



At Home with Students - Observing Online and Offline Contexts

Anita Lyngsø

Department of Media, Cognition and Communication
University of Copenhagen
&
Health Department
VIA University College
E-mail: anly@via.dk

Abstract

This article reflects the methodological challenges presented in the research process, where the principle of 'following the field' means that the researcher must also follow students engaged in online activities in their own homes. The ethnographic studies are a part of a PhD project on "NETeducation," a full-scale development project in nursing education (Lyngsø, 2014). With a focus on online professional education as the starting point, the process of research will follow the shifting learning process, through phases in the virtual classroom and in the students' own homes.

Research in online contexts demands a rethinking of the traditional ethnographic approach (Hammersley, 2006; Hine, 2005), sharpening the focus on the online and offline contexts, and the shifting between them (Webster, da Silva, 2013). The methodological reflections in the first part of this article can relate to this division due to the "netstudents" activities in studying online at home. On the other hand, the dichotomy between online and offline contexts is found to be inadequate, during the observations conducted. In light of some preliminary findings, the challenges of observing online and offline activities almost simultaneously are considered, despite a dearth of literature existing on this subject.

Keywords: methodology, ethnography, reflexivity, online learning

Introduction

This article reflects the methodological challenges in the research process, where the principle of 'following the field' means that the researcher must also follow students engaged in online activities in their own homes. The ethnographic studies are a part of a PhD project on "NETeducation," a full-scale approach to development in nursing education (Lyngsø, 2014). The focus of this PhD project is online professional learning, empirically following the movement of a class of "netstudents" and their teachers in educational time and place. This involves participant observations, interviews and the collection of relevant document materials in the clinical settings, in the classroom and in the digitalized classroom; achieved by going into the students' own homes. Only the latter dimension is to be considered in this article.

The ethnographic approach gives knowledge about the teachers and students' activities and practices in the educational everyday life. The broad ethnographic approach (Borgnakke 1996, Hammersley, Atkinson, 2007) opens up for mapping the educational field and for close up studies of the online settings and courses. Herby the project gain qualitative, in-depth analyses, and produce knowledge on the new and not yet researched online learning in nursing education.

Research in online contexts leads to a rethinking of the traditional ethnographic approach due to, amongst other things, the involvement of technology in human interactions (Hammersley, 2006; Hine, 2005). With this rethinking, the focus falls upon the online and offline contexts and the shifting between them (Webster, da Silva, 2013). The methodological reflections in the first part of this article can relate to this division, due to the "netstudents" studying online at home, while also reading the syllabus and other materials offline. On the other hand, a dichotomy between online and offline contexts is found to be inadequate, in the observations conducted. In light of some preliminary findings, the challenges of observing online and offline activities almost simultaneously are considered, despite a dearth of literature on this subject.

The Case: Online Nursing Education

The case is an online education in nursing, given the title "NETeducation" by the persons involved. NETeducation is a development project ordered by the Department of Health, with VIA University College and two nursing schools implementing the program in collaboration. The project is scheduled to run between 2012-2017, and can be regarded in concrete terms as an e-pedagogical experiment, characteristic of political and professional tendencies for the ongoing development of the e-pedagogical strategies of teachers and students.

The purpose of NETeducation is, according to the planning team, to develop an 'e-didactic approach to professional learning' (Nielsen et al, 2011). At the same time, they also stress that the development of the e-didactic approach should aim to prepare the nursing students for digital and high-tech healthcare:

'(To)...Develop an e-didactic concept that, through the form of planning, can prepare students to be included as employees in a digital and high-tech form of healthcare' (ibid.)

The first evaluations and experiences of students and teachers show that the netstudents did not possess the anticipated level of IT skills, exemplified by the fact that on her first day, one of the students commented that she had heard about Google but had not tried it yet! Their only interest in IT, as such, was as a means to gaining a much higher degree of flexibility in their education, rather than any desire to gain greater competence in IT. These divergent interests have been previously described and discussed by Borgnakke and Lyngsø (2014), with an emphasis on digital literacy or technacy (Borgnakke, 2012) and the IT habitus (Kolbæk, 2013) of nursing students in general.

