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# Generalization in Qualitative Psychology

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### **Development and future of the Center for Qualitative Psychology**

Mechthild Kiegelmann

In this brief description of the past and future of the Center for Qualitative Psychology I will cover the following points. First, I remind us of our past and how the center changed from an idea into the actual founding of the center. Then I will talk about the workshops that we have held so far and also mention our publications. I will continue with describing the original purpose of the center and the mission statement. This is followed by some remarks about why qualitative psychology is the purpose of our organization but also why we think this qualitative psychology is still necessary to be developed further. I continue with talking about other networks that are related to ours and finally talk about tasks for the future, i.e. a discussion about our common interest and the purpose of the center and also a discussion about the organizational structure. In the end I will close with a few remarks on funding.

#### About the history of the Center for Qualitative Psychology

In 1999, when I arrived in Tübingen and started my job in educational psychology at the University of Tübingen, I had the organizational background and support to realize a plan for creating a Center for Qualitative Psychology. This plan I brought basically with me when I came back from the United States to do more research and study in Germany. So, while I still lived in Berlin, the idea of founding a center for qualitative psychology became more realistic and I was able to meet with people who had similar ideas in terms of supporting qualitative research in Germany and in an international network. I met with Jarg Bergold who has been very active in the "Neue Gesellschaft für Psychologie" that is the organization for psychology in which there is a subgroup of researchers who are explicitly interested in qualitative research. Jarg Bergold and I met in Berlin and talked about how to organize those researchers who are psychologists or are working in the area of psychology and are interested in qualitative

methods. In the first years of the existence of the Center for Qualitative Psychology, Jarg Bergold always came to the meeting of the workshop for qualitative psychology and he also brought his colleagues whom he has worked with for a long time. After a break and extensive work in Argentina, he again is an active member of our group.

I also met with Katja Mruck in 1998, and we both had ideas of creating institutions for qualitative research, and Katja Mruck was able to get DFG-funding from the library sciences for her work on the online journal FQS or Forum: Qualitative Social Research (see at URL <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>) which by now has grown into an institutionalized and well established high-ranking journal for qualitative research in the field of social sciences. She and I are both engaged in supporting qualitative research while I am more engaged in organizing face-to-face meetings and doing workshops with people interested in doing qualitative research and especially in facilitating a creation of new projects and joint research endeavors. Katja Mruck is very good in managing online resources and organizing a larger group of people, and in addition she and Günter Mey established the "Berliner Methodentreff" that is a support structure for doctoral students using qualitative methods in the wide field of social research. In contrast, in our Center for Qualitative Psychology we focus more narrowly on psychology only. Back in 1999 when we started working on the Center for Qualitative Psychology I also had a consultation with Renee Fall who has been for many years an administrator and professional fund raiser at various institutions in the US. Renee helped with figuring out the administrative details of starting the center. In addition, I also had some consultations with Werner Fiedler and also talked to Uwe- Dieter Steppuhn who both work at the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung. There is a high interest from the foundation to support qualitative social research. Mr. Fiedler and Mr. Steppuhn were able help me by applying for a grant from the Hans-Böckler-Foundation that I used as start-up money for initializing the Center for Qualitative Psychology. There is also the ZBBS, Zentrum für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung (<http://www.uni-magdeburg.de/iew/zbbs/>) in Magdeburg which again is a center for qualitative research but in the area of counseling a more educationally focused research. In 1999 I attended the initial meeting of the center and their graduates' school which at the same time started when we with our center started. Finally, I was able to attend the conference of the "Neue Gesellschaft für Psychologie" (see: <http://www.ngfp.de/>) in Berlin in 1999, there I could advertise the idea of founding a center for qualitative psychology

and also meet with other researchers who have worked in this area for a while.

So, when I got the job at the University of Tübingen, I was lucky to be able to work with Günter L. Huber who has supported the idea of the center from the very beginning and who has contributed countless hours of work for this project. He and I worked on the details of the initial meeting for the center for qualitative psychology. We found a conference house near the University of Tübingen for the first meeting. There is a general structure for the schedule of each workshop, which we initiated at the first workshop. It still remains the basic backbone of each meeting. We always start on a Friday evening with an informal opening and introduction round and space for announcing new projects and research interests and also areas where people are writing grants. Friday evening leaves time for informal networking among the researchers and participants. We then have the next day, the Saturday of the weekend workshop. Saturdays provide the space for a full day of intensive work on qualitative research in psychology. After opening presentations, papers and work-in-progress-reports are presented and thoroughly discussed in thematic workgroups. Finally, on Sundays, i.e. the final day of each meeting, we have the business meeting of the Center, and also a session where we are using the time to start up new joint research projects and also think about how to present qualitatively oriented research in other organizations like the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie or the American Psychological Association or the EARLI (European Association of Research and Learning). The mixture of intensive work on academic research and the presentation of academic papers on the one hand and on the other hand time for networking, cooperation and the start up of new projects, remains the main structure for each meeting. We offer childcare every time in order to make possible that young researchers with small children are able to attend as well.

In the beginning, in the initiation phase of the project we were able to hire Bea Dörr as project manager who was financed by the Hans-Böckler-Foundation who helped with organizing the first workshop and initiating the structure for the center. Also, the Ingeborg Huber Verlag has been supportive from the very beginning of the center by publishing the proceedings of each workshop. Since Leo Gürtler joined the educational psychology department at the University of Tübingen, he has been working for the success of the Center for Qualitative Psychology.

Table 1: *List of workshops of the Center for Qualitative Psychology, 2000-2007*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Workshop Title</b>	<b>Meeting Place</b>
2000	Qualitative Research in Psychology	Blaubeuren, Germany
2001	The Role of the Researcher in Qualitative Psychology	Blaubeuren, Germany
2002	Research Questions and Matching Methods of Analysis	Perlora, Spain
2003	Areas of Qualitative Psychology — Special Focus on Design	Blaubeuren, Germany
2004	Mixed Methodology in Psychological Research	Freudenstadt, Germany
2005	Generalization in Qualitative Psychology	Klagenfurt, Austria
2006	Qualitative Psychology in the Changing Academic Context	Riga, Latvia
2007	Qualitative Approaches in the Field of Psychology	Berlin, Germany

As shown in table 1 we met in 2000 in Blaubeuren near Tübingen with the workshop about "Qualitative research in psychology." Then, in 2001, the conference title was "The role of the researcher in qualitative psychology." After that, in 2002, we met in Perlora in Spain with a workshop on "Research questions and matching methods of analysis." In 2003 the workshop again was held in Germany, in Blaubeuren, and we worked about "Areas of qualitative psychology – special focus on design ." 2004 the title was "Mixed methodology in psychological research" which we discussed in a conference hotel in Freudenstadt, Germany. Then, in the year 2005, the topic was "Generalization in qualitative psychology" which we worked on in Klagenfurt, Austria. In 2006 we met in Riga, Latvia and worked on "Qualitative psychology in the changing academic context." Finally, the meeting for the year 2007 is planned again in Germany at a conference hotel near Berlin and the topic there will be "Qualitative approaches in the field of psychology." There we will continue our re-

structuring process of the organization of the Center for Qualitative Psychology, i.e. we plan to register the center as a non-profit organization.

#### Purposes of the Center for Qualitative Psychology

When we started the Center for Qualitative Psychology we began with formulating a mission statement. If you look at our original mission statement (see Table 2) you will see that there are three main arguments for the purpose of the Center for Qualitative Psychology.

Table 2: *Original Mission Statement of the Center for Qualitative Psychology*

The *Center for Qualitative Psychology* was founded in 1999 to further develop and enhance qualitative research methods in the psychological field. It is especially committed to supporting qualitative methods for socially committed research, built on the German tradition of qualitative psychology starting since the 1950ies, such as the use of observation, introspection, and interviews.

The center provides qualitatively working psychologists the opportunity for networking, for enhancing their expertise in annual meetings, and for engagement in international co-operation. The center aims to uphold the German tradition of qualitative psychology as well as to engage in an active scholarly exchange with the international community of researchers in psychology.

The center was founded in October 1999 in the department of educational psychology at the University of Tübingen and promotes qualitative research methods in the field of psychology.

The original mission statement included: 1) the purpose is to develop and enhance qualitative methods specifically in the discipline of psychology. This means in contrast to other organizations that provide a network and support for people who are using qualitative methods in social sciences our center focuses is explicitly on the discipline of psychology. Therefore it is a unique subgroup of the movement of qualitatively working social scientists. 2) The second aspect of the mission statement is

about especially supporting socially committed research. Coming from a tradition of feminist and action research and other qualitative approaches that do not claim objectivity but rather work from a position of openly acknowledging the purposes of research, we pursue a tradition of research that explicitly has the value of supporting social movements. 3) The third point in the original mission statement is about an international community. That means, we are an organization that was started from a small group of people living in Germany. But our idea from the beginning was to focus on building up an international community. Therefore, our language of the conference always has been English. Most of the people who are participating in the Center for Qualitative Psychology are not native speakers of English. Therefore, many discussions are being conducted by using English as a second language. This form of communication sometimes provides difficulties in the attempt of expressing one's own arguments. Our experience, however, is that everyone is very committed to careful listening – as I would say is an expertise of good qualitative researchers. The workshops have been a successful practice of overcoming the difficulties of language. Often researchers who are attending the workshops of the Center for Qualitative Psychology have to explain their ideas in English as a second language and have to reframe key-concepts within unfamiliar words and thus reflect on terms they usually are able to use without much thought about it. This process of rethinking even those arguments and those concepts that we take for granted has proven to be a fruitful aspect of the discussions.

#### Why Qualitative Psychology?

So, today I ask in the context of the network that has evolved since we started the Center in 1999: Why do we have the Center for Qualitative Psychology? The main idea is to provide the opportunity for networking for all. On the one hand that means to include the whole range of psychology, i.e. all sub-disciplines within psychology are included in the networking: such as developmental psychology, social psychology, organizational psychology, educational psychology, clinical psychology, forensic psychology, and all the other sub-disciplines. On the other hand we also want to include the whole range of approaches in qualitative research methodologies, i.e. we are interested in networking with those researchers who use approaches such as biographical research, mixed methods, ethnography, hermeneutics, content analysis, the voice-approach, dis-

course analysis, or grounded theory. We strongly believe that the communalities of researchers using qualitative approaches are worth to build an organization like ours. Even though we acknowledge that there are differences in philosophies and theoretical frameworks that are the background in the variety of approaches, we still believe it is worthwhile to concentrate on the communalities of those psychologists that are using qualitative research. This means both aspects a) including the whole range of psychology and also b) including every approach that is considered qualitative in psychology means that we are not focusing on one specific approach or on one "school" of qualitative psychology. Rather we are providing a network for the whole range of people. We expect that everyone reflects on her or his theoretical standing and thus contributes from this position to our common discussions. In 2002, our meeting in Perlor, Spain was titled "Research Questions and Matching Methods of Analysis" (see Kiegelmann & Gürtler, 2003). There, we stated and justified our postulate that a given research question is the focus that determines which research approach and research method is to be used. Thus, we believe the main reason for choosing a method in a research project should not be a tradition where one comes from nor the experience that one approach is known the best. Therefore, psychologists using qualitative methods often also use quantitative methods. By the way, most of us are trained mainly in the quantitative tradition and are able to make worthwhile use of this knowledge. But often in the research and professional biography of psychologists, several approaches both qualitative and quantitative have been applied. So it is not just a range of approaches represented by a variety of participants in the workshops and the meetings of the people who attend the Center for Qualitative Psychology, but also there is a variety of approaches within one single psychologist.

Who cares, what is there to do?

