

Workshop Program Point Sud 2019

Qualitative Approaches to Teaching Research and Development in International Discourse: Disconcertment and Convergence

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Convenors

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Abstract

Internationally and in particular in African countries, research on teaching is increasingly based on different approaches of qualitative research. Qualitative methods seem to be particularly suitable to examine globally challenging didactic issues such as addressing the individual within heterogeneous classes. With different emphases these issues concern both educational quality development in postcolonial upheaval and problems of differential participation in education in developed countries. However, qualitative research on teaching faces epistemological, methodological and practical challenges that increase when research is focusing different cultural contexts. These questions are mostly discussed within Europe, North America and economically highly developed Asian countries only. Though the importance of reflexive examinations of researchers' cultural and academic background and preconceptions is emphasized, however, the methodological discussion is mostly based on unquestioned self-evidences of European or Anglo-American research traditions. The possible reproduction of unequal power relations in scientific discourse and possibilities of questioning hidden assumptions through mutual disconcertment are thus barely taken into account.

The international conference in Maputo addresses this challenge and gathers researchers from six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia) and from two societal quite different countries of the industrial North (Japan, Germany). Here, a variety of workshops will open the floor for mutual presentations, examinations and discussions of research methods. Scientists from the contributing countries will present ethnographic, videographic-reconstructive approaches as well as methods of lesson studies, which are all increasingly applied in African research on school and teaching. While reconstructive methods detect implicit norms, patterns, orders and orientations of teaching and reconstruct practices of addressing and emergence of learners as particular individuals in particular communities, the methodology of lesson study highlights the action-oriented, further development of teaching and learning.

The conferences' aim is to reveal implicit concepts of particular approaches, to discuss cultural and scientific backgrounds affecting research on school, teaching and learning, as well as to focus on historically grown power asymmetries which still impact the scientific discourse. These challenges are of fundamental importance for all qualitative approaches, but are additionally accentuated when studies are driven in different cultural contexts.

Following aspects will be issued:

(1) Challenges of approaching the research field: In particular the tension between the need for common cultural reference-frames (e.g. concerning teaching or research) between the researcher and the research field on the one hand and the necessity of facilitating some disconcertment of researchers' culturally contextualized perceptions and expectations on the other hand leads to questions of methodology and research ethics.

(2) Generalising qualitative findings: Qualitative research is always contextualised by situation, case, culture and research interest. Hence, possible limiting and enabling impacts of cultural and theoretical preconceptions are to be considered.

(3) Normativity: The field of tension between descriptive and developmental research interests finally suggests questioning the both limiting and enabling role of explicit and implicit normative propositions in research on teaching and learning.

Beyond the (online)-publication of the conference results, an international online archive for qualitative teaching research will be initiated to facilitate regular exchange.