Issues in Learning About and Teaching Qualitative Research Methods and Methodology in the Social Sciences

Franz Breuer & Margrit Schreier

Abstract: For many qualitative researchers in the social sciences, learning about and teaching qualitative research methods and methodology raises a number of questions. This topic was the focus of a symposium held during the Second Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods in July 2006. In this contribution, some of the issues discussed during the symposium are taken up and extended, and some basic dimensions underlying these issues are summarized.

How qualitative research methods and methodology are taught is closely linked to the ways in which qualitative researchers in the social sciences conceptualize themselves and their discipline. In the following, we distinguish between a paradigmatic and a pragmatic view. From a pragmatic point of view, qualitative research methods are considered research strategies or techniques and can be taught in the sense of recipes with specific steps to be carried out. According to a paradigmatic point of view (strongly inspired by constructivism), qualitative research methods and methodology are conceptualized as a craft to be practiced together by a "master" and an "apprentice." Moreover, the teaching of qualitative research methods also depends heavily on the institutional standing of qualitative compared to quantitative research method.

Based on these considerations, five basic dimensions of learning about and teaching qualitative research methods are suggested: ways of teaching (ranging from the presentation of textbook knowledge to cognitive apprenticeship) and instructors' experience with these; institutional contexts, including their development and the teaching of qualitative research methods in other than university contexts; the "fit" between personality and method, including relevant personal skills and talents; and, as a special type of instructional context that increasingly has gained importance, distance learning and its implications for learning about and teaching qualitative research methods.

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1. Introduction

The starting point for this *FQS* debate on "Teaching and Learning Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences" was the Second Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods on this topic in July 2006. The feedback and the manifold questions that were raised in this context showed us that this poses an imperative problem for many social scientists who care about and work with qualitative methods. This experience inspired us to pursue the treatment of this problem and to open up a discussion from as many directions and positions as possible—in the framework of a continuing *debate* in *FQS*. Moreover, the organizers of the Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods have announced to further examine this question at subsequent meetings. [1]

Questions of how teaching and learning of qualitative methods in the social sciences take place—in different academic, institutional, curricular contexts or outside of these; what this looks like in different disciplines, universities, federal states, etc.; how we believe it should be carried out—cannot be discussed without reference to *what* it is that is to be taught and learned. In other words: Assumptions as to how qualitative methods in the social sciences see themselves are already implicit in the discussion, or else a pertinent explication is required (Section 2). Methods in the social sciences are by definition methods that are applied to their subject matter, i.e., the human being, and how this subject matter is conceptualized invariably affects subsequent notions concerning the learning about and the teaching of these methods. But these notions may vary depending on how qualitative researchers see themselves and their role in the research process. Consequently, ideas concerning the learning about and teaching of qualitative research methods must be discussed with reference to how qualitative methods are themselves conceptualized (Section 3). Finally, we have found in the (rather sparse) literature on the didactics of qualitative methods in the social sciences frequent references to the marginal position of qualitative researchers, at least in some social science disciplines (EAKIN & MYKHALOVSKIY, 2005; GROEBEN, 2006; HOOD, 2006). We see this, also against the background of our own experience as instructors, as an indication of the fact that the institutional significance of qualitative research has immediate consequences for qualitative methods instruction. These issues will also be discussed (Section 4). Based on these considerations, we have derived five dimensions or problem areas. These served as guidelines by which to structure the contributions at the above-mentioned symposium and during the discussion (Section 5). At the same time, some of these contributions form (in an edited fashion) the point of departure for the present debate (see Section 6 for a short summary). [2]

2. What Are the Key Issues for Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences?

The basic understanding of a qualitative model of how to generate knowledge in the social sciences in the minds of social scientists is not uniform. The producers of knowledge who affiliate with this style of research are configured heterogeneously in their epistemological convictions, their methodological decisions as well as in their preferences for specific methods. It can be assumed that putting on specific "knowledge-production goggles" by choosing a specific (thematically selective and focused) methodology entails a number of *a priori* epistemological decisions—regardless of whether the respective researcher is aware of this or not. A relatively undisputed feature of the scientific mode of knowledge is that its protagonists are advised to (self-) reflexively and (self-) critically question their approach and to make it explicit and to face and expose themselves to such criticism. A discussion of learning about and teaching qualitative methods thus requires the (previous or parallel) clarification and expli-cation of the respective qualitative-methodological model of knowledge production. [3]

