

Self-confrontation interview

Objectives and processes

The self-confrontation interview aims at developing '*the experience or pre-reflexive conscience or immediate comprehension of the actor upon each moment of his/her activity*' (Theureau, 2002).

It enables the actor to provide elements which are essential to the comprehension of the production in the activity as well as the reality of its practices.

Procedure : the actor is confronted with records related to his/her activity and invited to detail, demonstrate and comment on the most significant points of this activity, in the presence of another person.

There are two key categories of self-confrontation interview :

- **Simple self-confrontation interview** (Theureau, 2010). This enables collection of information on the activity of a person during an interview with a researcher while analysing audio or video records of his/her work.
- **Cross self-confrontation interview** (Clot, 2005). A clinical framework of the activity (Clot, 1999). Research into genres or styles.

The aim here is *to develop the subjects' (and the group's) power to act on the organisation of the function in order to work towards a different organisation.* (Clot, 1999).

Example : Two professionals observe the video recording of one of them at work. The researcher invites them to interact, seeking professional controversy at given moments during the recording.

Conditions

The elements required for self-confrontation interviews are films, audio recordings and/or ethnographic notes. There are diverse material productions (interview in a given situation based on material records), e.g.: texts written by the actor during the interviews detailing the activity, sculpture....

Recording the workplace situation

Video recording

Audio recording

Production(s)

Ethnographical notes

Recording a self-confrontation interview

The self-confrontation interview may be recorded on a video or audio support, depending on the objective :

- it may be necessary to view gestures, behaviours or activities by the actor during the self-confrontation : video recording
- or the self-confrontation needs to take a step away from visual considerations: audio recording.

The self-confrontation interview need to be realised as soon as possible and up to a maximum of two weeks after filming/recording. If possible, at the filming/recording location. The ideal situation is to hold the self-confrontation interview immediately after filming/recording, on site.

The basic principles

It is important to ensure that the conditions enable the actor to “*show, mime, simulate, relate and comment*” (Durand, 2008)... and to maintain this environment during the interview so that the actor explains the elements in his/her activity that they consider as significant.

It is necessary to contract with actor and to obtain from him an informed consent by and explanations about :

- The principle of the following interview, its confidentiality and procedure. Mutual knowledge and personal trust.
- Presentation of the objectives, i.e. accessing an invisible area of the activity in order to better understand it and better target any assistance.
- Agreement to review the context (video, elements/records from the activity...)
- Agreement to explain the pre-reflexive conscience and to analyse the activity.

The principle is to make actor enable to review the situation by presenting the beginning of the situation with asking any specific questions.

This review phase enables the actor to access his/her pre-reflexive conscience but is highly variable from one person to another.

Certain highly “self-confrontationable” persons only need a short period of time to approach the situation, others need more time...

The simplest principle is to invite the actor to describe the easiest elements, i.e. his/her actions (*‘What are you doing there ?’...*) and his/her centres of interest (*‘What are you being attentive to right there ?’, ‘What are you concentrating on ?’, ‘What are you considering in this situation ?’, ‘What are you interested in here ?’...*).

Further to this, or simultaneously, you should try where possible, to document other components of his/her activity that are not evoked or are less spontaneously referred to, but which can be expressed.

The elements we aim to identify :

- His/her concerns; what he/she is aiming to do in the present situation? What are the skills and representations : what knowledge is mobilised at each moment ? What does he/she think about in each situation ? What knowledge is validated or invalidated further to the action ?
- The expectations : what are the expected results of the present situation? What results are expected from each action ?
- Emotions : what does he/she feel ?

The exchange time for the ‘self-confronter’ must be limited and allow for a much larger share for the ‘self-confronted’. The latter must have priority over when he/she wishes to intervene with regards to the recorded sequences. Except when subject to constraints:

- of time

- of research issues (direct selection of extracts chosen by the researcher)

The questioning must not contain affirmations, expressions containing elements of the expected answers or requests for justification.

Question types depending on the research objectives ?

Actions, communications, emotions : what are you doing there ? What are you saying, and to whom...? What do you feel ? What is your personal opinion there ?

Engagement, intentions, preoccupations : What is happening here in your own words ? What are you aiming to do ? What are you expecting when you do that ? What are your concerns here ? What is your intention when you do that ? And there, what is the objective of your intervention ?

Focalisation, expectation : What are you focusing on ? What do you take into account in this situation ? What are you interested in here ? What aspects are essential for you at this moment ? What were you expecting ? Were you expecting this ? Does this surprise you ?

Genre – style : What happens normally ? Do you always do it that way ?

Knowledge, interpretation : Why did you do that in that way ? Why do you say that ? How did you know that... ? What are you saying to yourself ? How do you see the situation ? What do you think when you see that ? What do you think when you do that ? What makes you say that... ? How do you know that... ?

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