joining them up that gets mutual benefit, I think.

ELAINE HALL: And I think that's definitely the path that we've gone from our projects to our part-timers, but actually I would say anybody who works with me now, full-time or part-time, I offer them these on the menu. And maybe that's not what they want, but I offer them because there is something about working in this way that opens up things that traditional research methods don't do.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: I'll give you an example, one of my colleagues is a dentist, and he teaches the module where students take teeth out of a real person for the first time, which, as you can imagine, is a lot of fun for everyone. But they write a reflective piece about it afterwards, but it's several months down the line.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So it's all kind of evened out, and flattened out, and yet, as an observer in that room he knows that people go really up and really down in their emotional state during that process. So we ended up using a primary-school thinking skills tool called a fortune line. And the students filled those in as they were doing the extractions, so after every point in the instruction they would be marking their emotional level.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Now that's-- when he first took that to medical dental conferences people laughed openly at him. But actually what it is, it's a pain graph, it's the same kind of thing. You can measure the area under the curve, you can produce all kinds of regression analyses and data sets from it. But in terms of connecting people to a simple, how am I doing in this moment, it does things that a more sophisticated looking tool just doesn't do.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: It gets right to the knot of the question. And I think that's what a lot of our visual methods, and the methods that have evolved after these projects, do. So I think it doesn't matter what kind of a study you are doing, I think there's something in here for people to use.

KATE WALL: It's the creative thought around these-- what comprises evidence, which opens up. So, in terms of what we've taken from practitioner enquiry into other areas of research, it's thinking about these tools creatively, and trying not to be epistemologically bounded by their traditions. So thinking about how a tool can be used in the most practical way, but also in the most useful way to answer the question.

KATE WALL [continued]: So taking a pedagogic tool, and taking it to a dentistry pain conference, and thinking about how that can be quantified, the space into the graph. But also thinking about visual data, for example, and how you can use them in an RCT, a randomized control trial, to measure changes in metacognitive awareness. So I have very, very large visual data sets that I am analyzing in a very deductive way-- because it's so large, 3,000 pieces-- but they are still visual.

KATE WALL [continued]: But by not being epistemologically bounded within a qualitative tradition, we are able to open up to the mixed methods, sort of, side of things. And just trying to use them in the most practical way that we can to answer the questions that we need answering.

ELAINE HALL: And we've been really, really influenced, I think, by the colleagues in America, who-- people like Teddlie and Tashakkori and [INAUDIBLE], who are part of the Journal of Mixed Methods Research, and the way in which mixing methods occurs right through the design. I think we came to mixed methods in a very sort of small-p pragmatist way, at first we just like-- we need different tools for different jobs.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: But actually now we're thinking much more in terms of qualitative and quantitative approaches to elements of design, elements of recruitment, as well as analysis and display. And I think that again is another one of those things that means that when we've got these very, very diverse networks that we're working with, everybody feels that the kind of knowledge that they're bringing is valued.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And that it has a place in the process. [What does introducing visual forms of data gathering involve?

KATE WALL: The first thing there is probably that we're both primary teachers by background. So we come from classrooms where we have worked with children for whom literacy is probably a problem, either developmentally or because they have special needs later on. So thinking about different ways that we can elicit their responses and get them involved, and mediate learning experiences is been

part of what we did as professionals.

KATE WALL [continued]: And when we came into the research domain we carried on working with, and wanting to support children in giving voice to their experiences. And so that was an immediate transfer of these visual approaches into our practice. What we were surprised about is the fact that the academic domain had not probably advanced as far as the professional domain had in using this type of approaches.

KATE WALL [continued]: And so we have become advocates in supporting these new creative approaches to supporting for research methods. And what's interesting is talking to teacher colleagues, they get the visual data. They get it immediately, they get its use, they can see the potential of it, they can see the transfer from research into pedagogy, and back again.

