Unpacking the mechanisms shaping perceptions of quality in early childhood education research and practice as illuminated by cross cultural conversations between practitioners from Britain and Jamaica.

Introduction

Globally, attempts to develop standards and improve educational outcomes have largely been the impetus behind early childhood education reform efforts. Notwithstanding the difficulty in achieving this, decisions driving such efforts have predominantly revolved around providing 'quality' and have been in response to questions surrounding; What can we do better? What does it look like? and What do we do next? These questions are important for both researchers and practitioners because, as Schweisfurth (2014, p.260) notes, the global quality imperative has often been 'addressed obliquely and couched in terms of its outcomes rather than its processes', shifting the focus of research towards evidence-based practice that uses cause and effect models and quantitative impact measurement (Stewart-Brown *et al.*, 2011; NICE, 2014; Nesta, 2018).

Jamaica and Britain are two countries that have asked such questions about quality in ECE, and which are admittedly at difference points in the articulation of the response to them. For instance, in Jamaica, it is quite clear that the early childhood sector stands at a unique point in its bid to provide quality services for children in the early years (Kinkead-Clark, 2015). Increasing investments in the sector have resulted in; greater student enrolment in early years institutions, improved teacher qualifications and the implementation of standards to improve the quality of offerings to children birth through five years.

Likewise, in the UK, focus on early childhood education (ECE) as the "great equaliser" has been the impetus behind decisions to ensure equity and equality in access to ECE offerings across the country (Duaet *et al.*, 2016). Because of the reciprocal relationship between research and practice, policy shifts by our respective Governments have been directly informed by current research guiding ECE. This has

led, for example, to the UK Government's pronouncement that all three and four-year-old children have a statutory right to ECE. As a result, decisions have been made to provide thirty hours of free child care for all three and four-year olds (Pascal *et al*., 2013).

It is abundantly clear that in both Jamaica and the UK, while decisions driving ECE sector development have largely been in response to societal needs, the overarching goals to improve ECE offerings have had both positive and negative ramifications. In the UK, for instance, the decision to promote equity in access to affordable and high-quality care has overwhelmingly been in response to the political and social climate seeking to increase access to pre-primary schooling yet in ways that do not disrupt austerity measures (West, Roberts and Noden, 2010). Coupled with this, "audit agendas" have also funneled their way into the mix, driving literacy and numeracy requirements with the goal of putting British children on par with their Finnish counterparts (Lloyd, 2015; Lewis and West, 2016).Similarly, in Jamaica a significant factor that has led to much of the change in the ECE sector has been the development of policies in support of sector reform fueled by Jamaica's goal to achieve Developed Country status by the year 2030. Interestingly, Jamaica too is dogged by the challenge of how to claim a greater stake in ECE but in ways that do not directly impact the meager coffers of the Government.

Though well intentioned, the undercurrents driving sector development in both Britain and Jamaica, have also had uneven effects. For instance, 'big policy' initiatives, including the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and Jamaica's national development plan, 'Vision 2030', have triggered a range of 'little policy' activities in a ripple effect of intended and unintended consequences. In the UK, the frequent comparisons to the Finnish model of education have amplified messages to British teachers of the perceived inferiority of their practices and have resulted in highly stressful learning environment especially when one considers the proposed "testing" of children in reception classrooms (Beliner,2018).

Using Cross-Cultural conversation between two researchers who are also early childhood educators, one from Jamaica and one from the UK (see Table 1, for comparative look at Jamaica and the UK), this paper explores what informs perceptions of quality in early childhood education and care. This dialogue is informed by our experiences as both practitioners and researchers. Our dialogue is also grounded in our positional contexts; one from a context which reflects the Euro-centric models of 'best-practice'; and the other from a context which frequently measures itself against these Euro-centric models - which are positioned as the gold standard for developing nations (Rao et al., 2014).