Psychologists and researchers in the area of psychology are invited to participate in the network that we have created. The idea is to overcome isolation that many of us experience at their home institutions. Also, we are interested in international cooperation. Furthermore, we pursue the goal of overcoming a quantitative-qualitative divide and rather focus on developing methods that are able to support psychological research of high quality. The network helps to give researchers peer support. It is the

purpose of supporting each other regardless of theoretical tradition that shapes the tone of communication at our meetings. A very important aspect of the atmosphere of the network in the Center for Qualitative Psychology is that everyone is treated with respect and support, whether or not this person has had years of professional research experiences and whether or not this person even has earned a doctorate yet. The common interest is in supporting qualitative approaches in psychology and not in reestablishing hierarchical systems.

An important aspect of the work in the Center for Qualitative Psychology is not only the yearly meetings and face-to-face contact we engage in, but also the initiation of joint research projects. Often two or three participants meet at a workshop and use the time to come up with ideas or to create some new projects and together apply for funding to realize this idea. There have been several occasions where participants of the Center for Qualitative Psychology have presented in symposia of major national and international workshops and congresses for psychology, e.g. the convention of the American Psychological Association or the meeting of EARLI, i.e. European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction or at the conventions of the German Psychological Association.

### Why do we pursue Qualitative Psychology?

There have been several central questions that came up in discussions over the years of our meetings. From my perspective and my own work, the following key issues in qualitative psychology have been central, i.e. the importance of research relationships and work on research ethics, as well as research questions that guide research methods. Furthermore, we worked on the documentation of gaining knowledge as one version of fulfilling quality standards in research. Theory building is another important question. As I have recently formulated elsewhere (Kiegelmann, 2005). I divide theory building into two aspects and two separate entities that are relevant in an empirical research project. 1) On the one hand theory building means to evaluate "the state of the art" of psychological research about the given research topic area. Here, the typical reasons for justifying a research project are being elaborated, e.g. there is a gap in the literature about the phenomenon of interest or in the current state of the art. Another reason for a new research project can be the suggestion of a new perspective on a problem. 2) On the other hand, theory building in empirical psychological research means reframing a general approach of

psychology. The general theoretical framework that is used in psychological research is something that is worked on by empirical studies. Each research project in psychology that is based on empirical data also has the potential to elaborate and extend or rework the big theoretical approaches within psychology. Hereby, I mean Piaget's perspective on psychological development or psychoanalytic thinking in the tradition of Freud or behaviorist approaches or Gilligan's relational psychology. That means, an empirical research project not only provides the opportunity to answer questions about a specific aspect of phenomenon that is a topic in psychology. But also, each empirical study has the possibility of contributing to the main perspectives and frameworks that guide our psychological thinking.

When we talk about theory building we state that analyzing empirical data is just one of many steps in a research design. That means, in the Center for Qualitative Psychology we talk about theory building and research projects that include a whole design process of empirical research. We suggest that there is a possibility that qualitative approaches provide to the field of psychology by expanding the range of research questions that are able to be taken on in psychological projects. A wide range of specific research questions in qualitative psychology are also reflected in contributions to our workshops that we have held during the last couple of years. Each year, we documented the presentations and discussions in conference proceedings (Kiegelmann, 2001 & 2002; Kiegelmann & Gürtler, 2003; Gürtler, Kiegelmann, & Huber, 2005, Mayring, Huber, Gürtler, & Kiegelmann, in press; Maslo & Kiegelmann, in preparation).

What is special about qualitative psychological research?

If I summarize some key ideas we have discussed during the last years, several points will come to mind. A central point is that the social context of the psychological phenomenon is always included in our research projects, i.e. that qualitative psychologists reflect on the wider social context in which the research takes place, including historical and current conditions. We attend to structural organizational frameworks that provide the background and have the potential to either support or also to hinder the success of research endeavors. We always see research relationships as a part of the research process and openly acknowledge the dynamics that are happening within the human contact of conducting empirical research. We prefer to actively address researchers' interests

over denial and claims for objectivity. Also, we strive to understand participants' perspectives in psychological research.

When I think about specific qualitative research questions that seem to be a contribution to the scientific field of psychology, three areas of research questions come to mind.

- 1) One is research about psychological processes of all kinds.
- 2) The other is studies in which the subjective perspectives of participants are at the focus.
- 3) Finally, qualitative approaches in psychology provide the opportunity for contextualized research questions. That means, in addition to psychological research that focuses on exactly and narrowly defined variables, qualitative approaches are able to explore more complex and socially embedded analyses of psychological phenomena.

In summary I argue that there are two key features that are important for our work at the Center for Qualitative Psychology. On the one hand, there is a focus on qualitative approaches in empirical research, and on the other hand a focus on genuine psychological research questions. In our mission statement we talk about inclusion of researchers from all kinds of disciplines with the purpose of providing a network for those researchers who are interested in psychological research. That means, it is a network that provides the opportunity of support for a whole range of researchers but still focuses on psychological questions and on qualitative methodology.

## Epilogue

There was a meeting of the Center for Qualitative Psychology in the year of 2006 in Riga/Latvia. The topic of this meeting was "Qualitative Psychology in the changing academic context." Here, we focused on discussing the contributions of qualitatively oriented psychologists in Europe and the changes that are being pursued currently in the European academic world following the Bologna process. Furthermore, for the year of 2007 another meeting of the center is planned. It will take place in Berlin/Germany and will focus on talking about the common interest that we members or participants of the Center for Qualitative Psychology have. At that meeting we will also establish a new organizational structure for the

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Center for Qualitative Psychology by formally registering as a non-profit organization.

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**Should we generalize? Anyway, we do it all the time in everyday life**

Leo Gürtler and Günter L. Huber

Before we outline various approaches to generalization in the social and natural sciences, it seems promising to have a look at the habits of daily life, because generalization plays an important part in the life of ordinary people, i.e. non-scientists.

In his personal construct theory, Kelly (1955) compares the daily life and activities of laymen with the strategies of scientific work and the ways of thinking and reasoning of scientists. He comes to the conclusion that on closer inspection there are less differences between scientists' and non-scientists' thoughts than usually expected. He introduced the metaphor "man the scientist," which represents the idea that everyday thinking and scientific thinking are structurally equivalent, although the world views of ordinary people mostly do not meet the criteria for the evaluation of scientific publications and theories. Groeben and Scheele (1977) and Groeben (1986) built their construct of "subjective theories" on this epistemological basis.

Following from this structural equivalence, we should find processes and problems of generalization both in everyday and scientific thinking. Social life demonstrates many good examples: On our daily way to our job, school, shopping center, etc. we noticed several times an interesting person – and now we assume that this person comes this way regularly. We overhear people having a gossip about a person who is suspected of having lied or stolen something in the past; this will arouse our suspicion or at least reservations against this person – regardless whether the person really has stolen or lied at all. If we like somebody very much, we expect that we will like her or him still many years later – although we may be no longer in contact with this person at that time and do not know about his or her personal development. Numerous examples of this kind can be found, however, we also encounter many exceptions, e.g., today we do not meet the person on our way, a person appealing to us in former times now behaves nasty, etc. Most interestingly these contradictory experiences

often do not lead to doubts about our hypotheses in everyday life. Far more, sometimes they contribute to the consolidation of this very world views.

Thus, in our daily activities, the question is not whether human beings generalize or not, because they do it all the time, otherwise our life would be very complicated. On the other hand, our preference to simplify the complexity of everyday life has its costs: Our ubiquitous tendency to generalize our experiences leads to a phenomenon called the *fundamental attribution error*, also known as *correspondence bias* or *overattribution effect* (Jones & Harris, 1967). This bias in our judgements is grounded in the fact that people tend to overestimate the influence of (an assumed) stability of personality as the cause of other people's actions. At the same time, people tend to overestimate the impact of external influences when judging their own behavior. Shortly, we ourselves feel like victims of situational conditions and restrictions ("I had no choice to act otherwise, because... the train was late / traffic was heavy / X suggested this alternative"), while other people are seen as responsible for their actions ("S/he is like that... and that is the cause for ..."). This fundamental attribution error plays an important role in various settings like social psychology, psychotherapy, education, etc.

As an interesting example for educators, achievement motivation (McClelland et al., 1953) can be understood as a form of generalized expectation: Learners orient themselves habitually towards success or failure. This personal and quite stable orientation shows substantial effects on their actual achievements. Numerous examples from personality and differential psychology can be found (e.g. certainty/uncertainty orientation; Huber & Roth, 1999), which all demonstrate that generalization is a topic of great importance even beyond the field of methodology.

So it seems that especially in everyday life it is quite hard to avoid any generalization. Instead, we practice it quite often and habitually. And of course there is some sense behind that: By generalizing, we can spare effort and energy and use instead routines to master complex (social, physical) situations. We do not want to start a discussion on the benefits of "everyday" generalization which mostly helps us to reduce the necessary awareness and attention while performing habits, routines, and related tasks. In line with discussions about (neuro-)cognitive resources, information theory, and working memory along with chunking, this type of managing our resources can be linked to cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) and therefore to the magical number seven (Miller, 1956) that provides knowledge about the tolerance boundaries ( $7 \pm 2$  chunks) of human's capacity to process any information. However, in face of new or

changed situations, our expectations based on previous trials to generalize often fail – as can be seen by misleading actions as a consequence of the fundamental attribution error. Additionally, people also tend to be unaware and not very mindful by relying too much on their routines.

To formulate a working hypothesis, generalization plays a very similar role in the social and natural sciences as in everyday life and among naive scientists. Its main goal is to enable us to come to a proper decision by using only a small amount of energy (that is the processes of data collection, analysis, interpretation, ...). This is especially true in case of uncertainty or incomplete information.

However, this quite broad and unspecified assumption derived from everyday life does not allow us to formulate how generalization can be realized in a scientific manner. For that purpose, we want to compare in a very short summary the most influential approaches to generalization.

### Common scientific approaches to generalization

Well-known approaches were developed within the realm of quantitative methodology:

- Mathematical induction;
- David Hume's refutation of inductive reasoning outside the area of mathematics (see Stegmüller, 1975, for a short, but thorough discussion of that topic);
- Orthodox statistics, which is based on assumptions about the distribution of data in various samples.

### Mathematical induction

Mathematical induction works quite simple. If something is true for  $n$  cases and if we can show that it is also true for  $n+1$  cases, then we can assume that it is generally true. Of course, this strategy works only in the abstract, formalized field of theory, above all in mathematics. As soon as we try to transfer it to the real world, particularly to the framework of the social sciences, we may not expect any event to appear under given conditions with a probability of  $p = 1$ . Death may be the only exception, but even the exact state and time, at which an organism can be declared dead is not as certain as it seems to be – as recent interdisciplinary discussions in the fields of medicine, ethics, and politics show. The physicist

Werner K. Heisenberg (1901-1976) showed the ultimate uncertainty principle for the physical world. The world can be seen either as vibration or as combustion – but it is not possible to see both perspectives at the same time. Absolute generalization by induction is therefore impossible in the real world. However, statistics is a strategy of data analysis by which we can at least become aware in terms of coefficients, indices, etc. how close we came to the ideal goal of a probability  $p=1$  for our conclusions.

To conclude, mathematical induction has nothing to do with induction based on reasoning and which produces new knowledge (Jaynes, 2003, p.276). Jaynes (ibid.) calls mathematical induction a "rigorous deductive process."

Hume and the refutation of inductive reasoning

From the position of philosophy of science, Stegmüller (1975) investigated Hume's argument that inductive reasoning ("gehaltserweiternde Schlüsse") is impossible. By referring to the various arguments quoted by Hume ("Gibt es wahrheitskonservierende Erweiterungsschlüsse?", p.5), Popper and his deductive approach ("Bewährungstheorie", corroboration theory), and Carnap's inductive reasoning ("induktives Schlussfolgern"), he concluded that the original formulations of the problem of induction (Stegmüller, 1975, p.58f.) can be summarized by the following two questions

1. What are the rules of inductive reasoning?
2. How can these rules be justified?

However, they should be replaced by questions referring to two problem families. These are

1. Theoretical problems to make a decision related to deterministic hypotheses ("Gesetzhypothesen") and
2. practical problems that are related to standards of human actions and their application.