In this respect, qualitative styles of research can be sorted along one dimension whose one pole is marked by a strongly holistic—somewhat paradigm-like—conception, and whose other pole is more marked by situationally pragmatic and opportunistic methodological practices. [4]

To illustrate the properties of the former paradigmatic pole:

- The concept of research in the social sciences and humanities necessarily defines certain object attributes (characteristics of a "concept of humankind") that are given, interesting, and are focused (in contrast to other attributes which are considered as uninteresting or unimportant). For protagonists of a qualitative approach it is of importance that the "'research objects' are in principle beings with a similar structure, i.e. bodily-socio-cultural-historically constituted/formed persons with (self-) reflexive abilities. In this framework, the "fit" between the research method and salient characteristics of the "research objects" becomes a prime criterion in the selection of a specific method and methodology.
- The way in which knowledge is generated implies a specific methodological conceptualization of research concerning the goals of the scientific endeavor. Some orientations aspire to an approximation of "objective reality", while others consider different constructions of the world (depending on perspective) as sufficiently interesting and important so as to reconstruct them, to compare them, to analyze their interactive developmental dynamics, and the like.
- The research model pertains to a "complete" cycle of knowledge which does not only comprise the testing of a theory/hypothesis (prototypically in the sense of efforts toward the possibility for falsification), but extends to the process of representing the research object(ive), the *generation* of

theories/hypotheses, the elaboration of theories, and the "theoretical saturation."

- The research model comprises a sophisticated concept of what constitutes knowledge generation and what constitutes data. It focuses on and reflects upon our comprehension of selected parts of the world, while paying attention to the fact that the observer, on the one hand, has certain epistemologically relevant (personal, among others) system characteristics and, on the other hand, is a (participating) member of that segment of the world that is under scrutiny. [5]

At this pole of our first dimension qualitative research is mainly understood as a research style, approach, or paradigm. The other pole is characterized by a *pragmatically* oriented concept of qualitative research. Here, qualitative research is conceptualized as an application of selected methods in order to answer specific research questions (i.e., local/situational problem solving strategies). Qualitative methods are thereby removed from the network of the above-mentioned epistemological and other constitutive assumptions. Against the background of such a pragmatically oriented understanding of qualitative research, research methods may be applied within in the framework of a "complete" theory-generating cycle of knowledge production; or alternatively, they may remain limited in their application to part of the cycle. Where qualitative methods are employed as mere "heuristics" that are supposed to serve to gain initial insights into the area of interest before "serious" forms of hypothesis testing are used, the opposite extreme of the above paradigmatic pole has been reached. In their role within this "context of discovery" of theoretical assumptions, qualitative methods have been accorded somewhat of a right to exist as well as some dignity by their "quantitative" critics—however, with the reservation that this is not science in the strict sense, following POPPER in assigning the *discovery* of theory to the realm of empirical psychology that supposedly had nothing to do with epistemology. Another example of the afore-mentioned use of qualitative methods in the sense of a situational problem-solving strategy is to be found in studies that start out—without a well conceptualized research design—by collecting qualitative data (for instance by conducting interviews), where the researcher considers data analysis only once data collection has been completed, and then—sometimes in despair—chooses whatever method happens to be available. [6]

Depending on whether one understands qualitative methods in this pragmatic or in the former paradigmatic sense, different demands and ideas will naturally ensue concerning how qualitative methods are to be learnt and taught. Individual researchers' conceptualizations of qualitative methods in the social sciences will often be located somewhere between these two extremes. [7]