The other providers of online nursing education in Denmark - perhaps more accurately described as distance learning in nursing - have only made small changes in their pedagogical approach, in relation to their campus-based education (Fredskild, 2008). NETeducation, however, has made a conscious choice to clarify their special e-pedagogical approach, and are using Gilly Salmon's 'five-stage model of teaching and learning online' (Salmon, 2011) to

do so. The team responsible for the planning of the curriculum describes the model as both a 'stage model' and as a 'scaffolding model' and highlight the role of the e-moderator and the "e-tivities":

'The model has two basic elements: an E-moderator, who makes a summary of the discussions, and e-tivities, which are activities that students should perform online (with defined purposes, goals and deadlines). Each stage also requires the participants (students and teachers) to master certain technical skills' (Document, The Curriculum team, 2012).

The inspiration from Salmon is evident, but NETeducation has also altered the e-pedagogical concept. As a nursing education with clinical training, it is not possible for NETeducation to be an entirely online education. Neither does the scholastic part take place entirely online. NETeducation has chosen that a few days each semester should be spent face-to-face, on campus. These days are often used to start or close topics, or for practical training in the simulation lab. Despite the fact that NETeducation calls itself an online education, it seems that they have more of a blended learning approach (Dirckinck-Holmfeld, 2002; Borgnakke, 2012).

This means that, compared to traditional campus-based nursing education, NETeducation still has learning spaces in the clinical setting and in the classroom, but have added a further learning space - the space for online learning. Therefore, it seems that NETeducation could be an alternative to traditional nursing education, with positive evaluations about the use of e-tivities particularly evident, where both netstudents and their teachers find them to be productive in the learning process. Examination results are another positive element, where there is a tendency for netstudents to achieve slightly higher grades. Therefore, even though the formal criteria are comparable with the traditional nursing education, the space for online learning still demands further research. With the focus in this paper on online observations, the rest of the paper will concentrate on the ethnographic studies conducted in the netstudents' homes and upon the methodological questions raised in relation to this.

Online Observations in Students Homes

The methodological approach draws on the experiences of international research using an ethnography described as mixed-method (Hammersley, Atkinson, 2007; Borgnakke, 2013), within scholastic and educational settings. This means that periods of participant-observation are interspersed with spontaneous conversations, interviews and the compilation of relevant documents.

The learning process is a personal, internal process, which is not fully visible for others. The learning process is also happening within a context that, for the netstudents, is their own home - as well as the practices involved in NETeducation. The ethnographic approach seems to have the ability to embrace them both. The participant-observations in the netstudents' homes give the researcher the possibility of following the netstudents in their individual activities, in their collaboration with other students, and of hearing their interactions as they actually take place. At the same time, interviews and spontaneous conversations will acknowledge that it is only the individual netstudent who knows exactly how they perceive what is going on (Walford, 2008; Hammersley, Atkinson, 2007). Relevant documents are defined, in this context, as the e-tivities assigned by the teachers who frame the activities being observed and the products being produced by the netstudents. In this way, the ethnographic approach provides the opportunity to produce more

comprehensive empirical material on online learning, than any of these methods could achieve individually.

The inspiration to follow the students at home is derived mostly from Marcus and his descriptions of multi-sited design (Marcus, 1995). Marcus emphasizes that the very heart of ethnography is to design strategies for following the participants' connections and relations in the various sites within which they participate. As already mentioned, the individual netstudent is part of sites such as the classroom at campus, the clinical settings and the digitalized classroom. This digitalized classroom, where she sits at home, is where she spends the majority of her study time. Following the netstudents at home, then, must become the key area when online learning is the research focus. By following the student at home, the methods are 'blended to the same degree as the field of practice' (Borgnakke, 2013).

Participant observations involve participating in the social world, preferably in a role chosen by the researcher themselves, but just as often in the role it proves possible to obtain, or the role given to them. (Hammersley, Atkinson, 2007). The Netstudents knew me as one of the teachers on the program, giving me easy access to contact them both on campus, and afterwards to secure their permission for observing them in their studies at home, via email. However, as a researcher, this relation could also represent a restriction in getting to know their everyday life as Netstudents, due to the potential implications of the inherent power relationship. Therefore, it was emphasized that I would no longer teach or examine them after I had started to observe them. The preferred role in ethnographic studies is between a stranger and a friend (ibid.). I was no stranger, and harbored no intention of being a friend. Therefore, I presented myself for the netstudents as a 'participant-observer,' being neither expert nor critic, rather trying to establish the position of being 'acceptably incompetent' by pointing out the fact that they were the only ones who could introduce me to the field (ibid.). I also clarified that it was solely their decision, as to when I should come and go. Coming into people's homes can give the researcher the role of a guest (Jordan, 2006) and in an attempt to avoid this I wrote to them that I would bring my own lunch.