Both problem families give rise to further questions. Theoretical problems lead to these questions:

- What is the precise definition of the deductive term of corroboration ("Bestätigungsbegriff")? and
- How to justify properly the appropriateness of this term?

Practical problems demand answers to the following questions:

- What standards are appropriate for rational decision-making under conditions of risk? and
- How to justify the appropriateness of these standards?

In line with these statements, Stegmüller (ibid.) relates Popper's theory of science to the domain of theoretical problems, while he sees Carnap's theory dedicated to standards of practical decision-making. A further problem area resulting from considerations related to the induction problem is the problem of decision-making in case of uncertainty or incomplete information. This fascinating topic will be explored in more detail below in the section on the Bayesian approach.

In sum, Stegmüller separates theoretical considerations from practical concerns. However, he applies quite similar questions to both topics. These are the demand for precise definitions and their legitimate reasons. For our topic of generalization it is important to remember that generalization can be explored from a theoretical (definitions, i.e. precision in theory) as well as from a practical (decision-making as a prerequisite to action) point of view. Another interesting topic appears in this discussion: Reasoning, a process that highly depends on available information about the subject under question.

#### Orthodox statistics

Orthodox statistics still represents the "mainstream" of methodological approaches within psychology and also the social sciences at large. It is based on various assumptions about the distribution of data in (infinite) populations in relation to samples. The most influential distribution is certainly the normal Gaussian distribution that many others (e.g.  $\chi^2$ , Student's t, F, ...) approach with infinite samples and infinite degrees of freedom – the law of great numbers (central limit theorem). Thus, induction aims at making inferences by concluding from empirical samples to unknown populations. The position of orthodox statistics is compiled by Fisher (1935 / 1966, p.7) who stated that

"Inductive inference is the only process known to us by which essentially new knowledge comes into the world."

The term "process" in Fisher's statement refers to the rejection of the null hypothesis  $H_0$ . This proposition stands in contrast to abductive reasoning, for which the same was stated in qualitative social research. Abduction is regarded as a way to come to new insights and to produce new knowledge without any number crunching. It respects the heuristical, creative, and

unconventional quality and potential of the "abductive flash" human minds are capable of. Abduction is defined by Peirce as an "act of insight," something that "comes to us like a flash" (CP 5.181).

However, if statistics is practiced like described above (e.g., by making use of distributions of data), it offers only a limited understanding of single cases and unique processes, because sampling distributions are by definition not focused on single cases. One principle of statistics is to reduce the amount of data by calculating means, sums of squares, sums of square-cross-products, etc. All these indices contain the individual case, but their predictions are always biased to some extent.

Additionally, many teaching books on statistics or statistical theory (e.g., Bortz, 1993; Hays, 1973) are also quite inaccurate in describing and distinguishing Fisher's theory of significance testing and inductive inference from the Neyman-Pearson approach of hypothesis testing and inductive behavior based on alpha and beta errors while performing many empirical studies and replications. A good discussion of the great differences between both approaches is given by Jaynes (2003) and Hubbard (2004). Another problem arises, because the assumption of a Gaussian curve is seldom tested and in many cases not very accurate to describe the actual distribution of empirical data. Many statistical analytical procedures do not fit the requirements that are necessary to apply them properly. At last, in most cases they do not contribute to a deeper understanding of perspectives, world views, and underlying structures that need to be reconstructed instead of being the outcome of calculations. In short, much more work on theories is necessary before starting any statistical calculations (cf. Sedlmeier, 1996).

How are the preceding comments on generalization linked to the quality of research, especially to qualitative social research? This will be handled in the next section.

### Consequences for criteria of quality in qualitative social research

According to classical test theory the standards of quality in quantitative research are represented by objectivity, reliability, and validity. Each of these standards is an approach to generalize empirical findings.

- *Objectivity* demands that all empirical processes are independent of the observer (generalizing over researchers),

- *Reliability* suggests that "nothing changes," i.e., continuous stability over time can be found (generalizing over time and situation), and
- *Validity* asks what is really studied (generalizing over relationships between subject matter and associated objects of investigation).

These standards are meant to ensure the quality of investigations within the quantitative domain, but they cannot be transformed easily to attain the status of proper strategies within qualitative social research. The different criteria of quality in qualitative research were exemplified by various authors (Flick, 1987; Birkhan, 1992). Alternatives are sometimes suggested by mixing methodologies (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), and further strategies can be summarized by the terms of triangulation, transparency of data analysis and research – researcher interaction by focusing on the social relationship between research subject and research object.

In the next section, two more alternatives are described, which both formalize the analysis of "qualitative" data. Firstly, the *Boolean* approach fosters the formation of types by using logical combinations instead of numbers or calculations. As a second alternative, the *Bayesian probabilistic* approach offers the qualitative principle of common sense expressed in precise mathematical statements and calculations (Jaynes, 2003; Studer, 2006). This is a real mixed methods approach beyond traditional thinking in terms of triangulation or mixing methodologies. Often, the latter only meet the criteria of a compromise without providing much benefit on the epistemological part.

Alternatives: The Boolean approach and the Bayesian approach

The Boolean approach and the formation of types

By applying Boolean algebra to qualitative data, Ragin (1987) has developed an important approach to the analysis of qualitative data, which he called the "Boolean method of qualitative comparison." The procedure is based on the Quine-McCluskey-algorithm of "logical minimization" (cf. McDermott, 1985). This qualitative comparative method integrates – not simply combines – features of experimental and interpretational design by treating the existence of a certain "condition" in a set of data that represents a "case" as a dichotomous categorical variable. The evidence or "condition" either exists or does not exist in a given data set. There is no

other alternative possible. Causes are always seen as complex combinations of conditions that are associated with a particular "outcome." All data are searched for the presence and absence of all forms of possible combinations and the results are entered into a table, with each cell containing either a zero or a one, signifying the absence or presence of the condition. Using algebraic procedures developed by the mathematician Boole, called "combinatorial logic," "minimization," and the use of "implicants," conclusions are drawn from the table about the one or several combination(s) of conditions that result(s) in the occurrence of the outcome being investigated.

In order to apply the rules of Boolean algebra to qualitative comparisons all the available information is radically reduced to "truth values," that is, to the binary statements "condition true" (i.e., "given," "T" or "1") or "condition false" (i.e., "not given," "F" or "0"). For easier reading the following example, we will apply letters to name the characteristics (or variables) of the cases. Capital letters will represent the value "True" and small letters will stand for "False."

The configuration of characteristics of a particular case is represented by a row in a table of truth values. The conditions for a case are combined through Boolean multiplication (logical *and*  $\cap$ ). The different configurations, i.e., the rows in the resulting table are combined additively (logical *or*  $\cup$ ). In this way, the single cases are first represented as configurations of characteristics or conditions and then the patterns of configurations are compared. This strategy can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative data, because scores on a quantitative dimension can also be reduced to truth values.

Let us assume we have data from a study on aggression in classrooms, and we are interested in what aggressive students have in common. Let us further assume that four characteristics (or variables) seem to differentiate between students rated (by teachers, peers or by self-report data) as aggressive and non-aggressive (aggressiveness = True vs. False), namely gender, parents' educational style, addiction to violent computer games, and social climate in the classroom (subsequently addressed as characteristics A, B, C, and D). For further analysis we select only students with high aggressiveness scores from our sample, according to our research interest. Within the data of the selected cases in this fictitious study we find the following configurations of characteristics:

aBcD	(please read: "a" = false AND "B" = true AND "c" = false AND "D" = true) OR
aBCd	OR
AbCd	OR
AbcD	OR
ABCd	OR
ABCD	

Of course, some configurations appear more frequently than others, however, we are interested in finding types of aggressive students and therefore it is not significant at all how many students share a specific configuration of characteristics. According to the rules of logical minimization we can reduce these configurations by systematically comparing them and looking for irrelevant elements in these configurations. According to Ragin (1987, p.96), the rule of minimization is

"... combine rows that differ on only one cause, if they have the same output value ..."

For instance, "aBcD" and "AbcD" can be reduced to "BcD," because this particular combination of characteristics appears in both configurations, but independently of the truth value of "A," that is, in the case of "a = false" as well as "A = true." The remaining variables are sufficient for a prognosis of the criterion (aggressiveness). Continuing the process of comparison we find Bcd, Acd, and ABC, altogether four different configurations of characteristics or four different types.

Comparing this strategy to variable-oriented approaches, which assume that variables can be combined additively, we find that Ragin's case-oriented comparisons (1987, p.51f.) appear to be able to

- uncover patterns of invariance or constant configurations of conditions by minute comparison of individual cases;
- react more sensitively to meaningful configurations of conditions than to relative frequencies of typical cases – which implies that even a single contradictory case has to be attended to;

- consider cases as entities, that is to understand the conditions of a case in relation to each other instead of in relation to their distribution pattern in the population;
- provide a basis for examining how the conditions found combine in different ways and in different contexts to produce the observed results.

The Bayesian approach

### *Reconsidering Popper's swans*

Instead of arguing on an abstract level, we want to start with one of the famous examples from the theory of science, where black and white swans, cats, and other logical animals (Stegmüller, 1975) play a prominent role. The respective logical conclusions are deduction, induction, and abduction:

<i>Deduction</i>	<i>Induction</i>	<i>Abduction</i>
<i>All swans are white.</i>	<i>X is a swan.</i>	<i>X is white.</i>
<i>X is a swan.</i>	<i>X is white.</i>	<i>All swans are white.</i>
<i>X is white.</i>	<i>All swans are white.</i>	<i>X is a swan.</i>

If we state "All swans are white," we formulate a risky statement which can be falsified easily by  $n = 1$ . This is a quite good hypothesis, because it has power as long as it is not falsified. We can learn for generalization that risk is highly associated with generalization: No risk, no fun! However, we must not forget: For purely theoretical discussions, certainly it can make sense to base conclusions on such a minimum of information like the color of a single swan or information about some more swans. In everyday life, decisions based on incomplete information tend to overestimate or underestimate influences and consequences. The real problem in everyday life, however, seems to be that we do not use *all* the available information about swans. Of course, there is indeed a lot of information about swans that humans collected over history. For example, we know that

- Swans are animals
- Their nervous system and biological structure is quite well researched
- The fundamental processes how the colors of skins come about are known
- ...

The plain sentence "all swans are white" makes only sense as long as we know nothing about swans and if we only have seen one or a few white swans in the past. In real life, there are no pure white swans but rather they show a mixture of white, grey, and other colors.

Maybe it is not a matter of generalization, but to take all available information into account and cumulatively update it in the face of new information we encounter (e.g., about their biological structure)? However, this requires to make use of all information about swans, their physical structure, their behavior, their natural settings, etc. Then, from all this information reasonable conclusions can be drawn that allow the evaluation of a sentence like "all swans are white," that is, whether such a sentence is really meaningful or not.

Interestingly, the emphasis on the role of contextual information was already mentioned by Popper himself (Stegmüller, 1975, p. 30, "Hintergrundwissen," background knowledge), but – as Stegmüller regrets – not really recognized in its general importance by the scientific community. On the contrary, Popper's (1934 / 2005, p. 518ff.) misleading anti-Bayesian argument (Jaynes, 2003) was well received by the scientific community. As Jaynes (ibid., p. 310f.) pointed out, it is not a matter of comparing one theory against all possible conceivable theories – as Popper did. Rather, one should make use of common sense by choosing between actually existing theories, which define "a definite set of specified alternatives" (ibid.).