3. Teaching and Learning as Mirrored by Qualitative Social Research

Conceptualizations of qualitative research in the social sciences (in the sense of the former pole) necessarily entail a particular model of humankind (see above): the human being as the subject or object of research is considered to be capable of (self-)reflection, of acting in and upon the world, and of communicating. It follows that for the conceptualization of learning processes those theories will be most appropriate which do not mask, but model this very ability to reflect upon oneself—as do, for instance, constructivist learning theories (overview by SCHROEDER, 2006, Chapter 3.2.3). Here, learning is understood as actively constructing knowledge, a process during which new information is integrated with the student's prior knowledge. Teaching, in turn, can then not be conceptualized as a process whereby knowledge is transferred piecemeal from teacher to student. Instead, teaching must be about ways to stimulate this process of integrating new information with previous knowledge. Depending on the knowledge and the motivation of the students, the ways in which this process arranges itself will differ between individuals. The "co-construction" of knowledge according to the model of "cognitive apprenticeship" (COLLINS, BROWN & NEWMAN, 1989) counts as an especially promising route towards successful learning in this constructivist sense. Here, the processes of teaching and learning are accompanied by a teacher-student-relationship whereby the teacher is engaged in a constant process of supervising and socializing the student into the practices to be taught, usually within a small group of researchers containing one or more members with prior experience, i.e. a concept of contextual, technical, and cooperative practice. This type of methods instruction is suitable to guide and orient the students' actions (for an example of this narrative and accompanying-cooperative style of teaching methods, cf. ROTH 2006). [8]

As qualitative research methods in the social sciences have sometimes been conceptualized as a "craft" (rather than a mere "strategy" or "technique"; e.g., DAUSIEN, 2007; EMERSON, 1987; HAMMERSLEY, 2004; KARP, 1999; see also above for the pragmatic conceptualization of qualitative research), the model of teaching and learning as a process of cognitive apprenticeship appears especially promising in the present context. If qualitative methods are nothing but "technique"—a number of procedural steps which are to be implemented in this and no other order, independent of the concrete object or the specific research question—then students can learn these procedures from textbooks or by means of observation. Learning a "craft", on the other hand (so the argument goes), ultimately requires students to cooperate in carrying out the relevant activities. This type of knowledge cannot be acquired from textbooks or in other ways that remove the learner from the concrete situation in which the research is carried out (HAMMERSLEY, 2004; ROTH, 2006; similarly also BABBIE, 2003 on the importance of mentoring in teaching qualitative methods). The above conceptualizations of qualitative research in the social sciences thus entail different assumptions concerning teaching and learning processes. The first pole of conceptualizing qualitative research in paradigmatic terms is linked with constructivist learning theories and the perception of qualitative research as a craft which one learns above all in the context of joint research activities (*cf*.

BREUER et al., 1998). The second pole of conceptualizing qualitative research in pragmatic terms, on the other hand, suggests that qualitative methods are understood as techniques and that the acquisition of knowledge about these techniques does not necessarily entail the participation of the students in the learning process. [9]

However, representatives of the paradigmatic understanding of qualitative social research have not only modeled it as a craft—a conceptualization of qualitative research as art or bricolage has also been widely prevalent (e.g., DENZIN & LINCOLN, 2000; HAMMERSLEY, 2004). At this point, the ability to teach and learn qualitative social research reaches its limits: the production of art requires talent, if not even "genius"—and one either has that, or one does not. If one is of the opinion that qualitative research constitutes an art, one lays oneself open to the suspicion of removing qualitative research methods from among those subject areas that are amenable to being taught and learnt. [10]

4. The Social Positioning of Qualitative Social Scientists in the Scientific Community

Social scientists who are currently active in conducting qualitative research frequently take the attitude or have had the experience that by doing so they position themselves outside of or above the mainstream of academic research (s. also EAKIN & MYKHALOWSKIY, 2005). This evaluation has not remained uncontested at the Second Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods: apparently, some disciplinary contexts exist (in Germany and of course in other countries) where the different (quantitative as well as qualitative) styles of conducting research and their protagonists are treated equitably and are equally integrated into the academic landscape—the present-day discipline of sociology as it is practiced in German-speaking countries would be a case in point. It seems to us, however, that this might well be a minority experience—presumably a desirable position to be in, perhaps attainable in the course of numerous disputes within a specific discipline. More often or even most of the time (?), qualitative researchers in the context of the Berlin Summer School described their situation as precarious or marginalized: receiving insufficient guidance, working in isolation and receiving little appreciation—yet carried forward by enthusiasm, ambitions of autonomous and innovative development, and the like. And the fact that the Second Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods experiences an enormous demand—even to the extent that registrations have to be stopped after a very short time (within a few days) because the capacities have already reached their limits—permits the conclusion that there exists a considerable need among students for further training, support, and supervision, especially when working on their diploma and master theses, dissertations, and that this need is not sufficiently met by the already existing academic institutions and their procedures of supervision. [11]