Research aims

This study has three aims. It first examines how research contexts guide researchers' assumptions about quality and how it is constructed. Secondly, we examine the dangers of "knowledge capitalism", a practice which has largely positioned knowledge construction in the hands of countries from dominant-hegemonic perspectives. Finally, through a Prominence/Perception Matrix, we propose a framework for how researchers and other stakeholders can challenge such practices by accepting the need to destabilise commonly assumed "positions of power" and by adopting an awareness of the importance and value of knowledge democracy (Hall and Tandon, 2014).

Table 1 *comparative look at Jamaica and the UK*

The Jamaican ECE context	The British ECE context
Developing country	Developed country
Lower to middle income state	Economically advanced
Formal early childhood curriculum	Formal early childhood curriculum
No standard early childhood policy exists	Established early childhood policy in place

Educational standards largely driven by the goal of meeting developed country status by 2030	Educational standards largely driven by having a system on par with Finland
Majority privately funded, though the Government is seeking to increase involvement in ECE.	Government minimally involved in ECE. Hands off approach predominantly taken, though evidence suggests this will soon change.
ECE evolving from its grassroots legacy.	Formally developed ECE system
Explicitly stated minimal educational qualification for practitioners	Explicitly stated minimal educational qualification for practitioners
Over 95% of 3-5-year olds enrolled in pre-primary school	Over 95% of 3-5-year olds enrolled in pre-primary school
ECE a national priority	ECE a national priority

Literature Review

In working to understand how the different research contexts we operate in have shaped our assumptions about quality practice in early childhood education, we were firstly enlightened by studies that describe how research is perceived and ordered in the world; notably through Hall and Tandon's (2014) work on knowledge democracy. This led us to engage with scholarship that considers the ways research hierarchies can be subverted. Here, as researchers from previously colonised and colonising countries respectively, we found Brannelly (2016) and Russell-Mundine's (2012) work on decolonising research useful. Finally, because of the cross-cultural nature of our research, we were also led by Beiser (2003), Widenfelt *et al*. (2005), and Sullivan and Cottone (2010). These scholars have helped us to conceptualise the ways in which research can be socially and culturally situated and the importance of finding ways to reveal and navigate normative or deficit framings of early childhood education practice in research.

Unpacking knowledge democracy; who 'owns' knowledge construction?

Hall and Tandon (2014, online) articulate knowledge democracy as an 'opening outwards of comfortable assumptions about whose knowledge counts, and how life and knowledge are related to each other'. This challenges the narrow definitions of what legitimate research can be and the narrow spaces in which legitimate knowledge production can take place. This is instructive for researchers seeking to engage with, and contribute to, the knowledge base for quality early childhood education research, as it calls for critical evaluation of the suppositional barriers which may enclose or exclude rightful knowledge (Mullett *et al.*, 2015). Much of the literature on knowledge democracy focuses on capturing, and mobilising, grassroots knowledge within communities, in order to build local capacity to meet socially-just aims (Hall, Jackson and Tandon, 2013; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008; Tremblay and Oliveira, 2015). This movement has been part of dismantling the ''research monopoly' of the academy because, as Biesta, (2011, p.46) points out, 'nowadays research is carried out in many places outside the university'.

Despite rising pluralism in research, there has not been a neutral shift whereby knowledge production has transferred from the hands of elite institutions to the hands of 'the people'. Rather, alongside a growing participatory research movement there has also been an increase in the commodification of knowledge 'with business, media, think tanks and civil society challenging the traditional hegemony of universities as the only recognised sites of knowledge production' (Tandon, 2014, p.2). Illuminating this point, Biesta (2007), notes that whilst the university may no longer hold the monopoly on research, it may maintain a 'knowledge monopoly' through its power to anoint small scale community-driven research with legitimacy through publication and partnership activities. It is in relation to this power dynamic, that Openjuru *et al.* (2015, p.221), call for broader definitions of knowledge to be affirmed 'within the framework of the current mainstream academic and knowledge publication/sharing systems outside participatory research or community circles'. This cautionary note, is a reminder that certain types of knowledge have gained acceptance only in certain spaces, creating a fragmented and

shifting landscape of recognised knowledge, that is dependent not only on who creates but also who reads, shares and applies knowledge.

