

Wicked issues: higher education research, and institutional innovation for learning and teaching – a reflection.

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The authors recently completed a funded research project in learning and teaching in higher education during which dilemmas in method choice emerged. This showcase unpacks the research process undertaken drawing on the analytical framework devised by Buchanan & Bryman (2007) in their consideration of the field properties that shape method choice in organizational studies. It considers the “wicked issues in situating theory in close-up research” Trowler (2012, p. 278) in a study conducted within a field of practice where funding bias supports empirical and descriptive studies congruent with improving the quality of learning and teaching, leadership capacity building and deliverables of use to the sector. This theory-method trajectory created a narrow space within which discursive and argumentative research problems might be pursued. Getting the “balance right” in the case of our study was partially vested in methodology – but we came to the view that whilst epistemological and methodological clarity was important, struggling with theory-method and data-theory trajectories remained central to the development of critically engaged applied research.