The "pioneering spirit", however, which surfaces during these meetings appears problematic to us to the extent it involves a closing of one's eyes before the original basic values and the argumentative strengths of the qualitative research

model. One should not forget that the basic epistemological position of this model of knowledge originally developed from a critically enlightening endeavor (in a somewhat Galilean fashion)—against the totalitarian claims to dogmatic truths prevalent at the time. [12]

Relating to this there is the problem of the coupling between a model of how knowledge is produced, on the one hand, and social power (dominance within the scientific community), on the other hand: the connection results from the socio-/societal-historical conditions, not in a logical or in a deterministic fashion. There is a danger that proponents of qualitative research in the social sciences lock themselves into a corral of a methodological anti-position against the "hostile" environment. From such a deadlock position, the arguments and the potential of a "quantitative" model of knowledge production are no longer heeded nor given serious consideration. In evening lecture during the Second Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods, Norbert GROEBEN put his finger on the spot and urged qualitative researchers to counter the marginalization issue head on (at least where the discipline of psychology in German-speaking countries is concerned) by showing as much expertise in using quantitative as they already do in applying qualitative research methods. This ambitious request, however, did not meet with the unanimous approval of the auditorium. Whether the visible reservations are based on rational argument and consideration or are owed to socio-psychological factors has not yet been resolved (at least not to our knowledge). [13]

The experience of marginalization also finds its expression in that conducting qualitative research in the social sciences is often characterized as an "anti"-movement. This is manifested in the descriptions and metaphors of such an "anti"-orientation in the literature on qualitative methods instruction in the social sciences: EAKIN and MYKHALOVSKIY, for example, write about "Teaching against the grain" (2005), and HOOD (2006) propagates "Teaching against the text". One could probe this thought of "anti" in terms of its origin and in terms of where it is headed (Against what? Where instead?). [14]

EAKIN and MYKHALOVSKIY (2005) transfer the experience of marginalization underlying the "against" to the context of the health sciences. There, the description applies to both the "cognitive culture" of the discipline and to its social marginality. They observed—in the context of a Canadian "National Workshop on Teaching Qualitative Research in the Health Sciences"—on the one hand, a growing interest in qualitative research methods. On the other hand, they find that this style of research does not fit with the knowledge structures, ways of thinking, and evaluation criteria of the scientific milieu in this disciplinary field (quantitative orientation, conventional research schemata, exaggerated ideas concerning the speed of knowledge production, divergent ideas of what constitutes effectiveness, "shallow" theories, and others). The description also applies to the situation in which qualitative researchers in different disciplines of the social sciences find themselves in times of the introduction of Bachelor and Masters degrees all over Germany. [15]

Furthermore, one encounters the tendency of hermeneutic-qualitative protagonists to read texts (or also phenomena, data, etc.) "against the grain", i.e., against their first impression in what almost amounts to a deconstructive manner (as in HOOD, 2006, there however with respect to textbooks of qualitative methods)—for instance to decipher their profoundly/cryptically intentional and/or historical layers (of meaning). [16]

In many ways, these contrasts are reminiscent of what has often been described as an opposition of "two cultures" in scholarship: the natural-scientific-and-engineering (science) and the social-and-cultural (humanities), where the social sciences occupy a middle or hybrid position. In this, the mindset connected to qualitative methods stands on the side of the social sciences, whereas the quantitatively marked approaches stand on the side of the natural sciences/engineering. Elsewhere (BREUER, 2003), this antagonism—regarding the opposition of qualitative and quantitative methods—has been subsumed under the image of the Chinese yin-yang philosophy. [17]

A number of pairs of opposites can be compiled which are connected by association to these antagonistic poles. These opposites concern, for instance, ideologies, mindsets, rationalities, attitudes towards life, values, and so on. [18]

Here are some examples:

Standard procedures, routines, canonification, modularization	Withdrawal from matter-of-factness, breaking up of routines, alienation
Logic, derivation	Creativity, emergence
Economy, effectiveness	"Nosing around," purposelessness
Answers, solutions	Questions, insecurities
Objective truth	Multiple constructions, subjective perspectives
Acceleration	Deceleration [19]

Again, the contrasting view of qualitative methods as techniques and procedures as opposed to an art/craft reappears and at the same time points to the consequences these two points of view have for conceptualizing teaching and learning processes. The question arises where one positions oneself, one's way of conducting research, and one's ideas about the teaching and learning of qualitative methods in the social sciences between these opposing cultures of orientation and action. [20]

5. Levels of Teaching and Learning About Qualitative Methods

In the following, we outline some such dimensions for classification that result from the previous considerations.