Accepting plural voices in knowledge construction

Inadvertently, straightforward conceptions of knowledge democracy may valourise plurality but minimise how the competing voices that emerge are inequitably positioned, due to uneven distributions of power. Stuart and Shay (2018) suggest this inequity, and associated 'epistemological exclusion', emanates from the preeminent positioning of impact measurement and scientific approaches to data collection and analysis. This is frequently advanced by a dominant neoliberal agenda in global education research and policy making (Schweisfurth, 2014). This imbalance could potentially be revealed by delineating how the various producers of knowledge, such as academic institutions, think tanks and inter-Governmental organisations, engage with local communities in practice.

Further compounding this, is the obfuscating effect of a tokenistic co-opting of the language of participatory-research across much commissioned and academic research (Rutkowski, 2007). This concern was neatly articulated by Sarna-Wojcick *et al.*'s (2017) study which examines the "unnamed" contributors in participatory research. It is also evident in the rhetoric of mission statements and briefing documents of inter-governmental organisations, which emphasise the importance of co-creating knowledge and participatory approaches in developing education policy (Rutkowski, 2007; Lingard; 2013; Tremblay and de Oliveira, 2015; Fredericks, 2009) but are not always transparent about the nature, depth and challenges of such collaborations.

An increasing number of scholars, characterise this shift, to a democratic rhetoric around knowledge production in education, as part of a global system of neoliberalism that privileges education's economic role in relation to the creation of human capital (Rukowski, 2007; Apple, 2000; Russell-Mundine, 2012; Stuart and Shay, 2018). This reading suggests that the hollow incorporation of participatory and collaborative terminology, particularly into commissioned research, is part of a meritocratic discourse

that emphasises local people's self-determination and their right to be heard but does not necessarily account for the factors which marginalised their voices in the first place. Wheeler-Bell (2017) adds texture to this concern, by noting that whilst including grass-roots perspectives in the production of knowledge should not be tokenistic or inauthentic, equally researchers should beware assuming marginalised communities automatically and unproblematically provide the best or purest forms of knowledge. Thus, gathering knowledge democratically 'entails more than including the least advantaged into the deliberative process...Respecting individuals, in this sense, requires subjecting both one's own opinions as well as those who are oppressed to reasonable arguments' (Wheeler-Bell, 2017, p.574).

Interrogating hierarchical agendas in knowledge production

There are many concerns for researchers who are presented with global priorities that are dissonant from the local realities in which they operate. Wisely however, these concerns serve as an impetus for disentangling ideas about quality from politicised versions of best practice (Boyd, 2009; Alexander, 2015). This need to interrogate hierarchical agendas in knowledge production is resonant with the work of Levermore and Beacom (2009, p.158) who point to 'vertical partnerships' in which 'northern experts speak on behalf of the south' (Mwaanga and Adeosun, 2017). This phenomenon, Giulianotti (2004, p.22) is characterised as the "cultural legacy of colonialism" wherein the presumption of expertise is analogous with the assumption of a 'dominant and colonising position...which fails to recognise the expertise and worldview of colonised societies' (Brannelly, 2016, p.4).

This is in line with Stuart and Shay (2018, p.7), who draw on Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Moreton-Robinson (2009) to note that 'Western knowledges continue to dominate the epistemic realm of knowledge production, emphasising white, patriarchal, imperialism, while indigenous knowledge continues to be positioned as a 'paradigm on the peripheral'. As well as having marginalising local voices, neo-colonial approaches to knowledge also have a homogenising effect. This, according to Hartmann and Kwauk (2011), can be observed in the way singular solutions, such as sporting, entrepreneurial

or intergenerational programmes, are applied to diverse problems. Mwaanga and Adeosun (2017, p. 59) suggest the development of broad-stroke, panacea solutions is ‘perpetuated by inter-governmental organisations and corporations who embody the belief that inhabitants of the global south share the same identity and henceforth share the same problems that require the same solutions’.

