

Editorial Note *FQS Debates*

Franz Breuer

The thesis Jo REICHERTZ discusses in the following contribution towards the state of qualitative research at German universities—"... that the volatile and actually rather accelerated expansion of method teaching (before any development and canonization of consensual criteria for the quality of research) will not produce an increasing number of good work, but just in the opposite the number of deficient studies will grow"—we will use as an opportunity to start the debate about standards and criteria for qualitative social research.

This debate will be continued during the following *FQS*-issues. In the beginning, Jo REICHERTZ and Franz BREUER will act as moderators, but also colleagues from other countries will be invited for co-moderation. An ongoing problem is the unsecure financial base of our work, so unfortunately the REICHERTZ'-contribution actually is only available in German language. (The decision process concerning whether or not *FQS* will be funded is still not finished, but hopefully we soon will have the chance to translate some key-texts also into other languages; concerning the actual state of *FQS* see also [FQS concept](#).)

Contributions concerning this debate are warmly welcomed: You might use our [Discussion Board](#), or contact the moderators or *FQS*-Editorship if you are interested in participating with a more detailed contribution. Additionally, we will ask colleagues for discussing special issues concerning this debate.

Actually, positions towards possible criteria for qualitative research seem to be rather heterogeneous—they contain the idea of adapting classical quantitative standards (sometimes cautiously modifying one or another) as well as the conviction that qualitative researchers need principally different criteria to evaluate the quality and the outcomes of their work. Some traditional criteria seem epistemologically suspicious (so e.g. we regard the idea of "objectivity"—independent from its respective methodological figure—to be rather dubious), others are inadequate compared to a qualitative understanding of experience and change (e.g. "reliability", a criterion pre-supposing the possibility of invariance of attributes between different observations). Although a shared "alternative" canon of qualitative criteria still not exists, it is obvious that most concepts of classical epistemology (so e.g. the idea of "one truth") are not sufficient any longer.

Nevertheless, towards the question if there is a (legitimate and limited) "number of truths" convincing responses are missing. This basic uncertainty tends to threaten the scientific idea of knowledge. And this uncertainty not only concerns epistemology or "unworldly" discussions in epistemological spheres, but also the daily pragmatics of research: the (inter) acting of researchers, the definition of the own research work within different cognitive and social matrices, the distribution of resources for research projects etc.

Such a view—including the epistemology as well as the pragmatics of research as a social action—is characteristic for the ideas and arguments Jo REICHERTZ presents in his contribution. Following contributions in this FQS Debate hopefully will comment, will point out different aspects, will develop some of his ideas more explicitly, will stress different positions.

[Franz BREUER](#)

Editor and co-moderator FQS Debate "Quality of Qualitative Research"

Citation

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