**Research design, writing and fugues**

Heather Davis

***Fugue****. n. Music. A contrapuntal composition in which a theme is introduced by one part, repeated by other parts, and subjected to complex development.*

Having just completed my confirmation I am reflecting on research design….

I tweeted today that I was “thinking about research design and fugues–both musical and befuddlement–fugues are saying a lot to me about the process…”

The writing block I experienced when preparing my confirmation document, upon reflection, was quite fugue like and befuddling–the more I learnt about the process and strengthened my capacity to ‘do’ my PhD, the less I was able to put pen to paper!!  Very disconcerting indeed, until I realised that what I had been ‘learning’ in the last six months was tied up with ‘identity’ and wasn’t really supposed to ever get much ink in the thesis.  Thanks to Barbara Kamler & Pat Thomson (2006) again for pointing out in their book that ‘text work is identity work” otherwise I may never had got past that block!!

This is the second really big ‘aha’ moment for me so far in my PhD and the insights were well worth the discomfort in that they have helped steer me through a couple of ‘cycles of iteration’ that Piantanida & Garman (1999) talk about in ”*The qualitative dissertation: a guide for students and faculty*”.  Perhaps these cycles of iteration require some discomfort as we move to deeper understandings as Gibran notes:

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.

Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) Lebanese-American Poet, Philosopher and Artist

The musical definition of fugue is resonating with me now as I turn my attention to how to depict my research design and to explain the research design and methodological framework in a succinct way.  Even though they are ’playing’ away in my head in several parts just like a fugue might, it will be a challenge to bring together what may seem to be discordant elements into some sort of cohesive framework.

14 November, 2008

<http://leadershipliteracies.wordpress.com/2008/11/14/research-design-and-fugues>

***Heather Davis****is a PhD student in the School of Management at RMIT, Australia.  Her research journey blog can be found at*

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