KATE WALL [continued]: But talking to our academic colleagues, they are much more restricted in how they see its use. And so going back to this idea of epistemologically boundedness, the visual tools are often bounded in academics' heads within the qualitative domain. And, as I said before, we are trying to move and open it up into the mixed method sort of approaches.

KATE WALL [continued]: So the visual comes from our practice as teachers. But it's made sense in our work, particularly talking to practitioners and students.

ELAINE HALL: And I think, again, the place of it within the design is important because sometimes the visual is a way of mediating another kind of data collection. So it may be that we all sit around something, and interact with it, and draw on it, or annotate it. And while the finished part of that would be a research outcome, actually it's a way of mediating, moderating the conversation.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Again, taking away the thing that you and I do now, where we're gazing at one another, and it's actually quite awkward in some ways. But if we're both looking at something else then that's very freeing. And particularly where there's a power imbalance, which there always is one kind or another of power imbalance, but particularly when you're working with children, having a visual mediation is incredibly important. At other times we're asking people to tap into something that they find hard to express verbally, so using drawings, or photographs, or 3D sculpture, to express something that actually they can't necessarily put into words, and then using that as a jumping off point for-- because eventually everything ends up as text, of course, as a publisher you know this.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Sooner or later we have to find a way to describe this verbally, but it's a really good way of getting more complexity and nuance into a traditional interview, or any kind of collaborative enquiry. It's very engaging, which makes it problematic ethically, because people want to join in, and in their desire to get their hands on the fun thing to do, they may not be thinking as much about, do I really want to be involved in this, what are the implications for me.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: So it's one of the things that we're very keen on is to think very, very critically about the ethics of visual research, in terms of recruitment. But also in terms of ownership of what finally comes out of the encounter. In the end it's the academics on the whole who take the drawings, or the photographs away, and make meaning with them.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And we think that's really problematic because the children, or the young people, whoever you're working with, don't often have enough of a voice in that analytic process.

KATE WALL: I think has been a major preoccupation in both, the vision methodology and the practitioner enquiry approaches, that we do. And we are very-- obviously we are tied by the university regulations around ethics, and making sure that we anonymize, and-- the accountability side of things.

KATE WALL [continued]: But within a practitioner enquiry approach, or within visual methodology, there's also the ethical way that you go about research. And I think that that is much more embedded

in the epistemology that we're espousing, rather than it being something about removing people's names.

KATE WALL [continued]: That's very difficult with a photograph, anyway-- people's identity there. And we use the example of the news and reports on obesity, and the fact that the news uses images of people from the neck down, as an anonymized version of a fat-- for the obesity.

KATE WALL [continued]: But that's not anonymous. If that was me, I'd know it was me. If that was me, my friends would know it was me, it is not anonymous. Just by chopping the head off, and removing that sort of symbol. But similarly, within practitioner enquiry, it's-- and if you look at the work of Susan Groundwater-Smith, she talks about the ethical prerogative to enquiry, and how it is actually an ethical principle that these professionals need to work to get better, and work to improve their practice.

KATE WALL [continued]: And I think that's very telling then in how we use these sort of ethical principles in thinking about visual methods. It's about an ethical way of doing things, rather than the accountability structure. And I think that's really important.

ELAINE HALL: I think that traditional ethics structures don't think of people as co-researchers. So we think about our practitioners, we think about the kids that we work with, on the whole as co-researchers. My preference is for people to be named if that is their preference, that's the struggle that we often have. And if somebody has done an enquiry, I don't want to gray out their school name, and their name in the book that I write about-- know about their work with them.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: They should be acknowledged. [INTERPOSING VOICES] --they did the work, we didn't, so therefore--

ELAINE HALL: And equally, a child-- I'm thinking about the children at Deborah's school at Willow, who did incredibly complex work on mind maps. They got to this method where they were making mind maps about how mind maps work-- this is children in year two, so six, seven-year-old children-- and they wanted people to know that they had done that piece of work.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: If we were going to put that in a journal, they wanted to know that it was Hollie, and Becky, and Susie, from Willow school, who had made this. And you know, all researcher committees would say, well, you know, participants need to be anonymized. And we struggle with that. I think that the whole structure of practitioner enquiry calls into question these power relationships, and we just-- it does no good, there can't be blanket rules about this.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: It needs to be a negotiation and a proper contract. [What does it mean when analyzing a visual creation as a way of eliciting information?]