- Depending on how one conceptualizes qualitative research methods, different procedures will be suitable for instruction. These range from the presentation of textbook knowledge to jointly engaging in research in the sense of co-construction and cognitive apprenticeship. The first dimension to emerge thus concerns the question which didactic procedures are suitable for qualitative research method instruction.
- We already had pointed to the relevance of institutional contexts and the positioning of qualitative research within these contexts (ranging from equality to social marginalization). The role of these contexts for teaching and learning processes constitutes the second dimension to be examined.
- If one regards the (competent) application of qualitative research methods as a craft or even an art, it follows that learners will differ in their ability to acquire these research competences—some may be less able to do so than others. The question concerning the extent of a fit between personality and method affects the learning about and teaching of qualitative research methods constitutes our third dimension.
- If qualitative methods instruction requires other didactic procedures than does the teaching of technical knowledge (see the first dimension above), this raises the question whether by imparting knowledge about qualitative methods and qualitative research other competencies and skills are taught simultaneously and in the process, competencies that exceed purely methodological knowledge and that possibly in their turn reverberate back to the socio-scientific practice themselves—such as social sensitivity, social skills, or the like.
- With the increasing technological potential of computers and the Internet, digital forms of distance learning have also gained in importance. This raises the question whether and how these new forums influence qualitative methods instruction. [21]

5.1 How to teach and how to learn: didactics

Which forms of qualitative methods instruction are practiced and how effective are they, how are they evaluated by instructors and by students? [22]

The teaching of qualitative methods cannot do without an—implicit or explicit—theory of how knowledge about qualitative research is learnt (see Section 3 above), and the ways in which qualitative methods are in fact taught range from the use of textbooks to having the students participate in actual qualitative research, supervising and socializing them into qualitative research (co-construction). [23]

How have instructors and students experienced these different instructional styles? What does the choice of a specific style depend on? This might, for instance, include the number of students in a course, the type of course (lecture, lab course, etc.), the institutional requirements, how the protagonists themselves conceptualize learning processes, methods instruction, or the "essence" of qualitative research ("procedure" or "mindset"?), affiliation to a specific discipline, or maybe differences between the various qualitative methods and approaches. [24]

Another question that is raised in this context concerns the didactics of qualitative as opposed to quantitative research methods: does the teaching and learning of qualitative research methods require a different type of instruction than does the teaching and learning of quantitative research methods? In this context, the roles and the interpersonal relations between teachers and students seem relevant: qualitative research often involves greater personal proximity between the protagonists, greater involvement, and more reflection about such interpersonal aspects than is common in quantitative social science research. This arises from the social "proximity" that characterizes qualitative research: personal proximity between the subject and the object of research also involves greater density of personal contacts between the researcher and their collaborators and supervisors. The personal relationship between teachers and students is perhaps of great importance in the instructional context: the instructor may, for instance, become something of a "key person" who facilitates the acquisition of a particular style of doing research (e.g., DIERIS, 2007). [25]

5.2 The institutional contexts of teaching and learning

In how far do institutional contexts affect the ways in which qualitative methods are taught and learnt? Qualitative methods instruction occurs inside a variety of institutional and curricular frameworks, such as:

- at universities and universities of applied sciences,
- at "independent institutes" and in organizations for continuing education/further training which work on the basis of payments/royalties,
- in different disciplines—such as sociology, education, ethnology, health sciences, psychology, linguistics, etc., each according a specific status to qualitative as opposed to quantitative research methods,
- for different purposes, for example, in the course of the introductory or BA-studies as part of an obligatory, general education in methods (which is often unpopular with the students), in the context of a specialization (that is selected by the students themselves) during the advanced or MA part of their studies, or when conducting research for their diploma/MA thesis or dissertation,
- in different "schools" of qualitative methodology (e.g., in objective/structural hermeneutics, in-depth hermeneutics, grounded-theory methodology and many others). [26]

We assume that the teaching and learning of qualitative methods is arranged differently according to institutional prerequisites and frameworks, especially in interaction with didactic forms of instruction and aspects of "fit" between person and method. [27]