The first class of netstudents started with 17 women and 1 man, between the ages 21-53. Now, 2½ years later, there are nine women left. During the last two years, nine students have been observed in their homes, each for a period of two days. Going online with the netstudent in their homes usually involved observing their participation within their study group. The online observations therefore also include the connections and relations between the other group members

Observing online contexts demands a rethinking of the traditional ethnographic approach (Hammersley, 2006). Everyday life has become mediatized and consequently more complex. The observation of this mediatized everyday culture therefore inevitably becomes more complex, because the researcher has to follow the participants online (Webster, da Silva, 2013). This involves rethinking the traditional ethnographic approach - not in the sense of producing a clear recipe for observations in online contexts, but more an increased awareness of some principles (Hine, 2005). One of these principles is that even though the research site of interest is online, the research does not need to start online. Traditional contexts still 'play a vital role in everyday social experiences' (ibid. s.112), and therefore also in the understanding of online activities. The offline context is not necessarily present in the research, but when the observed students shifts between online and offline activities and interactions, it makes sense methodology to follow them both in their online and offline environment (James, Busher, 2013; Borgnakke, 2013). This strengthen the choice of going home to the students. I could still note that this home-context includes shifting between online and

offline situations. It led me to the assumption that these were two separate situations and that it was meaningful to see them as such. At the same time a common almost private atmosphere is characteristic for the home observations as confirmed in my first observation.

In e-mails to the netstudents, I had been focusing on online learning and the first netstudent suggested that I should be at her home, half an hour before she and her study group had arranged to go online together. When I arrived, the netstudent served newly baked buns; she said she baked every second morning.

This netstudent used her dining table when studying. After the buns were taken away, she found her laptop and several books and laid them on the table. I sat myself opposite; just as before, but now with my laptop ready, and I got the password for the internet connection. I could hear she was connecting with the study group, and after telling them that I was present, she also invited me to join them in their "Lync"ⁱ meeting. I could now follow the netstudents on my screen, see what they wrote, hear what they discussed and I took field notes accordingly. During the next hours, I started to get the feeling that I was missing out on something. I observed that the netstudent opposite me was intermittently working on the laptop without any activity happening on my screen.

At one point, I went over and looked. She had several documents open, and she was switching between them. None of these documents were visible for the study group or me - she was working with them offline. After lunch, I sat myself diagonally behind her, so I could follow her activities both online and offline and quite another perspective arose.

In this first observation, I chose, as an ethnographer to follow what turns out to be meaningful in the situation. Sarah Dyke (2013) uses this argument to verify that she follows her informants from offline into the online universe. Unlike her, I began by observing online, but found that what was meaningful for my perspective on online learning also seems to happen offline. However, the greatest difference was that I was not as such leaving one context to observe in another context. What was meaningful was that I tried to observe both contexts simultaneously.

To illustrate how meaningful this was, the next section reveals some of the findings and preliminary analysis from observing both online and offline, with these findings selected due to their ability to invite further methodological reflections.

Result: Observations both Online and Offline

At this point, two topics seem to be interesting in the attempt to reveal what would have been missed, if the observation had focused solely on online activity. These are 'hiding behind the screen' and 'interruptions by daily life.'

Hiding behind the screen

Lync's capacity to show the participants via a video-stream was not used by any of the netstudents, because of the demands this placed on their internet connections. In this sense, they are all 'hiding' themselves from each other - but there are also different manifestations of hiding behind the screen.

Multi-tasking is one of them. All the students have books lying by the computer, with most of them also using a tablet to read literature scanned electronically for them. They are consulting these, while at the same time

taking part in discussions and writing assignments online. As mentioned previously, the netstudents have several documents open simultaneously, to find relevant discussion points, but sometimes also to focus on the same document:

'The study group are discussing whether the structure of their assignment is a bit messy. Student G: 'Maybe a bit of this part would be better in the part about the patient's medicine?' Student A: 'I found that part. Shall I write it down?' The other two: 'Yes'. Nothing happened on my screen (Field notes, Jan. 2015)