Outlining contextual information leads directly to the probabilistic approaches that are claimed to be a logical equivalent to induction, abduction, and deduction (Studer, 2006; Jaynes, 2003). But in everyday life – may it be for scientific reasons or not – incomplete knowledge and lack of information are often the only facts that are available. Therefore, Jaynes extends his argument by remarking "incomplete knowledge is the only working material a scientist has!" (ibid., p.61). Consequently, drawing inferences is the main, if not the only source of producing new knowledge about the world and its inherent structure. Then a shift takes place from generalization to making inferences about logics and principles that themselves are bound to change. Generalization then may be meaningless to some extent.

### *Probability theory*

Probability theory is based on the works of Bayes (Bayes Theorem), Bernoulli, Laplace, Jeffreys, Cox, and Pólya. It was especially developed

further by the physicist E.T. Jaynes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jaynes, 2003). Studer (2006, p.329) characterizes probability theory by stating:

"In fact, probability theory is common sense translated into precise mathematical statements to attain simple and clear results by the process of reduction to calculation. Complexity is reduced to simplicity without neglecting any available information. 'Probability theory as logic' provides a way of drawing consistent conclusions in case of incomplete information that goes much beyond pure inductive or deductive reasoning. Hence, it really stands for a logic in itself."

In *probability theory*, the term *generalization* is not necessary any longer in the sense it is used by orthodox statistics, because conclusions are always based on all available information. There is no need to generalize, if it is possible to infer phenomena in a whole population from information about a sample. This statement would be completely wrong in the *probabilistic statistical approaches*, because if new information or cases arise or any situational determinants change, the probabilistic model must be updated with the new information. Compared to frequency-based statistics, a sampling distribution is not needed any longer to perform statistical analyses. Instead, a so called posterior distribution is the basis for answering research questions about (the probability of) parameters. Qualitative or even subjective information and estimations are formulated prior and transformed into precise mathematical statements. That is why qualitative data are neither independent nor just predecessors of mathematical calculations as they are often conceived of in quantitative approaches (Kelle & Erzberger, 2003; Barton & Lazarsfeld, 1955/ 1984). Rather, they are the main base of every calculation. However, in case of new empirical findings or new valid information, prior (subjective) knowledge becomes less important and the posterior distribution of parameters is more and more shaped by empirical findings. But in case of incomplete information, prior knowledge plays a very important role. Along with more and more empirical findings (i.e., growing numbers of samples), prior knowledge becomes less important, which means the *theorem of central limit* can be applied – orthodox statistics and Bayesian calculations meet each other.

In fact, qualitative data and their transformation process are the most important elements in probability theory. But this process of transformation is quite difficult and therefore often described as being more of an art instead of a craft, which can be learned easily. And – of course – the

mathematical calculations are far from being easy (e.g., see the comments on the Behrens-Fisher problem by Bretthorst, 1993).

We have seen that the idea of generalization does not play a predominant role in probability theory. Another critical question can be formulated as "Which information is missing?" and "How to integrate it into the model?" Answers to these problems allow to draw plausible inferences in a logically coherent way. They are also very helpful in case of a research situation, in which just a few cases are available and a research question can not be answered by qualitative data analysis alone. To demonstrate the combined application of probability theory and qualitative data analysis, a research example will be presented together with "generalized" conclusions from the joint analysis.

*Probability theory in action: A research example*

In his evaluation study of the drug therapy center *start again*<sup>1</sup> in Zürich (Switzerland), Studer (1998) uses an ingenious approach to apply probability theory to calculate the rate of success or failure of clients during a post-catamnestic two year period under various treatment conditions. By applying objective hermeneutics in the tradition of Oevermann et al. (1979) he performs extensive case studies, in which he elaborates on the principles of the in-depth systemic approach to addiction (Gürtler, Studer, and Scholz, 2007). Thus, he clarifies both the biography of addicts when they enter the therapy program and the impact of the treatment to change the mental models of addicts.

The purpose of applying probability theory in this setting is to test hypotheses based on empirical data. In general, the calculations estimate the success of the program and the risk of relapse: *What is the typical chance of an addict, who has completed the therapy program, to stay clean and remain socially integrated for a specific period of time after treatment?*

One limitation for common approaches to data analysis is the limited number of clients in the therapy center. Therefore, it is necessary to compare very small samples with each other (e.g.,  $n=20$  or even less). Then, all that we know about the theorem of central limit is not meaningful anymore. However, pure qualitative case studies do not provide a precise overall assessment of success and failure, which is the criterion of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.startagain.ch>

accountability of the therapy institution, demanded by health insurance agencies or departments of health. Probability theory allows to integrate prior knowledge about therapy (e.g., is success or failure possible?) and treatment conditions (e.g., with or without inclusion of a client's family) to calculate success and failure rates. Although all results are based on small samples, there is no need to generalize empirical findings to an unspecified population. From a mathematical point of view, all findings represent the current state of our qualitative information  $Q$  at the time  $T$ . If new information becomes available (e.g., from the cohort of a subsequent year), this new information is integrated into the existing formulas and the status quo is updated. In line with the cited case studies, it is possible to draw logical inferences from the statistics as well as to enhance the qualitative analyses. Together, they form a coherent picture of the therapy program, its success/failure rates and the underlying principles of the treatment.

The role of prior knowledge becomes important, if a sequence of incidents is very similar. One example is the observation of  $X$  cases of success (failures) in  $X$  trials (i.e., clients). If our prior knowledge states that success as well as failure is possible, we will not fall victim of apodictic and extreme reactions. In case of nothing but success we still know that failure not only can, but will surely happen in the future. In case of nothing but failures we still have hope that our work is worthwhile! The typical chance for success and failure is surrounded by a confidence interval. This interval reminds us of being realistic in case of a sequence of success and to maintain our hope and motivation to work with clients in case of a sequence of failures.

Applying these principles, Studer (1998) was able to demonstrate that the typical success chance of an addict to stay clean at least for two years (post-treatment) was  $\sim 2/3$  between 1992-1998. Comparing different subgroups (e.g. men/women, voluntariness, with or without inclusion of families, etc.) probability theory allows precise probability statements of similarity of these subgroups (i.e., similarity of means and variances). This can be summarized in ratio statements of odds favoring one hypothesis (similarity) or the other (non-similarity). The accumulation of data over several years allows statements such as the advantage of taking part at a post-treatment program for success (i.e., being clean after the two year period) compared to not participating.

If we want to "generalize" Studer's findings, one major problem arises: The treatment program of *start again* is unique and we do not know whether it makes any sense to compare the program with other drug addiction programs because of the different goals of each program. On the other hand, Studer uses every bit of data that is available for the period

1992-1998. In this sense, the study is representative – but only for *start again*, not for any other drug addiction treatment program. Viewed from that perspective, there is no need for generalization, but maybe for prediction and understanding. However, prediction is limited, too, because of changes in the environment (e.g. growing numbers of personality disorders of clients). Thus, treatment has to be changed and the stability is lost which is necessary to make comparisons. For probability theory, this change is no problem at all, because the new information (growing numbers of personality disorders) enters as prior knowledge into the formulas and everything is updated. Although this is possible, it is not easy at all, because one has to figure out how to transform this qualitative information into a mathematical statement.

These findings demonstrate a shift from the question of generalization towards identification of processes and underlying principles: *Who gets the maximum benefit from a program and why?* The answers to these questions are based on inductive inferences and cannot become generalized. They are based on reasoning and applied principles of logic – common sense.

Discussion: What is the meaning of generalization?

Answers to this question depend on the context of available data and the goals of generalizing from research findings. As we could see in the example of Studer's evaluation study in the preceding paragraph, sometimes the question of generalization is not only of minor interest, but it can be the wrong question at all! In science, we are interested in principles, we want to know the underlying logic of social and individual processes, in which change is always a part of. Or in more specific terms: How "generally" do we want to apply the "particular" findings – and is there a need for generalization? If we know about principles, we can apply them to new situations or new environments and this process of adaption is surely not a process of generalization, because something new emerges, something which was not given before. However, we know about some important factors that influence the process – and these are also an adequate source to generalize from.

Coming back to generalization, we want to close with at least four typical and differentiable contexts, which we will illustrate with short examples from psychological research and intervention in schools:

- (1) The context is defined by a demand of orientation for professional actions based on findings from a *single case*.

*Example:* A sometimes problematic student was observed in the classroom at various occasions; now the teachers expect recommendations for classroom management, that is, the experiences with this student during the observation hours must be "generalized."

- (2) The context is defined by findings from a small number of *selected cases*, for which hypothetical explanations are needed.

*Example:* Different teachers treat a problematic student in different ways and argue about their approaches. More information about their individual reasons and objective results are necessary, which together may help to explain the student's behavior and to develop a promising treatment.

- (3) The context is defined by a *larger sample of cases*, which have some characteristics in common, but differ in other aspects. The treatment is fairly the same.

*Example:* Different students react differently to a specific teaching method or some of its variants. Is it possible to recommend treatments adequate for "typical" learners?

- (4) The context is defined by a larger sample of cases such as in (3), but the contextual conditions vary itself (see, for example, research on aptitude treatment interactions (ATI)).

*Example:* Different students react differently to multiple teaching methods and these methods interact with the personality, learning style, and subjective theories of these students. Thus, by applying teaching methods students change and therefore the methods have to be adopted to the new situation. What is the typical and "best" combination of type of student and a specified class of teaching methods?

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## Generalisierung durch qualitative Heuristik

Thomas Burkart und Gerhard Kleining

Der Aufsatz erörtert den Vorgang der Generalisierung durch das Verfahren der qualitativen Heuristik (Kleining, 1995; Kleining & Witt, 2000; Kleining, 2005; Krotz, 2005) und beschreibt ihn am Beispiel der empirischen Untersuchung von Gefühlen (Burkart, 2003; 2005).

### Der Prozess der Generalisierung

In der entdeckenden Psychologie und Sozialforschung stellt sich die Geltung der Ergebnisse durch den Explorationsprozess selbst her. Er gibt den Bereich an, in dem eine Gemeinsamkeit – ein Thema, eine Form, ein Verhältnis, eine Struktur – gefunden wurde im Gegensatz zu dem Bereich, in dem die Zusammenhänge nicht, vielleicht noch nicht, entdeckt sind, entscheidet also zwischen einem "innerhalb" und "außerhalb" des Fundbereichs.

Der Entdeckungsvorgang wird durch das Zusammenwirken von zwei Regeln der heuristischen Sozialforschung gesteuert: der *maximalen strukturellen Variation der Perspektiven* und der *Analyse auf Gemeinsamkeiten*. Die gefundenen Zusammenhänge sind immer abhängig von den Bedingungen, unter denen die Gemeinsamkeiten festgestellt wurden, oder vom jeweiligen Sample.

Die Forschungsperson versucht im explorativen Prozess, den Gültigkeitsbereich auszudehnen, indem weitere, zunächst außerhalb des Gültigkeitsbereichs liegende Zusammenhänge nach der Existenz der zuvor gefundenen Merkmale befragt werden. Dies nennt man *Testen der Grenzen*. Dafür gibt es verschiedene Techniken zur versuchsweisen Ausdehnung des Gültigkeitsbereichs, wie das Sampeln von *Extremgruppen*, die *Fortschreibung* der bisher gefundenen Ergebnisse, das Aufsuchen von Ähnlichkeiten oder *Analogien* (Mach, 1905/1980, S. 220-231) oder die bloße *Vermutung* (Kleining, 2003). Bewährt haben sich auch gedankenexperimentelle Techniken, wie die Maximierung/Minimierung von bestimmten Merkmalen des Gefundenen als Fragen an die neu zu untersuchenden Bereiche (Kleining, 1986; Mach 1905/1980, S. 183-200). Geprüft wird immer, ob der vermutete Zusammenhang gefunden oder nicht gefunden wird oder ob neue

Gemeinsamkeiten aufgedeckt werden, welche die "alten" und die die "neuen" Bereiche einschließen. Der Entdeckungsprozess, wie jeder Suchvorgang, ist erfolgreicher, wenn er flexibel gehandhabt wird. Es ist erst dann abgeschlossen, wenn Merkmale identifiziert werden, die in allen Daten enthalten sind oder, bei unvollständigen Daten, dem keine Informationen aus den erstellten Daten entgegen stehen. Damit ist auch der Bereich angebbbar, in dem die gefundenen Verhältnisse gültig sind. Sie müssen in ihm nachweisbar sein, aber "außerhalb" dieses Gültigkeitsbereiches entweder nicht auftreten oder bisher noch nicht gefunden worden sein.