It also seems important to us to take into consideration future developments and the conditions affecting them: how will the "Bologna process" take effect in this respect (s. also above Section 4): how can qualitative methods be provided with a meaningful place and value in the curricula according to Bachelor and Masters patterns? What are the prospects of qualitative research in an academic landscape increasingly determined by the principles of productivity-oriented distribution of funds with an emphasis on obtaining external funding by submitting grant applications that already anticipate the results of the proposed research, or on publishing in peer-reviewed mainstream journals? In this context, the experience of researchers from other countries and university systems are of great interest. [28]

5.3 The relationship between personality and method

Is there such a thing as "fit" between personality and method? And is such a "fit" between the student and qualitative methodology beneficial to (successful) learning? [29]

When teaching qualitative methods or specific qualitative approaches, we ourselves have noticed that some students seem to find qualitative methods and qualitative research easy to learn, that a qualitative approach seems to "suit them"., that they come to identify with this way of thinking, have fun applying it and can be very creative in doing qualitative research. While others, even though they have kept on trying, do not really understand what qualitative research is all about, the qualitative way of doing research remains strange and external, the students feel helpless and lost, their *modus operandi* appears arbitrary and insensitive towards the research object. [30]

For us, this has raised the above question concerning a fit of personality and qualitative method which, if present, has a beneficial effect on the learning process. On the flip side, the question arises whether some personalities might be more or less unsuitable for conducting qualitative research—whether, in other words, there are limits to the extent to which the ability to do qualitative research can be taught and learnt. [31]

What might be prerequisites for engaging in qualitative research? The following are some of the ideas that occurred to us: social skills, being open and willing to reflect upon oneself and one's actions, ability to interpret (verbal) interactions, linguistic differentiation, tolerance of ambiguity, ability to deal with conflicts, interest in theories, creativity, (non-) conformity, patience, and persistence. Do different methods and approaches perhaps differ in their prerequisites—are different skills and abilities required when engaging in objective hermeneutics, in grounded theory, or in carrying out a content analysis? And is this "fit" between

personality and method more important when learning about qualitative than about other—such as quantitative—research methods? [32]

5.4 The role of qualitative competence for social science practice

Is the ability to conduct qualitative research linked or even transferred to the (vocational) practice of the social sciences? [33]

Is an education in qualitative methodology able to teach competencies and skills which extend beyond the knowledge of methods into social science practice—for instance in education, in institutions, or in organizations? [34]

This includes such skills and abilities as the above: sensitivity towards others in various respects and contexts, ability to interpret (verbal) interactions, tolerance of ambiguity; willingness to consider other persons as equally capable and authorized ("assumptions about the model of humankind"); openness; systemic thinking; ability to deal with opaque and complex situations whose results are still open; restraint concerning one's norms and values; willingness to reflect upon oneself, and so on. For the education of teachers, for example, there exist pertinent approaches and considerations (cf., e.g., SCHOLZ, 2006). [35]

Does a qualitative style of research only appeal to those who possess these skills at least in rudimentary form, or are such skills in fact taught and fostered in the course of conducting qualitative research? And does this happen during the process of conducting research, or do the instructors function as role models who possess these competences and who put these into use in research as in teaching? [36]

5.5 Digital forms of teaching and learning

How has qualitative methods instruction changed in the "digital age"? [37]

Communication, teaching, and learning have changed drastically with the increasing technological potential of the computer and software development, virtual courses, even virtual universities, worldwide networks, the development of new instruments, tools, and means of communication (information portals, e-learning, Internet workshops, mailing lists, electronic course platforms, etc.). [38]

This is an "open field" in which manifold developments have been initiated and are now taking place. On the one hand, students at universities or in disciplines where qualitative methods are not usually taught now have access to online supervision of their qualitative research. On the other hand, Internet-based support is necessarily a "support over distance", and this seems to be at odds with the above "proximity characteristic" of qualitative research. Is there a danger that knowledge about qualitative methods will be retrieved only piecemeal and out of context? Or is this a false impression; does the (at least potential) "simultaneity", independent of time and space, on the contrary allow for especially intensive forms of supervision? [39]

We point to a number of aspects that are important in discussions about the teaching and learning of qualitative methodology in today's situation and academic landscape. At the same time, this is not meant to exclude other dimensions and aspects that may also play a role in this discussion, but have not been raised here. [40]