The netstudents can write in the same documents simultaneously, but often it makes sense that one of them shares the document via Lync, to be sure that they are talking about the same part. The student who shares and controls the document is in a more locked position than the others are, she cannot scroll up and down or look in another document without the entire study group being aware of it. The exception is the students who have two screens. They have the shared document on one screen and can do whatever they like on the other. Some of the students who are using two screens, or are not actively sharing in Lync, also multi-task with activities that are not relevant for the study-group. For example, during a webinar, where study groups take turns presenting their findings in the presence of a teacher, a netstudent starts checking and answering her private emails. Furthermore, the mobile phone is always close by and text messages are read immediately:

'They (the study group) are discussing how to nurse a patient with breast cancer. Student B gets a text message and, right away, she reads it and sends a short message back. Student B looks up at the screen again and says: 'You said symptoms?' and by doing so, she gets one of the other students to repeat what was just said, and she continues in the discussion' (Field notes, April 2013)

Student B had lost a bit of the conversation but no more so, than she could ask a completely relevant question about it. This is a main characteristic: that the netstudent who takes these breaks can almost immediately switch back into the conversation, even without help from fellow students. It is seldom possible to hear a student being absent, even for the other students:

'When I am not the one who writes down what the group decides to put into the assignment, I almost have a tendency to play a game or something like that. It is not that clever, I know. I do not think that anyone of the other students do things like that. They are always very active' (Interview, student E, Dec. 2013)

This "hiding behind the screen" is very evident here, as is the belief that it is in some way possible to recognize if another person is absent behind the screen.

Hiding behind the screen can also be a conscious decision. At webinars, some students distinguish between the study groups to which they will listen. Their experience is that not all of the groups always present well-researched materials, and it can therefore be a waste of time listening to them. What makes it possible for them to do something else without anyone being aware, is the fact that the netstudents - among themselves - have decided that due to noise pollution, they should keep their microphones switched off. The others can therefore not hear any sound from chats etc.:

'A netstudent from another study group started presenting and student K is listening, when the chat function in her Lync makes a sound. She activates the chat and reads it, and among other things, there is a link, which she enters. A loud video starts playing. She smiles, looks at me and shuts it down. She answers the chat message and takes their own document on the screen instead of the presentation. Now there is only

the sound of it. A new chat message arrives which she reads. At the end of the presentation she removes both the document and the chat, but during the questions after the presentation, she sends and receives another chat' (Field notes, Jan. 2015)

This student and her study group were not present, but for the other students and the teacher it is impossible to see this. Their names are displayed in Lync alongside all the others, and there is no other way to track their activity. Observations have shown that it is not possible to presuppose that netstudents who do not participate in discussions and the like are always absent. In many cases, they are listening, taking notes, skimming through their books for arguments etc. but without having anything to say to the whole group.

Hiding behind the screen with the microphone shut at webinars can also be quite simple in its manifestation:

'Student E is sitting with her arms crossed, looking out the window. The teacher now passes the conversation over to student E and her study group, but no one answers. Student E makes no attempt whatsoever at opening her microphone. Silence. No movement. Another student says: 'I don't think there is anyone there'' (Field notes, Dec. 2013)

If netstudents wish to hide, there is not that much that can be done.

Interruptions by daily life

The majority of the netstudents have husbands or boyfriends that either study, work from home, or have flexible working hours. For some of the netstudents this can give rise to interruptions when they want to concentrate on their activities or Lync meetings. The netstudents, who no longer have children living at home, have their own office. However, a closed door is not always something that is respected:

'Student E is sitting at her desk working with a PowerPoint. Her husband passes by the closed door to her office. There are wooden floors that creak throughout the house, so it is clear that he has been walking around in the house, before now passing by the door. Student E shouts with a pawky smile, without looking up from the screen: 'You don't dare to pop in today, eh [name of the husband]?' (Field notes, Dec. 2013)

In an attempt to create her own space for learning, this student has arranged with her husband that they meet in the kitchen for coffee at 10.30 and again for lunch. In the meantime, she does not want to be disturbed. Their meetings in the kitchen function well, but he still has a tendency to pop in, just to hear how things are going. At the same time, and as shown in the citation, the netstudents are often very attentive to what is going on around them, without necessarily expressing this. Also, the younger netstudents that do not have an office are attentive without looking up, when they sit in their sitting rooms or kitchens and - just in time - raise their hand for goodbyes, or point appropriately when the location of specific items is requested by others. The lack of an office means that the younger students must take the rest of the family's needs and wishes into consideration:

'Today student H is sitting at her dining table, but says: 'I had been studying in our bedroom for the last couple of weeks, because my husband has had a written exam at university and has been occupying the sitting room. He has roughly 15 sessions at the university and otherwise he is at home studying. He finds it quite disturbing when I talk with my study group over Lync, so I often sit at our daughter's desk, in her room'. I tell her that the netstudents with small kids often do not have an office. She laughs and says: 'Student E asked one day if we could

study in the evening and said that if I was disturbed by my family, I could just use my office. I said that I might get the kitchen, but then that's the lot!" (Spontaneous conversation, Dec. 2014)

Indeed, the younger netstudents are often not even able to choose between this many rooms. On the other hand, it does not seem to be that important where they study, but far more important that they do not get disturbed.

A main reason for the younger netstudents with children to attend the NETeducation program is the possibility of collecting their children no later than 15.30. It does not mean that they are not a disturbed, when they come home:

"The door of the flat opens and then straight away the door to the sitting room. A girl in outdoor clothes is looking in. Student H looks up and smiles. When the girl has removed her outdoor clothes, she comes running in and shows her mom a woven Christmas heart basket she has made in school. Student E smiles again and then turns to the computer. The girl leaves the sitting room to meet her younger sister who now enters the door to the flat. She comes straight in and demands to hear who I am. The older sister is also back and wants to whisper something to her mother. Student H: 'I just need to finish here.' The little sister tiptoes out of the sitting room. Both girls meet their dad when he enters the door of the flat with shopping bags in both hands. Student H says to her study group: 'The girls are home now, so I have to stop'. The others agree.' (Field notes, Dec. 2014)

This is just one of the disturbances the netstudents have chosen themselves.

Challenges in both Online and Offline Observations

Firstly, this discussion will focus on methodological challenges in observing both online and offline activities within the same situation, and secondly, the methodological challenges presented by observing in the homes of the netstudents.

Had I not been observing online and offline contexts simultaneously, I would not have attained the nuanced understandings presented previously. Including the offline context within which the users are situated while they are online, is something that can be forgotten when ethnographers go online: 'The *context* of use, though usually missed by online ethnographers, is something that can be explored by the in-situ observation of users' (Mackay, 2005). Still, Mackay divides the observations in online and offline observations, not as activities going on in the same situation; and reflects a similar approach used by other researchers (Webster, da Silva, 2013; James, Busher, 2013; Hammersley, 2006). As an experiment, I have also tried solely observing offline activity during a short period at home with a netstudent. I got the same feeling of missing out on something, because I could not follow all that the study group were talking about or always be sure why the student had reacted as she did; due to the lack of insight into their online context.

Observing both online and offline activities simultaneously could be regarded as multi-tasking, and research has shown that cognitive work suffers under this kind of divided attention: 'Multi-tasking is a mythical activity in which people believe they can perform two or more tasks simultaneously as effectively as one' (Hallowells, 2007). The observations rapidly switches between online at offline activities and are as such not simultaneously, but the switches can happen within seconds and always within the same situation.

Even despite the lack of complete attention on each context, the almost simultaneous observations give deeper understandings than separate observations. For example, the observations attained relating to the switched off microphones would merely have been that the microphones were switched off - had the observations focused solely upon online activity. The offline observations revealed a variety of actions behind these switched off microphones, which again led to new questions, providing a deeper understanding. Adding online observations such as the online comment, '*I don't think there is anyone there,*' broaden the understanding even more; most profoundly because of the fact that I was sitting beside one of the very students who 'wasn't there.'

Being there when the children come home, and seeing them literally filling the room and the attention of their mother, gives a deeper understanding than just hearing her utter the words, '*I have to stop.*' 'Being there' has always been one of the characteristics in doing ethnographic inspired fieldwork (Landri, 2013). Landri finds that this is also the case in fieldwork in online environments, and suggests that online observations do not necessarily require a rethinking of the traditional ethnographic approach; but should instead be regarded as an extension - that there is a 'complex flow, and interpenetration among online and offline presence' (ibid.). However, in other ways he seems to maintain the separation between observations online and offline, when discussing fieldwork in online environments.