Die Forschungsperson führt bei dem Versuch zur Entdeckung von Gemeinsamkeiten einen *Dialog* mit der Wirklichkeit, "befragt" sie und erhält von ihr "Antworten". Vorsichtiger ausgedrückt: sie befragt die Daten, welche die Wirklichkeit repräsentieren. Der Dialog ist durch die Abfolge konkret → abstrakt → konkret gekennzeichnet. Die Forschungsperson geht von möglichst verschiedenen ("maximal strukturell variierten") Daten aus und sucht nach Gemeinsamkeiten, die eine Abstraktion des Konkreten sind. Sie wendet diese wieder zurück zum Konkreten, es in neuer Weise ordnend. Insofern ist das Konkrete, mit dem die Forschungsperson beginnt, verschieden vom Konkreten nach der Analyse, nämlich dadurch, dass die Abstraktion das neue Konkrete ordnet, dieses dadurch durchsichtig macht oder "aufklärt". Die Forschungsperson kann dabei bemerken, wie eine zunächst ungeordnet oder sogar chaotisch erscheinende Sammlung von Daten sich gliedert und Ausdruck einer bestimmten Mitteilung wird, was das Bühlerschen "Aha-Erlebnis" erzeugen kann, eine der Befriedigungen, welche die heuristische Psychologie und Sozialforschung zu bieten hat.

Der heuristische Forschungsprozess ist *dialektisch*, d.h. er verbindet *Konkretes* und *Abstraktes* oder den *Einzelfall*, das *Besondere*, mit dem *Allgemeinen*. Er setzt beides nicht nur in eine Wechselwirkung, sondern verwandelt sie in eine Bewegung: vom vorgefundenen Konkreten über die Abstraktion zum neuen, geordneten, gegliederten, aufgeklärten Konkreten. Die Gültigkeit ist aber immer auf den Bereich der erfolgreich geprüften konkreten Daten beschränkt; das Konkrete sind die vorliegenden Daten, das Abstrakte oder das Allgemeine die Verallgemeinerung nur aus diesen, nicht ein generalisiertes Allgemeines.

Durch die Bindung der Gültigkeit an die Regeln der entdeckenden Forschung unterscheidet sich die empirische Heuristik von andern Formen der Verallgemeinerung, wie der *logischen*, der *deduktiven*, der *idealtypischen* und der *plausiblen*.

Die *logische* Verallgemeinerung in der Sozialforschung, unter dem

Einfluss des Logischen Empirismus und des Scientismus, nutzt das Regelwerk der formalen Logik, um Allgemeinheiten zu erreichen, wie den Ausschluss der logischen Widersprüchlichkeit bei wissenschaftlichen Theorien. In den auf Entdeckung gerichteten Forschungsrichtungen erscheinen aber bestimmte Arten von Widersprüchen, Negationen und Umwandlungen als Merkmale der Wirklichkeit, z.B. im Gefühlsleben, und ihre Existenz darf keinesfalls geleugnet werden. Auch ist ein "Umschlag von Quantität in Qualität" zwar logisch unsinnig, kann im Erleben aber eintreten, etwa bei einem Übermaß von Freude oder Leid. Oder Lust und Schmerz können gleichzeitig vorhanden sein, wie auch süß und bitter usw. Logische Trennung wird in diesen Fällen durch den konkreten Einzelfall widerlegt und die Geltung logischer Kriterien in Frage gestellt.

Der *deduktive* Schluss vom Allgemeinen auf das Besondere wird in der Statistik verwendet und in dem deduktiv-nomologischen Paradigma verallgemeinert. Er wird explizit herangezogen oder stillschweigend als richtig vorausgesetzt bei der Deduktion von einer *Grundgesamtheit* auf den Einzelfall, der als Teil des vorher definierten Ganzen festgelegt ist, z.B. der deutschen Wohnbevölkerung oder den Teilnehmern eines empirischen Praktikums. Lineares, deduktives Vorgehen sind Verfahren vornehmlich der quantitativen Psychologie und Sozialforschung (Witt, 2001). Die Geltung der so gewonnenen Ergebnisse ist immer auf den der Grundgesamtheit beschränkt, wird also von der Forschungsperson vorab festgelegt. Für entdeckende Forschung sind deduktive Verfahren nicht geeignet, sie können bestenfalls vorbestimmte Hypothesen prüfen oder Verteilungen von Merkmalen innerhalb der jeweiligen Grundgesamtheiten beschreiben, aber nicht neue, noch gar nicht im Bewusstsein präsente Zusammenhänge aufdecken.

*Idealtypen*, nach Max Weber (1904/1968), sind "Utopien", "nirgends in der Wirklichkeit empirisch vorfindbar" (S. 191), also ebenfalls Setzungen der Forschungsperson. Sie unterscheiden sich deshalb von Abstraktionen, die durch die Analyse des Gemeinsamen aus verschiedenen empirischen Befunden gefunden wurden, welche den Anspruch haben, Wirklichkeit abzubilden und nicht als Phantasiegebilde zu fungieren. Idealtypen können aber nützlich sein als *Gedankenexperimente*, dann aber in flexibler Anwendung, also etwa, um auszuprobieren, welche verschiedenen "Typen" sich bei jeweiliger Dominanz eines verschiedenen bestimmten Merkmales ausdenken lassen und wie diese Variationen mit Vorverständnissen bzw. Vorurteilen in Verbindung stehen – den Vorurteilen auch der Forschungsperson selbst. Auch idealtypischen Setzungen können keine neuen Geltungsbereiche bestimmen. Dies kann nur empirisch erfolgen.

Verallgemeinerungen durch *Plausibilitätsurteile* schließlich sind ein verbreitetes Alltagsverfahren, eine Figur der Rhetorik. Im Gespräch oder der Argumentation geht uns ein unreflektiertes "immer" oder "jeder" leicht von der Hand. In der Wissenschaft sind Plausibilitäten nur verwendbar als Vermutungen oder Einfälle, die immer mit den Fakten verglichen und von ihnen geprüft werden müssen. So kann man bei drei ehemaligen Luftwaffenhelfern durch spätere Befragung feststellen, sie hätten ihre erfolgreichen Karrieren an die Bedingungen der Wirtschaftswunderzeit angepasst; daraus aber zu schließen, die *Generation* der Flakhelfer sei "vaterlos, sprachlos und geschichtslos" ist eine groteske Verallgemeinerung (Bude, 1987; Kleining, 1995). Schon ein Blick auf die gleichaltrigen Intellektuellen, Künstler Dichter und Wissenschaftler hätte den Autor eines Besseren belehren sollen.

Als *Fazit* kann man festhalten, dass die heuristische Psychologie und Sozialforschung vor die Verallgemeinerung der Ergebnisse aus begrenzten Samples, in begrenzten Kulturen und zu begrenzten Zeiten die Aufgabe setzt, den Geltungsbereich der jeweiligen Ergebnisse auch für die nicht untersuchten Samples, Kulturen und Zeiten empirisch nachzuweisen. Sie vermutet bis dahin die Bindung von Ergebnissen aus empirischer Forschung an die Bedingungen der jeweiligen psychischen, sozialen und kulturellen Verhältnisse und ihre jeweiligen Entwicklungsstadien, also ihre Prägung und Begrenzung durch raum-zeitliche, d.h. gesellschaftliche Wirkungen. "Evolutionäre Universalien", gesellschaftliche Merkmale, die Höherentwicklung charakterisieren sollen (Parsons, 1964/1970) sind bestenfalls idealtypische Utopien, aber auch in Gefahr, als Legitimation für die vermeintliche Überlegenheit westlicher Gesellschaftsformen missbraucht zu werden – das Problem nicht belegter Generalisierung.

#### Die Entwicklung des Gültigkeitsbereichs am Beispiel einer Gefühlsuntersuchung

Der Untersuchung liegt folgende, sehr breit gefasste Forschungsfrage zugrunde: Durch welche Merkmale und Strukturen ist Fühlen (emotionales Erleben) gekennzeichnet? Ihr Design entwickelte sich adaptiv in der Exploration des Gegenstands. Im Verlauf der Datenauswertung, die parallel zur Datenerhebung durchgeführt wurde, ergaben sich Erkenntnisse über Einseitigkeiten mit denen die Daten den Forschungsgegenstand repräsentierten. Sie führten zu weiteren Explorationen mit zusätzlichen Datenerhebungen. Im Verlauf dieser Explorationen, die mit aktiven und

rezeptiven Techniken durchgeführt wurden, hat sich der Gültigkeitsbereich der Untersuchung schrittweise erweitert.

#### Gefühlsschilderungen mit der Methode der dialogischen Introspektion

Ausgangspunkt der Untersuchung bildete eine Untersuchung mit der Methode der gruppengestützten dialogischen Introspektion (Kleining & Witt, 2000; Burkart, 2002; Qualitativ-heuristische Sozialforschung Hamburg Introspektion, k.D.), in der die Teilnehmer jeder für sich in ihrem Alltag ein aktuelles Ärgergefühl und ein anderes aktuelles Gefühl freier Auswahl bei sich aufmerksam registrieren und schriftlich festhalten sollten, um es dann später in der Gruppe nach bestimmten Regeln mitzuteilen. An dieser Untersuchung mit Mitgliedern unserer Forschergruppe nahmen sechs Männer teil. Neben Ärger enthalten die Introspektionsberichte folgende Gefühlsqualitäten: Langeweile, Scham, Angst, Freude und Niedergeschlagenheit. Trotz dieser Varianz war es offensichtlich, dass die Gefühlsqualität höchst unvollständig repräsentiert ist. Einseitig ist an dieser Untersuchung auch, dass das Geschlecht, von dem anzunehmen ist, dass es für emotionales Erleben bedeutsam ist, unverändert blieb. Auch die soziale Zugehörigkeit, die in unserer Kultur vielfältige Einflüsse besitzt und von der zu vermuten war, dass sie zumindest mit dem emotionalen Ausdruck kovariiert, ist nicht ausreichend variiert, da das Sample nur aus gebildeten Mittelschichtsangehörigen besteht. Außerdem ist nicht auszuschließen, dass eventuell die Gruppensituation zu einer reduzierten Offenheit bei bestimmten Erlebnisaspekten des Fühlens geführt hat.

#### Gefühlsschilderungen von Psychotherapiepatienten

In einer weiteren Untersuchung wurde deshalb für mich als Psychotherapeut leicht zugängliche Gefühlsschilderungen von Psychotherapiepatienten gesammelt, um die Gefühlsqualität, die Gefühlsintensität, das Geschlecht, den sozialen Status und Offenheitsbarrieren zu variieren (mittlerweile 88 Schilderungen von 22 weiblichen und 13 männlichen Personen im Alter zwischen 9 bis 75 Jahren, mittleres Alter 40,5 Jahre).