Methodology

This study forms part of a larger body of research. As two researchers from different research contexts, we engaged in a series of cross-cultural conversations to discuss critical issues germane to early childhood education and care in our respective countries. In this piece, once again using cross cultural conversations, we discussed the underlying issues which reflect notions of how quality is construed in Jamaica and the UK.

As suggested by Suhonen, Saarikoski and Leino-Kilpi (2009), cross cultural research provides a robust opportunity to advance knowledge by taking a global perspective on critical issues. Likewise, as proposed by Ilesanmi (2009), cross cultural research ultimately seeks to remove barriers and bias in research by acknowledging cultural differences while simultaneously reaffirming global similarities.

Cross-cultural approaches are a useful response to ethnocentric discourses on knowledge production (Beiser, 2003; Sullivan and Cottone, 2010) because of their potential to contextualise researcher interpretations and situate knowledge within local communities. This possibility is demonstrated in a study by Widenfelt *et al*. (2005) which found that ethnocentric definitions of "social competence" for children resulted in bias and inaccurate conclusions because of the differing, culturally-situated meanings attached to the term. This finding indicates one way in which a cross-cultural approach may help researchers ‘to reconsider conceptualizations that appear to be universal yet are actually based in Western standards and perspective’ (Sullivan and Cottone, 2010, p.360). As two researchers who sought to do just this, we engaged in a series of conversations to understand how our individual research studies in our own research

contexts compared to each other. Having the opportunity to engage in this critical discourse enabled us to challenge much of the rhetoric, biases and assumptions of how, why and what fuels perceptions of quality.

Data collection

The data for this research were garnered over eleven and half hours of conversations unevenly distributed over five meetings via Skype. Each conversation followed a pattern which helped us to manage the copious information gathered throughout our discussions. Because we understood lack of focus as one of the dangers which might potentially emerge while engaged in our discussion, prior to commencing each conversation, we outlined an unofficial agenda to detail what we wanted to discuss in each session. In addition to helping to minimise the frequency of straying too far off on tangents, it also helped us to ensure that we were “productive” in each conversation by ensuring we addressed key issues relevant to our contexts (Hartung and Wilson, 2016).

Throughout each conversation, both of us took note of comments, questions and remarks which we individually thought were particularly important to the discussion and the general focus of the research. We found that note taking, rather than recording each conversation, was especially useful. Rather than detract from the fluidity of our discussions, note taking served a powerful role in that it really helped us to focus on key points that we thought were significant to our own research contexts. Thus, our conversations had the potential to be a purposeful yet intuitive exploration of our extant positions in a dialogue enhanced by ‘immediacy, personal relevance, rich stories, serendipity, improvisation, an open agenda, permissiveness, and risk-taking’ (Haigh, 2006, p. 14). All of which are distinct elements of conversation which may be found less often in other data collection methods such as structured interviews or oral surveys.

Each conversation ended with each of us summarising the keys points of our discussion as we each saw it. This practice served two purposes. It first helped us to clarify issues which we felt needed to be further explored or explained, and secondly, it

provided a springboard for us to highlight unofficial themes which we felt evolved from each conversation.

Data Analysis

The data for this research were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). To do this, we individually coded the data we had collected over the conversations. This information was placed in broad categories based on similarities and differences in meaning. The second phase, axial coding was done where the previously coded information was re-examined to determine if the information accurately reflected our discussions. In this phase categories were also reordered, and merged based on the 'process of revisiting, de-familiarizing, and alternative casing' (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p.180). In the third phase, the data was once again recoded, merged and recoded again. This was done until saturation was reached and inherent themes were extricated.

