



Original Articles

Enactivism as a Powerful Theoretical Framework for Research and Tool to Reflect on My Own Role as a Supervisor

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Enactivism, as an interesting and useful theoretical underpinning is gaining traction in Mathematics Education research. It forms the central theme of this paper whose aim is two-fold: first to describe and engage with how elements of enactment informed a PhD study, both on a theoretical and analytical level, and second to reflect on the enacted role of the supervisor of this study. Despite the inevitable embodied relationship between the supervisor and the supervised PhD project, it is not often written about. This paper thus attempts to address this. The PhD study in question used constructs of enactment such as *autonomy, sense-making, emergence, embodiment and experience* to design a pre-service mathematics education programme and then explored the growth of student teachers' mathematical identity and disposition in their development of becoming mathematics teachers. The PhD supervision process was framed by the enactment notion that learning and the construction of meaning and knowledge is co-created by the lecturer, the student and the particular context. The role of the author of this paper in the study was that of supervisor. The relationship between a supervisor and his/her student is often complex and multifaceted. This paper argues that this relationship can best be described as one of embodiment and co-emergence. The paper thus starts with the author's own enactment ontological perspective vis-à-vis this relationship and how elements of enactment permeated his practice with regard to the PhD he supervised. The study found enactment to be a powerful theoretical vantage point from which to develop research instruments that enabled deep and meaningful reflection on teacher practice in the mathematics classroom—and on supervision.

Keywords: *Enactivism; embodiment; co-emergence; supervision; teacher practice*

Introduction

When asked by Poerksen what he meant by suggesting that 'anything said is said by an observer' (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 8), Maturana replied that '[w]hat is said can under no circumstances be separated from the person saying it' (Maturana & Poerksen, 2004, p. 26). Although Maturana, as one of the foundational thinkers of enactment, made this assertion in an ontological context that implied that '[n]obody can claim to have privileged access to an external reality of truth' (Maturana & Poerksen, 2004, p. 26), my role as a doctoral supervisor of a particular study that embraced some notions of enactment into its theoretical and analytical frameworks to analyse teacher practice, was similarly characterised. The student's name is Mandy, and I have her permission to use her first name in this paper. From an enactment perspective my role as an observer in the supervisory process grew two-fold. First, as that of an observer in observing Mandy doing her PhD and second