Im Verlauf der parallel zur Datenerhebung durchgeführten Analyse wurden weitere einseitig in Daten repräsentierte Faktoren deutlich, die dann variiert wurden, indem gezielt nach Gegenbeispielen gesucht wurde. Dazu zählten:

- Die Art des Bezugs zwischen Subjekt und Gefühlsgegenstand mit den Extremen sich eins und entfremdet fühlen.

- Die Geföhlsdauer mit den Extremen kurz, flüchtig und langandauernd, immer wieder im Verlauf der Biographie auftauchend.

Neben gezielten, aktiven Explorationen des Gegenstands über geplante Variationen wurde außerdem offen exploriert, indem Geföhlschilderungen einbezogen wurden, die einen neuen noch nicht in den Daten repräsentierten Aspekt enthielten.

Für diese Daten wurden zunächst nur auf die Geföhlschilderungen meiner Patienten zurückgegriffen, die für mich leicht zugänglich waren. Da mein Klientel aber selektiert ist und sich außerdem aus der spezifischen therapeutischen Interaktion und der von mir gewählten therapeutischen Methode Einseitigkeiten ergeben haben können, die einen Einfluss auf die gesammelten Geföhlschilderung hatten, wurden zusätzlich Geföhlschilderungen von anderen Therapeut/innen und Therapieformen einbezogen. Wäre dies nicht erfolgt, so wären die Ergebnisse möglicherweise einseitig und beschränkt gültig.

#### Methodenvariation

Da jede Methode den Forschungsgegenstand zwangsläufig mit gewissen Einseitigkeiten erscheinen lässt, wurde auch die Forschungsmethode variiert. Neben den bereits geschilderten Methoden – dialogische Introspektion einerseits und Sammlung von spontanen und durch therapeutische Interventionen unterstützten Geföhlschilderungen andererseits – wurden außerdem noch weitere Methoden eingesetzt.

Es wurden im Alltag und in Wörterbüchern typische Geföhlsbezeichnungen gesammelt (mittlerweile mehr als 590 Bezeichnungen und sprachliche Wendungen), die entweder in unserer Kultur allgemein oder aber in bestimmten Lebenswelten üblich sind. Sie spiegeln gesellschaftliche bzw. subkulturelle Einflüsse, indem sie bestimmte Formen und Strukturen des Fühlens hervorheben und sprachlich handhabbar machen, die in unserer Kultur eine besondere Relevanz besitzen.

Ferner wurden Zeitungsartikel gesammelt (derzeit 13 Artikel) und analysiert, in denen Geföhlsreaktionen im Mittelpunkt standen, sofern sie einen neuen Aspekt emotionalen Erlebens zu enthalten schienen. Sie spiegeln ebenfalls gesellschaftliche Perspektiven auf den Gegenstand "Geföhle" sowie Alltagstheorien in diesem Feld.

Die beiden zuletzt skizzierten Methoden ergänzen die eher individualszentrierten Methoden um gesellschaftliche Perspektiven, die den Hintergrund der Normen und Regeln geföhlmäßigen Erlebens und seines Ausdrucks bilden.

Außerdem wurden persönliche Introspektionsdaten und einige Beobachtungen zu Gefühlsreaktionen meines Sohnes und anderer Kinder in die Untersuchung einbezogen, sofern sie einen neuen Aspekt emotionalen Erlebens enthielten.

Übersicht über die eingesetzten Methoden zur Erweiterung des Gültigkeitsbereichs

Zur Exploration des Gegenstands – und damit Beeinflussung des Gültigkeitsbereichs der Untersuchung – wurden folgende rezeptive und aktive Techniken eingesetzt:

- *Gezielte aktive Exploration mit Perspektivenvariation:* Faktoren, die einen Einfluss auf den Untersuchungsgegenstand haben sowie ihn strukturierende Faktoren, wurden in ihren Gegensätzen ("maximale Variation") variiert. Sie lassen sich in *allgemeine, methodenspezifische* und *gegenstandsspezifische Faktoren* differenzieren. Allgemeine Faktoren sind jene, von denen im allgemeinen in unserer Kultur ein Einfluss zu erwarten ist, wie Geschlecht, Sozialstatus und Alter. Methodenspezifische Faktoren sind die Einseitigkeiten der gewählten Forschungsmethode, die deshalb variiert werden sollte. Gegenstandsspezifische Faktoren werden – abhängig von der Güte des Vorwissens – oft erst im Verlauf der Untersuchung entdeckt, was die Nützlichkeit eines adaptiven und nicht zu Beginn der Untersuchung festgeschriebenen Designs deutlich macht. Zu den gegenstandsspezifischen Faktoren, die im Verlauf der Gefühlsuntersuchung deutlich wurden, zählt beispielsweise die Breite und Vielfalt dialogischer Prozesse bei Gefühlsverläufen, die von wesentlicher Bedeutung für die psychische Entwicklung ist.
- *Offene, rezeptive Exploration:* Neben der gezielten, aktiven wurde auch eine offene Exploration mit einer Art rezeptiver Beobachtungshaltung in meinem beruflichen und privaten Alltag eingesetzt. Ihr lag die implizite Frage zugrunde: Enthält die (selbst erfahrene oder von anderen geschilderte) Gefühlsepisode einen neuen Aspekt, der noch nicht in den bereits explorierten Gefühlsepisoden enthalten ist?<sup>1</sup>

Ergebnisübersicht – ein dialektisches Modell des Fühlens

Gefühle sind ein komplexes, dynamisches Anpassungssystem mit dialogischem Charakter. Sie sind mit inneren Dialogen (zwischen Gefühlen, Gedanken, Erinnerungen und Vorstellungen) und äußeren Dialogen (mit der äußeren Welt und anderen Subjekten mit dialogischen Prozessen

zwischen Gefühl, Wahrnehmung und Handeln) verbunden. Diese Dialoge konstituieren drei Gefühlsfunktionen, eine evaluative, eine motivationale und eine kommunikative Funktion, deren Verbindung in folgendem dialogischen Modell dargestellt werden kann (vgl. Abb. 1), das die Gefühlsentstehung und -veränderung im Dialog mit inneren und äußeren Ereignissen

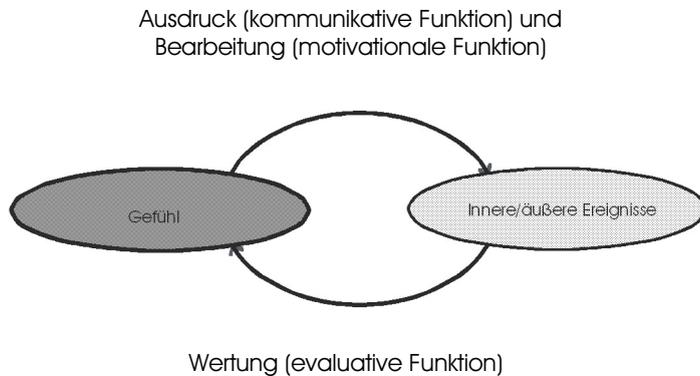


Abb. 1: Dialogisches Modell des Fühlens

beschreibt. Gefühle entstehen durch Wertung innerer oder äußerer Ereignisse (evaluative Funktion). Gefühle sind mit Impulsen zum Gefühlsausdruck verbunden (kommunikative Funktion) und motivieren zur "Bearbeitung" des Gefühlsgegenstands (motivationale Funktion). Sowohl der Gefühlsausdruck als auch die "Gefühlsbearbeitung" können zu neuen Ereignissen und damit zur Veränderung der inneren und äußeren Situation führen. Die durch den Gefühlsausdruck, die Gefühlsbearbeitung oder auch unabhängig vom Subjekt veränderte Situation wird danach erneut einer emotionalen Wertung unterzogen, was zur Veränderung der Gefühle führen kann usw.

Mit der *evaluativen Funktion* werten Gefühle die innere und äußere Situation der Person in Bezug auf wesentliche Subjektstrukturen (Erwartungen, Bedürfnisse, Ziele, dem subjektiven Copingpotential<sup>2</sup>, der emotionalen Erfahrung und dem Selbstkonzept) – wie beispielsweise das Glücksgefühl eines Arbeitslosen über eine erneute Anstellung. Diese unwillkürliche und normalerweise nicht bewußt erfolgende Wertung, die als eine spezifische Gefühlsqualität erlebt wird, bindet das Subjekt mehr oder weniger stark an dem Gefühlsgegen-

stand und den Gefühlsprozess – stark beispielsweise beim prüfungsängstlichen Examenskandidaten, der von den Gedanken an seine bevorstehende Prüfung beherrscht wird. Ihre Entstehungsbedingungen sind dem Subjekt nicht immer klar ("warum bin ich jetzt so traurig"), können aber zumeist in dialogischen Prozessen, wie beispielsweise in einer Psychotherapie rekonstruiert werden.<sup>3</sup>

Die emotionale Evaluation beinhaltet eine mehr oder weniger stark ausgeprägte Transformation des Selbst- und Welterlebens, die sich auf folgende Merkmale bezieht:<sup>4</sup>

1. Akzentuierung und Modulation der Wahrnehmung: Sie kann über eine *Filterung von Wahrnehmungseindrücken* (Beispiel: "rosarote Brille" in Euphorie), die *Veränderung der Intensität und Brillanz der Wahrnehmungseindrücke* (Beispiel "flache", "blasser" Farben in Depression), einer *Veränderung des Zeiterlebens* (in Langeweile z.B. quälend langsam) und anderer Dimensionen des Erlebens erfolgen.<sup>5</sup>

2. Kontakt und Haltung zur Welt mit einer Transformation von *Offenheit versus Verschlussenheit* (z.B. in Freude offen) von *Anziehung vs. Abstoßung* (durch Ekel z.B. abgestoßen vom Gefühlsgegenstand) von *Nähe, Vertrautheit versus Distanz, Fremdheit* und einer *Modulation der Handlungsbereitschaft* (z.B. gelähmt in Angst).

3. Selbsterleben mit einer Modulation der Klarheit des Bewusstseins (in Angst z.B. unfähig "einen klaren Gedanken zu fassen") einer *Veränderung des Körpererlebens* mit Spannung, Schwere versus Leichtigkeit, Druck, Enge, Wärme versus Kälteempfinden und einer Modulation von *Erregung versus Ruhe* (in Wut z.B. erregt) sowie weiterer Aspekte.<sup>6</sup>

Mit ihrer *kommunikativen Funktion*, die sich über den Gefühlsausdruck realisiert<sup>7</sup>, teilt sich der emotionale Zustand des Subjekts an andere schnell mit, wenngleich wegen der Gestaltbarkeit des Gefühlsausdrucks und kultureller Gefühlsregeln ("man muss sich beherrschen"),<sup>8</sup> die ein wesentlicher Bestandteil der Sozialisation sind, nicht selten mehrdeutig ("Ist er traurig?"). Darüber hinaus entfaltet der Gefühlsausdruck eine interaktionelle Wirkung (z.B. das Trösten eines traurigen Menschen), was zur Veränderung der äußeren oder inneren Situation des Subjekts beitragen kann.<sup>9</sup>

Mit ihrer *motivationalen Funktion* motivieren Gefühle zur Veränderung, Aufrechterhaltung oder Bewältigung des Gefühlsgegenstands. Die motivierende Wirkung von Gefühlen basiert auf einer Veränderung des Zustands des Subjekts, die eine Fokussierung der Aufmerksamkeit auf bedeutsame Aspekte, eine Veränderung kognitiver Funktionen (z.B. Leichtigkeit vs. Verlangsamung des Denkens, Klarheit des Bewusstseins) einer

Veränderung der Handlungsbereitschaft und einer Aktivierung allgemeiner Handlungstendenzen (z.B. Flucht bei Angst) beinhalten kann. Die Gefühlsbearbeitung umfasst innere (mentale) und/oder äußere Akte. Der ontogenetisch ursprüngliche Fall ist direktes Handeln, wie beim verärgerten Kind, das sich körperlich gegen die Wegnahme eines Spielzeugs wehrt. Ontogenetisch später ist die mentale Gefühlsbearbeitung, beispielsweise zum Entwurf einer Handlung, um den Gefühlsgegenstand zu verändern oder zu bewältigen, wie beim gemobbten, zwischen Verzweiflung, Empörung und Angst schwankenden Angestellten, der eine Lösung für seine belastende berufliche Situation sucht. Die mentale Gefühlsbearbeitung kann auch eine Reinterpretation des gefühlsauslösenden Ereignisses beinhalten ("Das ist doch gar nicht bedrohlich!").