After analysing the data to determine the themes in the data, we shared them with each other. We were able to look at each other's suggestions and discuss the similarities in themes we felt emerged from the data. Our discussion led to the proposition of three broad drivers for understanding quality in early childhood education and care.

Findings

Our cross-cultural conversations revealed a mechanism of three drivers, which shape our understanding of how quality is perceived in early childhood education and care. These drivers are summarised in Table 2 and then explored in more detail below.

Table 2 Drivers shaping our understanding of how quality perceived

Driver	Overview
Framing	The relational framework we use to consider what quality means. Involves framing our research and practice in relation to that of another

	country.
Saming	The perception that all developed or developing countries have the same sets of strengths and weaknesses.
Shaming	The impact of relegating research from/about developing countries to the margins of research about quality in ECE.

Framing

Within our conversations, we frequently articulated our understanding of quality through comparisons with other countries, particularly those widely regarded as exemplars of best practice in ECE, such as Finland and Denmark. At first, framing our research in this way was a helpful explanatory tool, bounding our discussions and providing benchmarks for what we perceived as effective approaches – such as child-centered play or outdoor learning. However, this relational framework quickly became constrictive with Hardacre noting that in ECE:

> "….we are always trying to get to a mythical land of best practice, and by focusing on that we spend more time gazing at a horizon we never reach, rather than focusing on our own settings…"

We both expressed with frustration, a feeling that our research and practice contexts were being positioned at differing points on a continuum; moving from poor to better to best. We found this particularly concerning because shifting global priorities, investment patterns and educational trends ensure notions of quality are in continual flux and thus the continuum is a shape-shifting entity that cannot be traversed in straightforward manner. There was also an uneasy sense in our discussion of being relational to one another hierarchically – Hardacre's practice and research taking place in a developed nation and Kinkead-Clark's taking place in a developing nation. This did not fit with our personal perceptions of our own or each other's practice. Thus, simplistic notions that practice in developed nations is 'better' than that in developing nations were easy to dismiss as ill-fitting and inaccurate, but we both recognised that deficit narratives are resistant to dismissal in the wider field with Kinkead-Clark sharing:

> "...I submitted an article to an international ECE journal and was informed it would not be 'of interest to an international audience' whilst a paper from Sweden (focusing on a similar topic) was included in the edition. My experience is that perspectives from developing nations are often positioned as of marginal interest because they don't fit with ideas about gold-standard or best practice."

We noted that whilst country-level discussions enable glib comparisons to emerge - suggesting that ECE in one nation would benefit from a shift in practice to become 'more like' the ECE of another nation. These types of broad-stroke analyses lacked relevance and utility at our person to person level discussion. However, a feeling of disempowerment remained because framing was experienced as a something that happens 'to' researchers and necessitates time consuming deconstruction before each researcher could share their work with the field.

Saming

Alongside our experiences around the framing of research we identified an interrelated driver of conceptions of quality in ECE, which we came to refer to as 'saming' (this is distinct from the term "othering- which connotes a marginalising form of difference). Our initial discussions about this phenomenon related to the subordinate treatment of research emerging from the developing world and we described this in-line with the concept of 'othering' as a reductive label for people that do not fit in with dominant societal norms. This was evident in our conversations when Hardacre shared:

> "It would be unusual to look to Jamaica or other developing nations as a place to find aspirational practice - like you might with Reggio Emilia or Denmark. Usually, developing nations are seen as niche or special interest only. I feel there's a sense of exoticism and a fascination with cultural features such as food, music and festivals but less interest in the intellectual offering of those countries"

However, our analysis of the conversations led us to shift our attribution from one of 'othering' to one of 'saming'. This is in line with Schor's (1995, p. 51) discussion of Irigaray's feminist thinking which contends that whilst 'othering' acknowledges the notable difference within an individual, 'saming' denies the 'objectified other the right to her difference' and thus the specificity that is essential when describing the nature of a person or place is eliminated.