6. First Contributions

The following contributions to the debate about "Learning about and teaching of qualitative methods in social science research" are based on the opening statements of podium participants during the Second Berlin Summer School for Qualitative Research Methods in July 2006. The contributions have been partially revised for the publication. [41]

Hubert KNOBLAUCH argues in his contribution that the question to what extent qualitative methods can be learned and taught is to be seen in the context of their institutional development and establishment. He explains that in sociology qualitative methods, after an initial phase of marginalization, have gained increasingly in reputation since the 1990s. He calls this a situation of "insular institutionalization". This reputation, however, he does not view positively, because, from his point of view, it is accompanied by an ambiguous development. On the one hand, this is marked by an increasing canonization and, on the other hand, by a formation of niches and lack of clarity concerning (the teaching of) qualitative methods. In the course of this process of canonization, the idea of qualitative methods as "techniques" that can be taught in a schematic, textbook-like manner has become predominant. In fact qualitative methods even have to be taught in a textbook-like manner in order to meet the demand that has arisen in the context of canonization. The very recognition and institutionalization of qualitative methods thus holds, according to KNOBLAUCH, the danger of increasingly schematic forms of teaching—forms that cannot do justice to the character of qualitative methodology as a craft and the resulting necessity of conceptualizing instructional processes as a joint practice of teacher and student. KNOBLAUCH highlights the danger that in the course of this development we might ultimately lose sight of the roots of qualitative methods that lie in the interpretative paradigm. Against this background, he argues in favor of a reflexive-pragmatic conception of qualitative methods that can also function as a "template" for teaching. [42]

Barbara DIERIS describes her experiences as a student of qualitative research methods in the tradition of grounded-theory research. She, too, considers the opposition of qualitative procedures as techniques which can be taught in a textbook-like fashion versus qualitative methods as a cooperative practice to be of prime importance, and as previously Hubert KNOBLAUCH, she also—and very decidedly so—perceives qualitative social research not as a technique, but more as an attitude which she has acquired in the course of the learning process. Her experiences are not entirely free of problems: she points out that the beginning of her learning process was characterized by insecurity. But she also refers to some key experiences that illustrate the above relevance of a fit between personality

and method as well as the significance of the relationship between teacher and student. [43]

The institutional conditions surrounding qualitative methods instruction in the social sciences (in a program on social work) at a university for applied research are at the center of the contribution by Rudolf SCHMITT. Tensions are described between—on the one hand—organizational and curricular framework conditions which leave little time at the disposal of both teachers and students and—on the other hand—the requirements of teaching qualitative methods as a cooperative practice which need time and space on the side of both the students and the instructors. By investing much time and effort in his own teaching, the author has succeeded in making qualitative research an integral component of the major "social work". From his point of view, learning about qualitative research methods facilitates the development of skills that go beyond methodological-technical abilities and that are relevant also in the everyday field contexts of social workers. [44]

Bettina DAUSIEN pursues the question of which key competencies are connected with the learning/acquirement of qualitative methods and how they transfer to extra-scientific fields of action/practice. Thereby, she focuses on aspects of task-related "reflexivity" and "trust" in one's own ability to interpret and act, which can contribute to a "professionalism" extending beyond the research context. She concentrates on the instructional format of the cooperative practice of a "research workshop". [45]

In addition to these contributions to the symposium on the learning about and teaching of qualitative research methods, we also include here an individual contribution featuring a concrete example of qualitative methods instruction in the social sciences. Dirk KOOB shows how the teaching of qualitative methods can employ humor, using an episode from the work of the German satirist LORIOT in order to illustrate the approach of symbolic interactionism. [46]

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Authors

Prof. Dr. Franz BREUER

Contact:

Prof. Dr. Franz Breuer

Universität Münster
Psychologisches Institut III
Fliednerstr. 21
D-48149 Münster, Germany

Tel.: +49 / 251 / 833 4160

E-mail: breuerf@uni-muenster.de
URL: http://wwwpsy.uni-muenster.de/inst3/AEBreuer/startseite.htm

Prof. Dr. Margrit SCHREIER

Contact:

Prof. Dr. Margrit Schreier

Jacobs University Bremen
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Campus Ring 1
D-28759 Bremen, Germany

Tel.: +49 / 421 / 200 3406

E-mail: m.schreier@iu-bremen.de
URL: http://www.jacobs-university.de/directory/mschreier/index.php

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