Das Modell ist im dialektischen Sinn zirkulär. Es beschreibt eine dialektische Entwicklung, in der sich sowohl das Subjekt und seine Gefühle als auch seine Situation verändern können. Bestehende Gefühle werden in diesem Prozess durch die sich ändernde innere und äußere Situation des Subjekts "kritisiert", die sich ihrerseits durch die Gefühlsbearbeitung und die Gefühlsäußerung oder auch unabhängig davon sich verändern können.

Gefühle können Lernen anstoßen, indem sie zu Handeln anregen, dessen Konsequenzen über neue, "umgeschlagene" Gefühle und den mit ihnen verbundenen Gedanken zu einer Kritik der ursprünglichen Wertungen (Gefühle, Sichtweisen) führen, mit der Chance auf besseres Handeln. Gefühle können aber auch Lernen blockieren, sofern die dialogischen Prozesse zwischen Gefühl und inneren und äußeren Ereignissen nur unvollständig oder verkümmert erfolgen und weder das Gefühl noch die inneren und äußeren Zustände ihr kritisches Potential entfalten können. Diese verkümmerte Gefühlsbearbeitung kann sich (1.) auf die Vermeidung von Handeln beziehen, wie bei phobischen Ängsten, die durch Vermeidung aufrechterhalten werden, nicht selten mit der Konsequenz einer allgemeinen Entwicklungsblockade; (2.) auf eine Gefühlsabwehr, beispielsweise durch Verleugnung oder Projektion, die ein belastendes Gefühl so verzerren, dass es für das Subjekt assimilierbar wird; (3.) auf ein aggressives Agieren, um belastende Gefühle von Unsicherheit oder Scham zu unterdrücken; (4.) auf Resignation, wenn das Subjekt keine Handlungsmöglichkeiten sieht, um eine belastende Situation zu verändern. Solche verkümmerten Gefühlsbearbeitungen können sich aus schlechten materiellen Lebensbedingungen und belastenden emotionalen Entwicklungsbedingungen (frühe emotionale Defizite, kumulierte emotionale Belastungen, traumatische Erfahrungen sowie starke emotionalen Konflikte, vgl. Kruse, 1995, S.144-147) ergeben.

## Die Gültigkeitsgrenzen

Trotz nicht geringen Umfangs an Exploration ist der Gültigkeitsbereich der Untersuchung und der auf ihrer Basis entwickelten Theorie begrenzt auf die explorierten Bereiche. Nicht (oder nicht ausreichend) exploriert wurden

- Gefühle in anderen Gesellschaften und Kulturen,
- Gefühle in früheren (geschichtlichen) Zeiträumen,
- die gefühlsmäßige Entwicklung (Gefühlsontogenese)

so dass die Theorie darüber keine Gültigkeit beanspruchen kann.

Fühlen ist von kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen abhängig, die über die Sozialisation des Subjekts die akzeptierten Formen des emotionalen Erlebens und seines Ausdrucks bestimmen. Aus einer Reihe von Untersuchungen ergeben sich Hinweise auf interkulturelle Unterschiede bei Gefühlsphänomenen, ja bereits auf Unterschiede innerhalb westlicher Industriegesellschaften. So fördern nicht alle Kulturen den emotionalen Ausdruck und die Entwicklung eines lebendigen und intensiven Gefühlslebens. Die Bantu in Kenia beispielsweise glauben, dass intensive Gefühle gefährlich seien. Intensive Gefühle sind deswegen in der Interaktion nicht beobachtbar. Der Gesichtsausdruck ist höflich-neutral, wobei Blickkontakt vermieden wird. Mütter tun alles, um die Emotionalität ihrer Kinder zu dämpfen.

Sie vermeiden längeren Blickkontakt, sind emotional zurückhaltend, ohne mimische Interaktionsspiele, wie sie in westlichen Kulturen verbreitet sind (Ulich, 1992, S. 119-126).

In verschiedenen Kulturen werden unterschiedliche Gefühle für wertvoll gehalten, was sich auch im Wortschatz für Gefühlsbegriffe ausdrückt. Auf Tahiti scheinen Ärger, Furcht und Scham besonders betont zu werden, was sich in vielen diesbezüglichen Bezeichnungen spiegelt, während es für Traurigkeit nach einem Verlust kein Wort gibt (Ulich, 1992, S. 126).

Im Vergleich zu amerikanischen Müttern erwarten Japanerinnen, dass ihre Kinder ihre Gefühle zwei Jahre früher kontrollieren (Ulich, 1992, S. 125).

Es ist plausibel anzunehmen, dass solche kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Varianten auch zu Besonderheiten des emotionalen Erlebens führen. Da darüber keine oder nicht ausreichend variierte Daten gesammelt wurden, vermag die Theorie darüber keine Aussagen zu machen.

Gefühlsphänomene sind nicht überzeitlich, wenngleich es möglicherweise wegen einer genetischen Determiniertheit der emotionalen Basis invariante Merkmale gefühlsmäßigen Erlebens geben mag.<sup>10</sup> Ein Beispiel für die Geschichtsabhängigkeit von Gefühlsphänomenen sind die

von Schmitz (1995) rekonstruierten Gefühle der griechischen Vorklassik. Sie waren weniger differenziert und spezialisiert als unsere heutigen Gefühlsqualitäten und stehen den "Uraffekten" von Gustav Kafka (1950, zit. nach Schmitz 1995) nahe:

- Eros ein universaler dranghafte Zuwendungsaffekt "Her mit dir zu mir";
- Phobos, der entgegengesetzte dranghafte Abwendungsaffekt "Fort mit mir von dir";
- Orgé, Thymos die unspezifische Aufwallung und Aggressionsaffekte "Fort mit Dir von mir";
- Pathos als fesselnde Anziehung "Hin mit mir zu dir" (S. 77).

Ein anderes Beispiel aus jüngerer Zeit sind einige weit verbreitete Gefühlsphänomene des ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhunderts, wie die Hysterie und die mit ihr verbundenen Ohnmachten von großbürgerlichen Frauen, die bei der Entwicklung von Freuds Theorie eine große Rolle spielten, heute aber so gut wie verschwunden sind. Dieser Zeitbezug hat auch Konsequenzen für den Gültigkeitsbereich von Freuds Theorie, dessen Konzepte – wie z.B. Penisneid – z.T. heute keine Gültigkeit mehr beanspruchen können.

Nur wenige "direkte" Daten liegen bislang zum Fühlen in der Kindheit und Jugend vor,<sup>11</sup> so dass die Gefühlsentwicklung – von einem psychotherapeutisch bedeutsamen Aspekt abgesehen<sup>12</sup> – nicht ausreichend durch die Theorie erhellt wird. Es fehlen Erkenntnisse zur Differenzierung von Gefühlsqualitäten im ontogenetischen Verlauf sowie zur der Persönlichkeitsentwicklung als Ergebnis emotionaler Erfahrung in der ontogenetischen Entwicklung.

Neben den geschilderten kulturellen, gesellschaftlich-historischen und ontogenetischen Grenzen, die sich auf die Explorationsbreite beziehen und gewissermaßen extensional den Gültigkeitsbereich beschränken, gibt es "vertikale" Grenzen, die durch die Tiefe oder den Auflösungsgrad der Exploration bestimmt sind. Bislang sind zwar viele verschiedenen Gefühlsqualitäten in den Daten repräsentiert. Bei jeder Gefühlsqualität ließen sich jedoch noch detaillierte Explorationen durchführen, die Varianten (der Angst, der Trauer usw.) erhellen würden.

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## Endnoten

- <sup>1</sup> Sinnigerweise wurde das Neue in einer Gefühlsepisode oft eher gefühlsmäßig erfasst oder "erahnt" ("dies wirkt neuartig und irgendwie interessant") und konnte erst später im Verlauf einer Analyse genauer benannt werden (zur Ahnung in Entdeckungsprozessen, vgl. Kleining, 2003).
- <sup>2</sup> Es handelt sich nicht um die objektiven Bewältigungsmöglichkeiten, weil Menschen nicht selten ihr Copingpotential über- oder unterschätzen und die gefühlsmäßige Einschätzung auf der Basis der subjektiven Möglichkeiten zur Bewältigung erfolgt, wie beispielsweise beim "1er- Examenkandidaten", der kein Vertrauen in sein Wissen und seine Fähigkeiten hat und die Nacht vor der Prüfung wegen panischer Prüfungsangst nicht schlafen kann.
- <sup>3</sup> Dies ist keineswegs nur in einer Therapie möglich. Im Alltag sind das Gespräch mit Freunden, die Selbstreflexion mental oder schriftlich (z.B. Tagebuch, Brief an eine/n Freund/in) üblich, um Gefühle zu klären, was nach Greenberg (2005, S. 327) von wesentlicher Bedeutung für die persönliche Sinnentstehung ist.
- <sup>4</sup> Unterschiedliche Gefühle transformieren das Erleben unterschiedlich, wobei nicht immer alle hier angesprochenen Aspekte adressiert sind. Freude kann mit einer Leichtigkeit des Denkens, mit Offenheit und der Bereitschaft sich mitzuteilen, tendenziell "rosiger" Sichtweise mit brillantem Farberleben, einem Empfinden von allgemeiner Leichtigkeit, einer angenehmen Erregtheit und einem beschleunigtem Zeiterleben verbunden sein; Angst kann dagegen mit einem Kreisen des Denkens um die Angstinhalte, mit Verslossenheit, mit Enge- und Spannungsgefühlen, mit Gelähmtheit und Unsicherheit. Die Transformation ist dynamisch und mit Körperprozessen, wie dem Auf- und Absteigen von Empfindungen, dem An- oder Abschwollen von Spannung verbunden. Die Transformation kann in Abhängigkeit von der Bedeutsamkeit und Dringlichkeit der gewerteten Bezüge in ihrer Intensität variieren. Ist die Transformation des Erlebens schwach, wird sie kaum bemerkt. Ist sie dagegen stark, kann sich das Subjekt selbst und/oder seine Situation als völlig verändert erleben, wie die folgende Patientin: "Wenn ich mich gut fühle, bin ich wie verzaubert, als wäre ich ein anderer Mensch".
- <sup>5</sup> Dies sind die Dimensionen "Fokus und Umfang der Aufmerksamkeit", "Annehmlichkeit vs. Unannehmlichkeit".
- <sup>6</sup> Wie der *Erleichterung versus Lähmung kognitiver Funktionen* und dem *Erleben von Sicherheit versus Unsicherheit* (vgl. Burkart, 2005, S. 48-49; Burkart, 2003, S. 118).
- <sup>7</sup> Der Gefühlsausdruck hat auch eine entlastende Wirkung, weil Gefühle für ihre motivationale Funktion einen energetischen Aspekt haben.

Sie sind mit Druck, Spannung, Schwellung verbunden, die zum Ausdruck drängen sind. Diese Energie entlädt sich über den Gefühlsausdruck, wie beispielsweise die Trauer, die sich in Weinen auflöst oder der "der Dampf", den der Verärgerte "ablässt". Die zentrale Rolle des energetischen Aspekts ist aber die Mobilisierung des Subjekts, um es für wirkungsvolles Handeln zur Veränderung oder Aufrechterhaltung oder Anpassung an das Gefühlsubjekt zu veranlassen.