This process of ‘saming’ was evident in our dissatisfaction with the homogenous treatment of groups of nations and their approaches to early childhood education and care. The perception that all developed or developing countries have the same sets of strengths and weaknesses was an unhelpful and persistent facet of our discussion which we often associated with the global priorities operating upon our contexts. Hardacre articulated this in relation to the impact of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in the UK saying:

> “We are continually made aware of where we sit in the PISA rankings and the need to improve our position is a real driver for making young children in England “school-ready”’

Kinkead-Clark was similarly attuned to the influence of the Vision 2030 agenda on a range of associated early childhood policies in Jamaica. Both participant-researchers found global priorities limiting and reductive to work with; removing context and overlooking diversity. The conversations revealed that the researchers’ differing contexts did not protect them from the requirement to meet a common standard and the expectation that one-size fits all measures would work to support these endeavors.

Shaming

As we further analysed our data, the issue of shaming was revealed in our experiences of how quality is expressed in early childhood and care. This was challenging to confront and was often referred to obliquely until we had established a sufficiently open dialogue. Whilst we had established that dominant hegemonic structures enable a more prolific research output from developed nations; often minimising or excluding the voices of developing nations, our analysis uncovered two factors in relation to shame. Firstly, it means that researchers from non-dominant contexts are relegated to trawling through swathes of research that are only tangentially related to their context. This is a disheartening and disempowering process which engenders a sense of being excluded from the narrative and was alluded to by Kinkead-Clark when she noted:

> "I really have to work with what best fits or what I can make work when it comes to engaging with literature on children's play for example; because the idea that children are not playing outdoors anymore is a common thread but is not relevant to the Jamaican context"

Kinkead-Clark noted that this had not prevented her from pursuing her own research or attending international conferences to disseminate her work, but she was aware that colleagues had at times internalised the perception that dominant-hegemonic perspectives were the 'gold-standard', leading them to privilege using textbooks or visiting speakers from these countries over local authors and speakers.

The second feature of shaming we identified, is the resonance this process - of documenting and disseminating narratives about quality - has with marginalising and exclusionary neo-colonial attitudes and values. Hardacre found these overtones uncomfortable whereas Kinkead-Clark noted that recognising and articulating such concerns were a regular part of her academic life. Hardacre explained:

> "I find it a difficult subject to broach as I am so conscious that it may not be my story to tell or that I might articulate it inaccurate or in patronising way. Which is strange as the UK context is multi-cultural and so not only do I want to engage with a wider range of voices surely it's an obligation if I want to get a proper sense of the varied communities I conduct research within."

Thus, shaming relates to the sense of shame researchers could feel when they are excluded from the narrative, to the sense of shame that is internalised about knowledge produced by local people and also the sense of shame researchers feel about being part of a marginalising narrative.

Discussion and Implications

This research had three aims. We first sought to unpack our perspectives of knowledge formation/construction as it relates to quality. Secondly, we sought to illuminate the dangers of "knowledge capitalism", and finally we aimed to provide a framework for how researchers and other stakeholders can dismantle barriers to knowledge democracy thereby revising or challenging perceptions they may have of quality, who reflects it and who and what dictates what it ought to be.

Our findings outline three themes; framing, shaming and saming. These themes encompass the seemingly broad assumptions about how knowledge is constructed and narrowly defined. They also perpetuate narrow yet commonly held perspectives of what quality ought to look within blinders. We argue that removing blinders will also challenge the perceived need for “vertical partnerships”. As suggested by Mwaanga and Adeosun (2017), these one-sided relationships promote the perspective that dominant hegemonic countries need to “think for” and be the “brain” for developing states.

In this piece, we challenge this assumption. Similar to Rukowski (2007), Apple (2000), Russell-Mundine (2012) and Stuart and Shay (2018), we question the ethics and sense in promoting homogeneity in education which often come at the expense of cultural identify. Our conversations illuminated the dangers of how this manifests in academia within the context of research.