ELAINE HALL: There's a really good example, which we used yesterday in a session that we did. It's from an Australian project about children's use of their leisure time. And they were given cameras overnight to go and take a picture of what they did when they were out of school. I think it has to be done collaboratively. We always used the example, when talking about this, of a study that was done in Australia about children leisure.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Children in schools were given cameras overnight to go and take a picture of somewhere that represented how they spend their leisure time. And some fantastic, fantastic images, most of which were relatively easy to interpret, there were kids playing tennis, there were kids jumping up and down on trampolines, kids fishing, surfing.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And there was one picture, which is a picture of an empty field. And I showed it-- not that image, but I showed a stock image to the group yesterday, and said, we can interpret this in so many ways, you know, this lovely field, it's enclosed by trees. We could think about safety and security, and a place to play in a rural environment.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: But actually that's not what this picture is about. This is a picture of some horses. It's just that on the night she had the camera the horses weren't there, but she took a picture of the field, and that's what it meant to her. Now, because in this piece of research they followed up that data collection, with interviews with all of the authors of the photographs, they knew for sure, at least how to categorize at the first level, the meaning of those photographs.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Yes, of course, you can then go into all kinds of image grammar, and the semiotics of the image, and those are legitimate and interesting ways to analyze visual data. But if you're going to make any claim for co-constructed meaning, or for participation for your research, then you need a collaborative analysis, as well.

KATE WALL: I think there's a real big question mark over visual methods, and the link with participation approaches. So there is some presumption that by doing visual you're being participatory. And I don't think that's right, the visual methods are just tools, and they are wielded by researchers in a variety of different ways, some of those are participatory, and some of them are not.

KATE WALL [continued]: And the fact that a child has done a drawing with you as a researcher does not make it participatory. So thinking about how you look at different elements of the research process around that drawing to increase the participation and the involvement of the children-- whoever's done the drawing-- is really important.

KATE WALL [continued]: So I think that that's one area that we would question, or put a question mark around. But I think that the other way that we would think about visual methods and analysis, particularly, is thinking about what you want to know from that visual data. It's like any data set, whether it's interview transcripts, or a big spreadsheet of numbers, you need to think about what you want to know from that, and then using the most appropriate analysis tools for that.

KATE WALL [continued]: So you can do semiotic analysis, you can use the work of Derrida to explore an image, but you can also do participatory approaches, to go and validate back with the participants that have done the image taking in the first place. Or you can think about counting, and do a thematic exploration in the tradition of Glaser and Strauss, to think about how what themes emerge from this data set.

KATE WALL [continued]: But it depends what you want to know. So you've got to be clear in your research question in exploring the way that you need to go through this research process.

ELAINE HALL: And, of course, we've had to put our hands up and say, we didn't always know. So one of the advantages that we had, because we had regular meetings with the people that we were working with, is that sometimes we do a primary analysis of a data set, and we do a bit of counting, and we use a couple of different thematic frames, and we do a quick first-level analysis of, OK, so if we look at these-- what do we have, 300, 400 cartoons of when children had learned something well-- we did a lot of counting of what sorts of things they were learning, and what sort of environment.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And also, how many boxes on the cartoon format they'd used, just to see if any of those things were interesting to the participants. We used the seven basic plots as a way of looking at the different kinds of narratives that were told. We used a number of frames, and we took those back to the people we were working with, to say if you were going to get into this data what kind of frame would you use?