In the end, the students do not regard their situation as being separated into different contexts, they are fundamentally still just working with their study group. Methodologically it is both interesting and necessary for the researcher to reflect upon their access to both dimensions, just as it can have important analytical implications. In-situ observation essentially involves these two dimensions becoming conjoined for the researcher.

'Being there' validates the ethnographic knowledge when the ethnographer at the same time reflects on the product of that participation. The ethnographer should 'maintain a self-conscious awareness of what is learned, how it has been learned, and the social transactions that inform the production of such knowledge' (Hammersley, Atkinson, 2007). Regarding these social transactions, I had - as previously mentioned - tried to attain a position of 'acceptable incompetence,' according to observing online learning, and presented myself more as an observer than a participant. Even though one's roles are clarified, they often are altered by the field (ibid.). For example, Jordan (2006) experienced that the families she observed in their own homes, constructed different roles for her: the researcher as student, as guest, as person and as negative agent. Inspired by Jordan I will begin my reflections on the social transactions experienced with the netstudents by relating to these roles.

The role of the researcher as student is described as a non-judgmental observer, who is interested in learning from the field. Most of the description is very similar to the role of the 'acceptably incompetent,' figure who tries to go open-mindedly into the field (Hammersley, Atkinson, 2007). All the netstudents so far have accepted this position, and thereby given me this role. They accept me in their homes, presenting me to their husbands and boyfriends as, "Anita who wants to see how I study." They put no restrictions on me being in their homes, but most of them just show me their place of study. They seem to reason that the rest of the house would not be of interest to my research focus. Jordan found that she was only given this role when she was still a student herself, and not afterwards - due to her more knowledgeable appearance and her increasing age. I did not share this experience. Currently, and as they also did 2 years ago, the students try to give me as realistic an impression as possible, so I can learn from it. This should not imply that they

construct the day for my benefit. Instead, the activities with predetermined deadlines and the expectations of other group members frame the activities of the day, rather than the fact that I am present.

Some of the netstudents saw me as a guest for part of the day. For instance, they emailed me back with an 'invitation' to come and observe them, and would give me lunch if I was prepared to eat what they ate, and in some ways they would try to acknowledge my presence by smiling and nodding in my direction during the day. Being regarded as a guest in this manner was not quite as categorical, as the experiences described by Jordan, where the families prepared special food for her and tried to entertain her, but this may also be due to the more informal social conventions in Denmark. The netstudents, for instance, all referred to me by my first name and anything else would have been odd, whereas this is a major factor in the distinct role of "the researcher as person," described by Jordan. Even some netstudents who had given me the role of guest at lunch, said at the end of the day that they had forgotten I was sitting behind them. This emphasizes and supports the claim that it was more the individual and the study group that structured the day, rather than any influence of my presence.

A few of the netstudents also constructed a new role for me, not experienced by Jordan, a role that was perhaps predictable, due to my former post. They saw me, for short periods of time, as a teacher. The study group would perhaps require supervision or assistance, but with no teacher available, the students turned to me and tried to implicate me as a participant in the group for a moment. Sometimes I agreed to give a short answer because of the notion that: "we have given you something, now you can return the favor." Other times a smile and a shake of one's head would negate the request. All of these episodes are described in the field notes, as a part of the observations.

For Jordan the family was the focus, where the focus for me is just one person from the household. The netstudents' relations with and actions towards their families are interesting, as a part of their patterns in creating their own strategies and spaces for interaction, communication and learning - as are their relations and actions towards the patients in the clinical settings - but this does not make the family or the patients my focus. My focus is the netstudents. When the netstudent goes from studying to being with their family, as described in the final citation from the field notes, I observe this, but at the same time, it also marks the end of the legitimacy of my presence.

Concluding remarks

In this case, the principle of 'following the field' - essentially following the online students in their own homes - presents methodological challenges in tackling the complexity of being in someone's private home and observing situations consisting of both online and offline contexts.

It is concluded that when a situation consists of online and offline contexts, the ethnographer must observe both, despite the methodological challenges this presents. The challenge is to observe the students' activities in both these contexts - If not simultaneously, then by following their rapid switching between the two. It becomes evident that this approach gives more detailed and representative findings, and therefore provides the possibility of a deeper understanding of the situation.

Another challenge arises in trying to observe netstudents at home, where the division between the online nursing education and family life is blurred; this division is not as distinct and definite as in the traditional nursing education, taking place on campus. Reflection on the roles the researcher can actively

construct, and the roles given by the students provides an awareness of how the knowledge obtained has been achieved. This awareness can provide clarity, by maintaining a concentrated research focus on online nursing education and not the family.