Development and theoretical underpinning

Having developed the framing/saming/shaming mechanism to describe the way perceptions of quality are driven in ECE we found that through the act of cross-cultural conversations we had named some of the forces driving perceptions of quality. This naming was revelatory for both practitioners as it shifted previously implicit factors into sharp relief and allowed us to recognise obstacles and barriers that we had taken for granted or internalised as part of the norms of producing, disseminating and applying research. An example of this would be Kinkead-Clark’s use of best-fit, but ultimately unsatisfactory, scholarship into her own work because of the dearth of non-deficit lens studies from or about developing nations.

This process, of articulating the factors which shape quality served as a transformative dialogue, in line with Freire’s (1970, p. 45) observation that ‘it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it’. As such, our cross-cultural conversations have contributed to our critical consciousness, in that systems of power which may serve to constrain or suppress were acknowledged and can thus be subverted.

Whilst many have articulated the need to reveal structures and engender agency through dialogue, practical tools for supporting this are less prevalent. Thus, as action-oriented researchers we have developed a matrix and associated questions which can be used to engage in a transformative dialogue to develop critical consciousness about the forces which may shape the way research and practice is perceived. The matrix emerged from diagrams we used to describe our experiences of being framed in differing ways in the research space and our frustration at linear models for understanding quality. We present the tool here in the hope that other practitioners and researchers might use it to consider how they perceive their research is positioned in order to navigate, subvert or challenge entrenched perceptions.

Description of the Matrix

The x axis of the matrix relates to perceptions of the research or practice in a particular country and moves from negative discourse to inspirational discourse. The y axis of the matrix relates to the level of prominence the research has and moves from niche to broad. Thus, research outputs can be mapped on to the matrix, rather than being considered in a continuum of quality which should only move in one direction, instead the matrix offers a useful way to include context in discussions about knowledge production, research and practice from a range of countries.

The Prominence/Perception matrix (P/P Matrix) is a highly reflexive tool which is not intended as a prescriptive and rigid measure but rather a way to consider the ways a country's research output is positioned against others in a manner which makes context a part of this discussion. For example, the Danish forest school is an aspirational discourse (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2012) but is not widely applied. The matrix invites the user to consider their work in relation to that of others and ask questions about the factors which are at work to position research. It resists simple explanations by moving the outputs of knowledge production from a continuum of quality towards more multifaceted explanations.

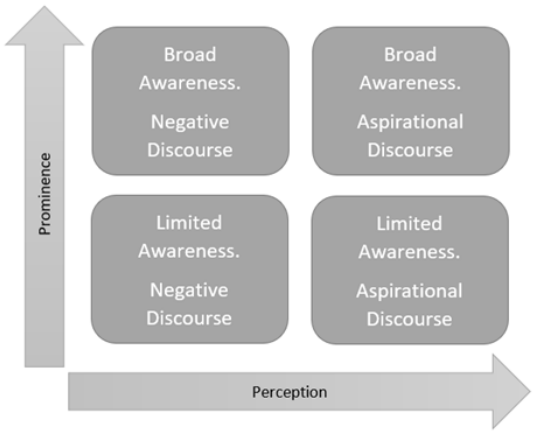

Figure 1: The Prominence/Perception Matrix

Application and Utility

The work the researcher does to position research acts to dismantle barriers by problematising the factors that place research in one quadrant versus another. Questions such as: ‘what factors contribute to an aspirational discourse?’, ‘what factors contribute to more prominence in the research community’?

The Prominence/Perception Matrix (PP matrix) can be utilised with a set of questions. The first three questions will help the researcher to position their work on the matrix and position the work of others. The second three questions will help the researcher to consider why this is the case. The last three questions are calls to action which will help the researcher subvert or navigate this positioning. We would welcome further research that applies this matrix in practice from both dominant-hegemonic positions and subordinate positions.