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Do any of these actually make meaning to you, or again, does it just look like academic noodling to you? And that's been-- we've had really, really robust feedback when we've been noodling, we've been told, haven't we?

KATE WALL: Yes. [If someone produced a picture that you were interested in interpreting, how would you go about having a conversation?]

KATE WALL: I think it depends on how you start, how you prompted the taking of that image, or the drawing of the image, the production of the-- how did-- what was the prompt? So if you've asked and given children a disposable camera and said, take-- fill this camera with pictures of your school, for example.

KATE WALL [continued]: So that means the kids have been very much involved in the taking of the photographs, they're very invested in them. So therefore, how you go about analyzing those would be a conversation where they introduce those photographs. So that would be one starting point. If you as research, however, have brought the photographs in, then the children have-- and the participants haven't seen those before, then it looks a very different starting point for the data collection, and therefore the analysis.

KATE WALL [continued]: So getting the participants to explore those images, and to get to know them would be the first point. And then doing some kind of activity where you sort those, and organize them in some way, shape, or form, and that would be the starting point for your analysis. And then talking about, well, let's look at other groups and see how they compare to yours.

KATE WALL [continued]: So I think it's very much part of the dialogue. It's not something that stilted, it's part of a process. And you're trying to be-- again do this as ethically as possible, as transparent and authentic, in the way that you are working with those participants. Either presenting yourself as a learner alongside them, not as the expert-- you know, I don't have the answers about this, I'm learning just the same as you-- is a very important stance.

KATE WALL [continued]: It's about the process and the involvement of the students in the process, and thinking about how we present ourselves in that dialogue. So it's having a dialogue about the visual pieces with the participants, and putting ourselves as equal to them. So whether we're doing visual methodology, or practitioner enquiry, it's often us as a learner alongside them.

KATE WALL [continued]: We're not the researches and the participants, it's the co-researchers, the co-learners, in producing knowledge from these artifacts, whatever they might be. [What advice would you give to new researchers as to the kind of attitude and skills they should possess?]

ELAINE HALL: It's really important to be able to say that you don't know. And that's actually the starting point. If you already know this, then you're wasting yours and everybody else's time. If you feel like you've got to go in as a researcher who's already the expert, then pick another topic. You know, it's really, really important to be ignorant in this situation so that you can ask people from a genuine position of enquiry.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: I'm not trying to catch you out, there isn't a right answer that I've already decided. I genuinely want to know your experience, what you think, what you feel, what goes on here. And that's actually, if you can accept that as a researcher, that's a great position as a neophyte researcher, because you don't actually have to know anything at all. You just have to shut up and let them tell you.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And that's why actually doing this work is quite hard if you've been a teacher, because that's really not how teachers are supposed to be. That we are supposed to know what we're doing, and what the outcomes of something should be. But clearly there's a reason why we're no longer in classrooms being teachers, and we're doing this instead. Because actually that's quite frustrating if at the beginning of the day you know what's going to happen all day.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And we never know that when we do our work now, and that's what's so brilliant about it. So flexibility isn't difficult if you just don't worry too much about what's going to come out of it. It does make managing a data set more challenging. You know, if you go out to do a structured questionnaire, or even a semi-structured interview, you pretty much know you're going home with answers to specific questions that you can encode.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: We tend not to have that, but it is so much more fun. And it's more, I think, helpful to the people in the field, who are actually doing the work.

KATE WALL: So I think that one of the key changes, when working with a student coming in from wherever in the world, and they're coming to work with me on the team, it's about that link with real life, and so placing a real importance on the usefulness of the research.

KATE WALL [continued]: I have strong affiliations to the idea that research is a learning process. And we have a strong affiliation between research and learning. We're very open that we're pedagogues, we're teachers, we're about learning. We're interested in learning, we're interested in the learning process, but we're interested in how research can support the learning process.

