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THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN GERMAN SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Introduction

Qualitative educational research is progressing in Europe. The number of studies using qualitative methods is growing and qualitative methology has gained a respected place among researchers. The European research arena is heterogenous across different countries and resembles a patchwork blanket rather than a well–structured domain with dominant tendencies. Nevertheless, I will highlight some typical contributions of the German speaking countries in the international efforts of implementing and consolidating qualitative research methods. Efforts and approaches from other countries in continental Europe can be found in Kelchtermans, Schratz, Vandenberghe (1994).

Frameworks and efforts for methodological grounding

Most concepts in educational research have been influenced by developments and discourses in other disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy or psychology. A good example for this can be seen in the study of the unemployed people from Marienthal, a small Austrian village, where a textile factory had to close down (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld and Zeisel, 1978 /1933/). The researchers spent several months there collecting data according to the problems at hand. Studies of this kind could not yet draw on a stock of standardised methods, but they hat to develop, try out and modify them along the continuance of the research process. Moreover, however, research approaches were often first imported from the USA and entered the (central) European research discourse with a certain time lag. Thus interpretive sociology, e.g. symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), and the „grounded theory" approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) constitute an important framework for many European research activities. They were integrated into the respective research discourses either by the translation of relevant pub-

lications (e.g. Arbeitsgruppe Bielefelder Soziologen, 1973) which soon became standard textbooks in research methodology courses, or by further explication and elaboration within the European context (cf. Brumlik, 1973).

Hermeneutics and empirical research

Because of the strong influence of philosophy, especially in the German speaking educational communities, education as an academic subject area had been taught by philosophers (of education) far into the second half of this century, and in the university structure it used to be part of the philosophical sciences until then. Therefore, the tradition of the *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* hermeneutics had a strong influence on educational reasoning. It was not before the late sixties that the so–called „realistic turn" took place (cf. Roth, 1966 and 1971) and research activites began to be based on empirical evidence. As a consequence, *educational* sciences became more and more *social* sciences using the respective methods. As a counter–reaction to the previously philosophical discussions mainstream research was based on empirical grounds, which asked for widespread questionnaire–driven surveys. Today education has to a certain degree found back to its roots of the *Geisteswissenschaften* in the liberal arts idea. Evidence of this development can be found in the broad use of hermeneutic methods and procedures in the study of everyday experience, particularly in German speaking countries, but, for example, also in the Netherlands, which still have a strong impact on educational research activities today. This way a European tradition was taken up and rehabilitated as a „pedagogically grounded concept of research that takes its starting point in the empirical realm of everyday lived experience" (van Maanen, 1990, p. IX).

An illustration of the rehabilitation of hermeneutic reasoning is the so–called *pädagogische Biographieforschung* (educational biographical research) (cf. Baacke & Schulze, 1979 and 1985, Fuchs, 1984, Heinze, 1984). This „movement" drew researches from several German speaking countries interested in using different kinds of (auto)biographical data to gain deeper insights into educationally relevant issues, such as, for example, the effects of learning in distant courses on the individual learner's biography (Heinze, Klusemann & Soeffner, 1980).

Identity formation and its development, for example, are important themselves in such studies, which were investigated into from various research perspectives. The researchers doing this newly developed biographical research use very different theoretical frameworks (e.g. psychoanalysis, critical theory, interactionism and ethomethodology) when analysing the biographical data. In order to establish such a biographical research branch within the educational scientific community they had to discuss the methodological implications when using different frameworks in their work. Thus, methodological issues received a great deal of attention in these studies. Although this research network has „faded"

since the mid–1980s, its impact on the institution of what later was called „qualitative research" is still evident.

Objectivity, a central issue in the methodological debate

During the late 1970s and 1980s, crucial methodological issues such as objectivy, validity and reliability formed the main focus in the debates. They were also ifluenced by the so–called *Positivismusstreit* (positivism struggle) in German sociology (cf. Adorno, Albert, Dahrendorf, Habermas, Pilot, & Popper, 1969), which stimulated the argument shout the knowledge interests in the research process. Hence, the main contribution of Critical Theory lies in its inclusion of the knowledge interest and of the „context of discovery" (and thus not only the „context of legitimation"). These ideas challenged the traditional concept of Critical Rationalism (Popper, 1959) which argued that objectivity of scientific statements lies in the fact that they can be intersubjectively tested.