References

- Borgnakke, K. (1996). *Procesanalytisk teori og metode. Bind 1. Pædagogisk feltforskning og procesanalytisk kortlægning: en forskningsberetning*. S.l.: Thesis.
- Borgnakke, K. (2012). Ny Nordisk Skole og dannelsesstraditionerne: skal vi tilføje technacy? *Unge Pædagoger*, (4), 49–56.
- Borgnakke, K. (2013). Ethnography on IT-based learning contexts: A matter of blended methodology and blended learning. In F. Hernández Hernández, R. Fendler, & J. M. Sancho Gil (Eds.), *Rethinking Educational Ethnography. Researching online communities and interactions* (pp. 5–25). Universitat de Barcelona. Dipòsit Digital. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2445/44009>
- Borgnakke, K., & Lyngsø, A. (2014). Going on- and offline: Following the course in the light of e-pedagogical concepts. In P. Landri, A. Maccarini, & R. De Rosa (Eds.), *Networked Together: Designing Participatory Research in Online Ethnography* (pp. 61–74). Retrieved from <http://www.irpps.cnr.it/e-pub/ojs/index.php/mono/article/view/978-88-98822-02-7>
- Dirckinck-Holmfeld, L. (2002). Designing Virtual Learning Environments Based on Problem Oriented Project Pedagogy. In L. Dirckinck-Holmfeld & B. Fibiger (Eds.), *Learning in virtual environments*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.
- Dyke, S. (2013). Utilising a Blended Ethnographic Approach to Explore the Online and Offline Lives of Pro-Ana Community Members. *Ethnography and Education*, 8(2), 146-161.
- Fredskild, T. U. (2008). *Studieformer i sygeplejerskeuddannelsen: en analyse af sygeplejerskeuddannelsen udbudt i tre forskellige regi: under den traditionelle studieform, via fjernstudie og som merituddannelse: fokus er lagt på analyse af fjernstudieformen set i relation til de øvrige studieformer*. Syddansk Universitet. Det Sundhedsvidenskabelige Fakultet. Odense.
- Hallowell, E. M. (2007). *Crazy Busy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Handling Your Fast-Paced Life*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Hammersley, M. (20060301). Ethnography: Problems and Prospects. *Ethnography and Education*, 1(1), 3-14.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: principles in practice* (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hine, C. (2005). *Virtual methods: issues in social research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg.
- James, N. (20130101). Researching Hybrid Learning Communities in the Digital Age through Educational Ethnography. *Ethnography and Education*, 8(2), 194-209.
- Jordan, A. B. (2006). Make yourself at home: the social construction of research roles in family studies. *Qualitative Research*, 6(2), 169–185.
- Kolbæk, R. (2013). *Holdninger til brugen af it i teoretisk uddannelse og klinisk sygepleje hos nystartede sygeplejestuderende: Ph.d.-afhandling*. København: Det Humanistiske Fakultet, Københavns Universitet.

- Landri, P. (20130101). Mobilising Ethnographers Investigating Technologised Learning. *Ethnography and Education*, 8(2), 239-254.
- Lyngsø, A. (2014). Ethnographic studies in online nursing education focusing on professional learning and development of professional identity. PhD project description. University of Copenhagen and VIA University College.
- Mackay, H. (2005). New connections, familiar settings: issues in the ethnographic study of new media use at home. In C. Hine (Ed.), *Virtual methods: issues in social research on the Internet* (pp. 129–140). Oxford: Berg.
- Marcus, G. E. (199510). Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), 95–117.
- Nielsen, C., Seyer-Hansen, H., Kolbæk, R., & Bjerg, K. (2011). Netbaseret sygeplejerskeuddannelsen i VIA. Projektbeskrivelse.
- Salmon, G. (2011). *E-moderating: the key to online teaching and learning* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Walford, G. (2008). The nature of educational ethnography. In G. Walford (Ed.), *How to do educational ethnography* (pp. 1–15). London: Tufnell Press.
- Webster, J. P., & da Silva, S. M. (2013). Doing educational ethnography in an online world: methodological challenges, choices and innovations. *Ethnography and Education*, 8(2), 123-130.

ⁱ Lync is an expanded kind of Skype