KATE WALL [continued]: So student as researchers-- supporting students in actually researching their own learning, and the teaching a learning process is a really good way of doing that. I think that thinking about how the learning process can be made better-- that professional stance, that ethical stance-- and all comes to marry in this approach that we're talking about.

ELAINE HALL: There's a really good example of this from Amble First School.

KATE WALL: Oh, yeah, the Learning Detectives.

ELAINE HALL: Yeah. This is a really lovely thing, set up by a teacher, she had her Reception kids become learning detectives. So it was one of the activities they could choose in the day, they would put on the hat-- they did actually start out with a slouch hat, but there was a nits issue, so they all went to wearing a tiara.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: Anyway. In order to be the detective you wore the signifier of being a detective, and you had a clipboard, and you collected evidence of learning. And she started off with a number of categories that she explained. And then, again, they were represented visually as symbols, so helping had a hand, and reading had an image of book, and talking to one another had a little image of two people talking to another, and so they were spotting other children learning.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And then they were debriefing and talking to the teacher about-- well, I saw so and so learning, they were doing this. But what happened is they were doing is that the children themselves, reception-age age children, were generating categories and saying, that's learning and it's not on the list, we need a category for that. And that's what we're talking about. That actually when you get people involved as co-researchers, when they get to wear the slouch hat or the tiara, and to develop the categories themselves based on their experience, and they genuinely feel that they've got a voice and a role in that, then you come up with all sorts of things that you could never do on your own.

KATE WALL: The conflict, I suppose, between research and teaching and learning within our project, it didn't matter at a certain level, whether the research that the teachers, or the practitioners did, was flawed. Because in the end they learned something new about their practice, and that has got to be a good thing.

KATE WALL [continued]: You go back to the work of John Hattie, just teachers doing something different has an effect size of 0.4. So therefore, we are encouraging teachers to do something different, and think creatively about what goes on in their classroom. The research practice is slightly less so. However, if they're doing a master's then that becomes more and more important alongside.

KATE WALL [continued]: And that's where you get this conflict between the research and the practice. So if you are a teacher and you do something that doesn't work, you change it, and you change it very quickly. If you're doing a master's and the practice is not working, but your researching it, how far do you have to continue with the research to make sure you get a master's.

KATE WALL [continued]: And particularly in a subject like education where it's very difficult to admit you failed, and to say, I actually abandoned the research halfway through because it wasn't working. So it's those kinds of conflicts that we're dealing with. It's not an easy route to take, this practitioner enquiry, because you're always balancing the dual priorities of the teaching and learning, and the research process.

KATE WALL [continued]: And they will have more or less priority depending on your circumstances, I suppose. But I think that fundamentally is that it's always about making better learners, that's better professional learning, and better student learning. And that goes back to us as teachers, that's what we're interested in.

ELAINE HALL: I think, also, what you'll-- heading towards practitioners is that, this processes in inherently metacognitive. So the teachers themselves are getting in touch with their own metacognition, and in that way modeling it for the students. So there is, I think, a long-term benefit and a self-awareness, a self-regulation, and a strategic quality to what comes out of it.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: And those schools who were in the Learning to Learn project the longest, you did start to actually see that, playing out in terms of performance. But certainly in terms of this incredibly confident, articulate young people. Thinking about the sixth-formers at Camborn who had been in a Learning to Learn school for their entire secondary education, who were really, really interested, both in their own process, in other people's processes, in the trade off in lessons between what they wanted and what the group's as a whole needed, and what constraints were on the teacher based on-- just a sophistication that sadly lacking, I think, from most policies.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: But you know, these kids were able to say, I really recognize why my geography A-level is like this. And that sort of awareness, those people going to the workforce, how amazing is that? And that's from years and years of the teachers modeling-- I'm not sure how this works, I'm just going to have a bit of a look at it, and what you're telling me is helping me to reshape how I work strategically with you.

ELAINE HALL [continued]: You know, these micro interactions quite hard to track, but when you get a big data set it starts to emerge. [MUSIC]