Nevertheless, there were still approaches which tried to approximate the idea of „objectivity" within the qualitative research domain. This is especially the case with the work of U. Oeveremann and his colleagues on the so–called *objektive Hermeneutik* (objective hermeneutics) (Oevermann et al., 1979), an approach which is concerned with the sociocultural aspects of the use of the individual's speech. Oevermann et al. state that underlying each individual speech act, objective meanings exist as latent structures of meaning, independently from the subjective interpretations, representations of the situation and intentions of the subject. For them, these structures thus constitute possible meanings that exist „objectively", quite apart from the actor's consiousness and intentions. According to Oevermann et al, these latent structures of meaning can be reconstructed through a careful and very time–consuming analysis of interactive texts (i.e. transcripts of interviews) by a group of interpreters working towards the „objective" meanings through argumentative interpretation. By means of this way of sociological analysis they try to tackle the problems of validity and subjectivity in qualitative research work. Although objective hermeneutics has been applied outside the founding group (e.g. Larcher, 1993), it has not spread widely. The reason for this limited diffusion not only lies in its time–consuming procedure, but also in severe criticism from a methodological perspective (see, for example, the extensive discussion of objective hermeneutics by Terhart 1981, 1983 and 1985 and Oevermann's reply in Oevermann, 1983).

Although the term „objective hermeneutics" soon disappeared from the research agenda, mainly because of terminology problems (for example, objectivity and hermeneutics were seen as a contradiction in terms) the controversial discussions have contributed to a further strengthening of qualitative methodology, especially in the interpretative part of the research process. Meanwhile, qualitative research has occupied a fair ground on the territory of European uni-

versities, and quality criteria are no longer measured against the traditional empirical criteria but are grounded in the new paradigm. For what Mayring (1990) calls a „qualitative turn", which he describes as a decisive change in the social sciences of this century, he mentions six general criteria for qualitative research documentation of the procedures, argumentative support of the interpretation, stringency in the application of rules, closeness to the research object, communative validation and combination of several analytical steps.

Because of the interactive relationship with the research „object" in the educational sciences, dialogic methods have started dominating the qualitative research debates. Whereas, just to name a few, case study research, qualitative experiments, discourse analysis and observational studies have not had such a strong impact on educational research as in sociology and psychology, the interview has become the most widely used instrument in educational qualitative research. Depending on the scope of interviews the terminology ranges from the problem–oriented interview, which focused on certain issues that structure the interview process, to the narrative interview, which is hardly structured by the interviewer.

According to F. Schütze, a German sociologist, the narrative interview has to be considered as a social–communicative process (Schütze, 1976, see also Südmersen, 1983). For him interviewing people is a form of social communication, and the content of that communication is (partly) determined by the interactive processes and the deeper meaning structures that operate in human communication. Unlike Oevermann, Schutze concentrates on the aspects that constitute the identity of the subject (e.g. the structures underlying his or her moral judgements). Therefore, through the narrative interview he tries to control for the fact that the interview situation is a moment of social interaction. The influence of the interviewer and the interviewer and the situation on the data has to be reduced or neutralized. To achieve this, the interview is organised along three phases. The interviewer first tries to establish a situation of respect and trust before s/he starts with a carefully chosen „narrative impulse", usually a general opening question. After asking this question the researcher reduces his or her presence to actively listening without any interruption of the respondent (*Stegreiferzählung*), unless the narrator loses the thread.

Only when the respondent finishes his or her story, the researcher starts the second phase, asking additional questions aimed only at clarifying elements of the narrative. The respondent is stimulated to retell or further elaborate parts of the original story. In the third phase the respondent is invited to a more abstract thematisation of recurring patterns and systematic connections between the parts of his or her narrative or to more argumentative statements to theoretical why–questions by the researcher. In the analysis all 'non–narrative'elements (those elements that more or less implicitly refer to or result from the interview situation as such, and not from the narration) are eliminated to get 'primary data' that reflect the actual meaning structures of the respondent. The analysis of these

data collected through this narrative interview is very complex and time–consuming. Therefore different ways of interpretation have developed, among others a psycho–analytical orientation, since the role of the researcher in the narrative interview resembles that of a psychoanalyst (ef.Walter, 1988).