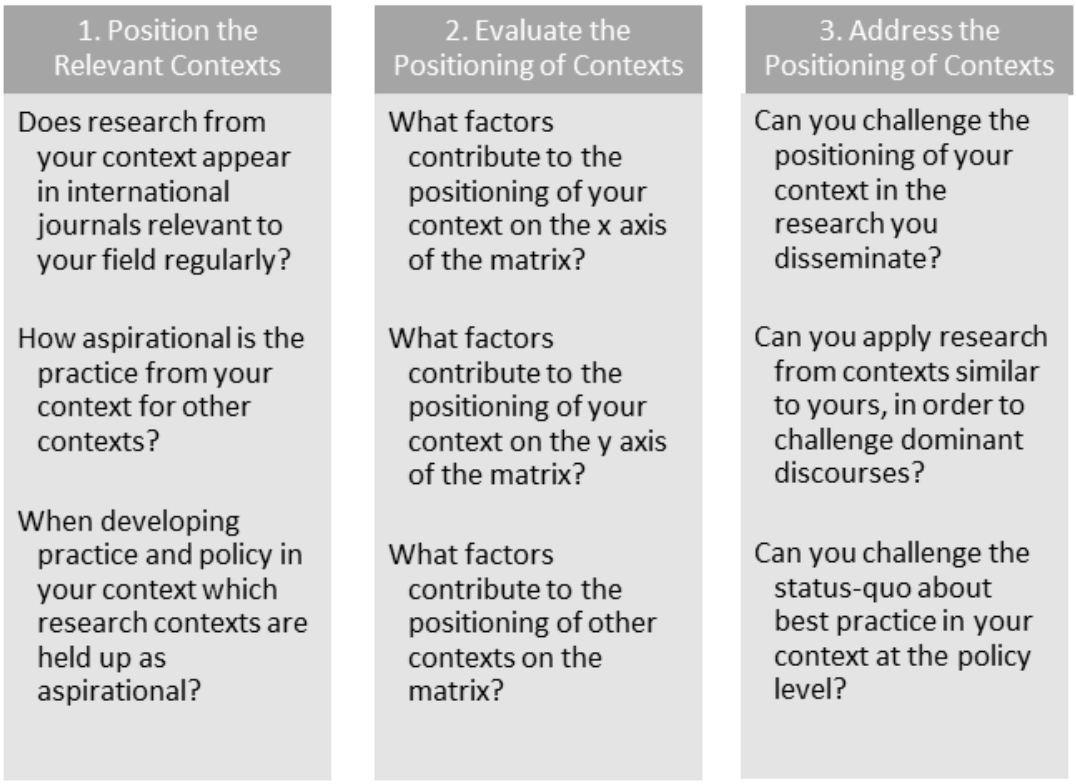

Figure 2: Questions Underpinning use of Prominence/Perception Matrix

Conclusion

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the movement seeking to dismantle barriers to knowledge democracy which addresses the driver of “framing” which seeks to homogonise perceptions of quality. Using cross cultural conversations, we were able to draw attention to the dangers of homogenistic beliefs and how these manifest in the spaces in which we exist as researchers. As suggested by Brannelly, (2016), the "cultural legacy of colonialism" must be challenged which would address the perception of quality being driven by the concept of ‘saming’. Value and knowledge about quality can come from both the “formerly colonised” as well as those from dominant hegemonic position. As two researchers who have made the effort to engage in cross cultural conversations, we deliberately endeavored to challenge our current biases and assumptions about quality. This included eschewing the idea that developed countries

represent the pinnacle of good practice, considering quality as a process as well as an outcome, and developing a practical tool for engaging in transformative dialogue which rejects the “shaming dialogue” about the forces shaping perceptions of quality. Overall by uncovering the tacit forces that shape notions of quality, we encourage others to transform how they articulate the drivers which silence practice and research about quality in diverse contexts.

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