Conceptions of the research subject

Psycho–analytic therapy builds on the assumption that the therapist's interpretations can only be suggestions for the reconstruction of data from somebody's view of the world, but it is only the client himself or herself that can decide on its very meaning. The *Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt School of Critical Theory) built on this assumption and derived from it the dialogically consensus–theoretical criterion of truth for its research agenda (ef. Habermas, 1968). In opposition to behaviorism, its members see the human being as a subject of knowledge that is principally capable of reflection, (potential) rationality, discursive communication and social interaction.

Groeben and Scheele (1977) elaborated further on this epistemological subject model, which found its application in the 'subjective theory'concept. This has been mainly used in teacher training for which F. Kroath (1989,p.59) has summarised the following presuppositions. The teacher is considered to be an 'epistemological subject', capable of generating and testing theories about his or her own practice. These subjective theories are considered to be an aggregation of cognitions (e.g. knowledge, thoughts, aims, plans, expectations, beliefs) that determine and monitor teachers'decision–making processes and actions. There are some structural parallels between a scientific theory (e.g. the assumption of rationality and reflectivity, of an argumentative, interferential logic, of validity) which establishes a functional equality between them. A teacher's subjective theory is usually represented and applied in an implicit way, but can be made explicit in various modes of representations (e.g. verbal, graphic, pictorial) by a variety of reconstruction techniques (e.g. retrospective 'loud thinking').

Groeben and Scheele worked out methodological principles and procedures which could be used in practical research. They argue that for communicative validation (cf. Lechler, 1982) the *Erkenntnissubjekt* (subject of knowlege) is overtaxed by the simultaneousness of the reconstruction of both contents and structure. Therefore, in the process of communicative validation they set the inquiry into subjective theory apart from its structure and use a two–step approach. To practically do so, Scheele and Groeben (1988) developed the *Heidelberger SLT (Struktur–Lege–Technik)* to reconstruct the subjective theories (see also Huber & Mandl, 1982, Mandl & Huber, 1983). The procedure involves a semi–standardized interview, animed at unravelling the semantic field of central notion relevant to the research interest. This exploration is followed by systematically defining the relations between these different notions through a con-

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sensus–oriented dialogue. This implies that after the phase of data collection is finished the interviewee receives the interview guideline and is invited to get acquainted with the method of reconstruction. In this way the interviewer is expected to achieve the same position as the researcher so that a dialogue based on equality can become possible. Only then begins the actual reconstruction of the subjective theory. This takes the form of a discourse between the researcher and the respondent trying to achieve consensus on the correctness of the reconstruction.

Similar–structures were used in other procedures particulary to reconstruct teachers subjective theories, among them the ILKHA (*Interview–und Legetechnik zur Rekostruction kognitiver Handlungsstrukturen,* Krause & Dann, 1986) and the WAL (*Wiengartner–Appraisal–Legetechnik,* Wahl et al., 1983). Demanding procedures of this kind have not proved to be suitable for wider applications. However, the notion of subjective theories has found further attention in the action research movement (cf. Elliott, 1991, Altrichter, 1993).

The relationship between researcher and respondent

In recent years researches have tried to pay more attention to the interactive processes or the research act itself and the relationship between the people involved (cf. Schratz, 1993). For example, in his hermeneutic life–history approach Th. Heinze (1987) builds on the communicative understanding of both researcher and research partner by establishing a self reflective process among everybody involved. To do so he uses diary entrieves, letters, narrative interviews and other (auto)biographical material.

Feminist approaches to enquiry provided the main challenge to traditional research concepts and to pay more attention to aspects of self–reflexivity and reciprocity in research. Memory–work, for example, is a research method which was developed by a German group of feminists and scholars who were dissatisfied with the divorce of theory from everyday experience as well as with the individualistic approaches in traditional research, so at the beginning of the eighties they looked for suitable methodology which on the one hand should bridge the gap between subject and object of research and on the other hand should make research itself a critically collective process (cf. Projekt Frauengrundstudium, 1982, Haug 1983 /1987/ and 1990). Using personal experience as a basis of knowledge they tried to study the structures in which women are socialized and actively participate in becoming social beings. Memory work has so far mainly been applied in feminist topics like female sexualisation (Haug, 1987) or emotions and gender (Crawford, *et. al.,* 1992). Schratz (1984) has used this research method with students in a course on intercultural learning and in a research methodology course in a peace–studies program.

In order to find out how individual Lives 'are made'one must find a way of how to access this human data base. In memory–work the method for tapping this source is the *writing of stories* about situations or events which people ex-

perienced in the course of their lives. These are stories of everyday experience, episodes or accounts which one remembers from one's own life histories. Therefore, it is important to *work historically* if one wants to find out the social construction, the mechanism, connections and meanings of one's actions and feelings. In order to avoid that everyday matters are simply seen through an individual perspective it is necessary to *work collectively* on these sketches. Therefore, if one wants to make sure that this kind of research does not end up in a simplistic view on how individuals see certain segments of their lives memory work has to be done *collectively*. The emphasis lies on *collective*, on *memory* and on *work*. For Haug the result is a necessary, new great social research methodology (Haug, 1990: 47). Feminist approaches have not only challenged the young tradition of male–dominated qualitative research in Europe, but also brought new methodological considerations and innovative methods like memory–work into the educational research discourse, which is still going on in various areas of application (cf. Schratz & Walker, 1995).

Outlook

Important trends in the development of qualitative educational research in German speaking countries have been discussed, as well as attempts for methodological grounding, examples of research procedures, and illuminated the research agenda related to the use of qualitative methods. In a recent book on qualitative data analysis, Schratz (1993) states that an important factor in the growing interest in qualitative methods is the equally growing interest in qualitative methods is the equally growing dissatisfaction with the „noise reduction" in the traditional methods used.

In recent years many researches have become increasingly disenchanted with the academics process of „noice reduction" by suppressing the more disturbing aspects representing the individuality of human cognition in the domain of educational practices. As a consequence different voices or researches have been heard within the scientific community suggesting more or less scientifically grounded ways to understand and improve educational practices. By paying more attention to the original voices of the actors in everyday life they tried to make room for a broader view of the social reality in their research (Schratz, 1993, p.l).

The concern with „authentic voices" will be a major characteritics in the development of a qualitative methodology. The complex and dynamic phenomena of teaching and learning will force researches to leave the well–trodden paths of quantitative and traditional qualitative methods and to explore new, scientifically sound of observing, understanding, and influencing educational practice.

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VÝVOJ KVALITATIVNÍHO VÝZKUMU V NĚMECKY MLUVÍCÍCH ZEMÍCH

Autor se ve svém článku zabývá některými typickými příspěvky německy mluvících zemí k implementaci a konsolidaci kvalitativních metod v pedagogickém výzkumu.

Úvodem – při uznání vlivu jiných disciplín (zejména sociologie, filozofie a psychologie) na pedagogický výzkum, stejně jako dění v USA na středoevropský výzkumný diskurz – autor připomíná dlouhotrvající vliv hermeneutiky na vědy o výchově, ostrý příklon k empirickým postupům v 60. letech, a konečně dnes zřetelný „návrat ke kořenům" – k tradicím ideje svobodných umění v pedagogickém výzkumu a jeho pojetí (tento stav dokládá opětovným širším užíváním hermeneutických metod a postupů a jejich vlivem na dnešní výzkumné aktivity).

Dále se věnuje diskuzím 70. a 80. let o pojmu objektivita a upozorňuje na jejich význam pro rozvoj kvalitativních metod (hlavně interpretativní části výzkumného procesu). Prostor dává především dialogickým metodám a jejich rozvoji. Předmětem dalšího pojednání jsou teorie subjektu výzkumu a jejich rozvoj. V souvislosti se vztahem výzkumníka a respondenta pak autor dokumentuje pozornost, kterou tomuto vztahu různé kvalitativní přístupy (hermeneutický „life-history" přístup, feministický přístup) věnují.

V závěru autor mj. předvídá rostoucí akcent na autenticitu jako hlavní rys budoucího vývoje kvalitativních metod.

. Habil. Doz. Dr. Michael Schratz (1952) přednáší metodologii pedagogického výzkumu a inovace kurikula na univerzitě v Innsbrucku. Jeho výzkumný zájem se soustředí především na otázky řízení a vedení v kontextu změny. Autor hojně působí i v zahraničí (v poslední době mj. v Estonsku, Rusku, Chorvatsku, Austrálii, Rumunsku, České republice). Jeho spis „Schule leiten und gestalten" (1993) je připraven k českému vydání v roce 1997 (Brno, Paido).

Tento příspěvek je dosud posledním výsledkem užší spolupráce Ústavu pedagogických věd FF MU s některými představiteli rakouské pedagogické scény.

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