<sup>8</sup> Weitere Beispiele für kulturspezifische Gefühlsregeln sind: "Man weint nicht in der Öffentlichkeit", "Ein richtiger Junge weint nicht".

<sup>9</sup> Diese interaktionelle Wirkung ist häufig Gegenstand von Lernen und verdichtet sich in interaktionellen emotionalen Schemata, die der Beeinflussung des Gegenübers dienen, wie beispielsweise dem appellatives Klagen zur Mobilisierung von Unterstützung.

<sup>10</sup> Für eine gewisse Konstanz von Gefühlsphänomenen spricht, dass die "Gefühlsgeschichten" historischer Dramen – wie beispielsweise von Shakespeare oder gar griechische Dramen von Sophokles oder Aichylos – noch immer verständlich sind, wobei allerdings nichts über das emotionale Erleben dieser Stücke in ihrer Entstehungszeit ausgesagt werden kann.

<sup>11</sup> Retrospektive Daten – Erinnerungen von Patienten an Gefühlserfahrungen in Kindheit und Jugend – dagegen schon.

<sup>12</sup> Dieser Aspekt beschreibt, wann Gefühle Entwicklungen anstoßen, wann sie Entwicklungshemmnisse sind – ein Aspekt der psychotherapeutisch bedeutsam ist. Gefühle sind dann entwicklungsfördernd, treiben dialektische Entwicklungsprozesse an, wenn die durch sie angestoßenen Dialoge "breit", innerlich und äußerlich erfolgen können; wohingegen Gefühle dann die Entwicklung hemmen, wenn die Dialoge "eng", restringiert sind, wie beim Phobiker, der Handeln vermeidet oder beim Psychopathen, der innere Dialoge abwürgt und Gefühle von traurigem Berührtsein per aggressivem Ausagieren "tilgt".

## **Attempts not to over-generalize the results of metaphor analyses**

Rudolf Schmitt

### 0. Preface for the English speaking readers

At the beginning of my lecture I apologized for my broken English and could have started to trouble my listeners with my broken English right away if the language-problem was not connected with a further difficulty. I want to speak about metaphors and so I see myself confronted with the problem of metaphor translation. Metaphors are usually conventional expressions, i.e. idioms specific to a culture. Their imagery cannot always be translated, and in addition the translation often does not meet the idiomatic expressions of the target language. In this way the risk of misleading interpretations is given.

Thus Paul Jurczak (1997) pointed out that this is the case with the translations of Jean Piaget's writings from French into English. Here Piaget's organic metaphors were lost to a great extent or were translated into mechanical metaphors. You can imagine which misinterpretations of Piaget may occur.

I am glad that the problem of translation could be reduced by having the chance to deliver the German as well as the English version of my lecture. I hope by that to receive more attention for the issue being discussed.

### 1. On single metaphors

Usually the question of generalization in qualitative research starts from a certain result, a context or type and considers their universal applicability (Flick 2002 S. 336ff.). Today I want to look at the problem of generalization from the opposing point of view: Meanings of metaphors are usually over-interpreted. This happens often in qualitative studies (cp. Thorne et al. 2002, p. 446f) and becomes very noticeable in the everyday discourse of the sciences. My first example refers to a non-reflected generalization of a metaphor.

Then I want to show you how to get reliable generalizations with the help of metaphor analysis by restricting non-reflected generalizations.

I want to illustrate my theses by using examples from a current research work in the context of alcohol dependency and abstinence. The research question was: Which metaphoric models describe the change from alcohol dependence to abstinence? A man who lives abstinent describes with the following words his turning point at which he gave up drinking:

Well, I was totally *down*. *On the bottom*. (J1)

The metaphor describes his occupational and private breakdown. We may take it as a central metaphor. But what is a "metaphor?" We recognize several problems in defining a metaphor, which is useful for social sciences:

- Most definitions are dominated by linguistic and language-philosophical background – theories that are incompatible with each other. (Lieb, 1964, found not less than 125 different definitions. Exciting discussions have arisen since then.)
- These definitions are mainly oriented on rhetorically or poetically striking metaphors (Ricoeur, 1991; Straub & Seitz, 1998, Seitz, 2004). The everyday-language is marginalised.
- Mostly the reference of a person's metaphoric constructions to culture, society, and cognitive, emotional and biographical structures is not (or at best incompletely) worked out.

I want to introduce to you a few elements of the cognitive linguistics following Lakoff and Johnson. They have elaborated a new concept of metaphor by which (in my opinion) the criticism mentioned above is taken into consideration. According to Lakoff and Johnson a metaphor is given,

A. if a word / an idiom in a strict sense has more than only the literal meaning in its context (e.g. "to be on the bottom"),

B. if, additionally, the literal meaning originates from a particular meaning-area (source area), (in our case: the physical situation being on the bottom), and

C. if this meaning is transferred to a second, often more abstract area (target area) (here: psychic and social situation caused by longer alcohol dependence). (cf. Schmitt, 2003, paragraph 14)

Only Lakoff and Johnson's broad definition of a metaphor is suitable for the analysis of everyday speech, but this definition of a metaphor is so wide that it explodes the common definitions. It covers simile, comparison, symbol, etc. and it covers the everyday-imagery as well. I do not want

to develop the connections to the developmental psychology and the psychology of language here (see Schmitt, 2001, 2005a). Concerning the cultural implications it might be sufficient to add that meanwhile there is a broad movement of Cognitive Linguistics within Anthropology (cf. Kimmel, 2004).

## 2. Instead of individual metaphors: metaphoric concepts

One can be rather sceptical as to whether the metaphor mentioned above – to be "completely down" and "to be on the bottom"- says something relevant about the experience of alcohol-dependent people. That's why I want to discuss the definition of the "metaphoric concept" in cognitive linguistics. This supports the thesis that the meaning of the named metaphors can be generalized in a systematic way. To illustrate this, I give you an example from my study:

The change to abstinence happens at the deepest point

I had first to be so *much down* that there I [saw] this so-called *tunnel* (B11)

Because I was just already so *deep down* (B11)

It was probably important that I did it so. One has truly *to be at the very bottom* (J2)

at that point I told myself, no! You must not *fall so deep* (J3)

One can say that the decision to become dry arrived when I was at the *deepest point*, as I have tried to commit suicide (R3)

Lakoff and Johnson summarize individual metaphors under one heading which expresses the common content of all the individual metaphors. We speak of a metaphoric concept if several individual metaphors have the same source area (here: depth) and the same target area (here: abstinence). Lakoff and Johnson assume that only metaphoric concepts which offer a network of the same transfers are cognitive and culturally relevant. This limits clearly the over-interpretation of individual metaphors. So Lakoff and Johnson's metaphoric concepts are rather more suitable to generalize metaphoric patterns of thinking and action than single metaphors.

Going back to the metaphors representing the change in the course of alcohol-addiction. The metaphorical concept shown above has become

known as "rock-bottom"-model; it has dominated the alcohol-research as well as the treatment-practice for a long time (Petry 1993, S. 67f) and it is connected with the central person of the alcohol-research of the fifties, Jellinek, and with the Anonymous Alcoholics. As we know there is criticism concerning this model because it suggests that an addiction takes a certain course and that help is only possible at the deepest point of the crisis whereby other courses and more premature possibilities of intervention or termination of drinking get out of sight. The individuality of these biographies vanishes behind the metaphoric scheme.

It is therefore worthwhile to examine metaphorical generalization skeptically. This scepticism can be looked upon from two points of view:

- a) There certainly not only exists the imagery of the depth. What do related imageries, for example the metaphor of the height, look like?
- b) Aren't there (very) different metaphoric concepts expressing addiction and abstinence, too?

This meets the method of the selection of metaphors from a text. According to which criteria should metaphors be extracted from texts? My skeptical position leads to a simple but rarely applied criterion: Metaphor analyses become reliable only if *all* metaphors of the material, that are relevant for the research question, are taken into account.

### 3. A metaphoric concept and its embedding

I have been skeptical towards the rock-bottom-model in two ways: on the one hand, whether the imagery of depth stands isolated, and on the other hand, whether completely different metaphors are still to be discovered. I begin with the metaphoric concepts in the context of depth.

- a) Occasions of drinking before getting addicted are given in the emotional *depth* and *under the burden* of everyday life:

had no work, that already was quite a *burden* for me (B7)

Once it was like that, well, out of the situation when I had a *low point* (B 16)

one was worried and such. And was *down in the dumps* and so (B16)  
my brother didn't return from a visit to West Germany. ... That has *put me down* (J2)

There is always something that *is sitting on one's neck* (J6)

b) alcohol-consumption causes feelings of *ease* and of *being airborne*

well, I had a rather easy feeling (B6)  
 One has felt *light* and got loosened there (B16)  
 Well, the feeling of having taken everything more *easily* (B20)  
 that *lifts* the mood, that *boosts* the cosiness (B2)  
 that one maybe *lifted up* a little (B8)  
 One could truly *fly*, like a *weightless* creature (J6)

c) Continuous alcohol-consumption is *burdening* and leads down into the *depth*

Then it sometimes goes on until one *falls down* (B15)  
 one has just a *heavy* head then (B9)  
 Then the total *breakdown* came (R2)  
 since 1989, 1990, it was rapidly going *downhill* (R2)  
 or he is so drunk *to fall over* immediately (J4)  
 But everything was so *heavy* to do (B10)

d) Therapy is *no elevator leading upwards*

Mrs. F. had sometimes '*got a down on me*' (B11)  
 One should *undergo* psychotherapy or a long-term-therapy (B11)  
 Well, yes, that one year, if you look back, in the beginning it still is a *heavy* task (B11)  
 I can still remember when he said: "It will be a *heavy task* with you. But it will also become *ponderous* for you. Are you ready for this?" (J1)  
 that she can tell me what hurts her feelings and this was at first not *easy* [relationship after withdrawal] (R4)

f) Abstinence is again *on the height*

I am again physically, mentally fully *on top* (B11)  
 No, I would like to go forward, *higher and higher* (B11)  
 since then, I would like to say, it was going *uphill* [since detoxication] (J3)  
 I reached a *higher level* than I ever had before (R2)  
 the self-confidence *rises* immensely [after withdrawal] (R2)

What has the metaphor analysis now discovered? Although the rock-bottom-model of science and the Anonymous Alcoholics portrays a part of the course of dependence it neglects an essential part: Before the elevation to abstinence occurs, there happened a similar elevation to a higher level by consuming alcoholic drinks. This first alcohol-driven motion out of an emotional low point to an intoxicated height is ignored by the rock-bottom-model – here the elevation caused by abstinence reevaluates the anticipations connected with alcohol into the opposite. The metaphor-analysis has uncovered something, which Lakoff and Johnson call "highlighting" and "hiding": Each metaphor focuses on one aspect of the world, brings it to light, or is even just constructing it - and negates or distorts other aspects. It is a central element of metaphor analysis to search systematically for meanings, which can be constructed by a metaphor, as well as for meanings, which are hidden by a metaphor. Generalizations must discuss both effects of a metaphor.

There is evidence that there are heights and depths already before the rock-bottom situation occurs. That's why the new and extended model can be called the "Parsifal"-Model, which is a western prototype of the male development: Although born as a king's son (in the version of Wolfram von Eschenbach), Parsifal was brought up by his mother in hermitage, since she feared prophecies about her son's future as a warrior. Nevertheless as a child he armored himself with wooden sticks. However mysterious coincidences and great knightly deeds helped him to get his first high social position. Soon after, when he had become a member of King Arthur's knights, this period came to an end. The reason for this was that he had committed some offences because of social ignorance. He was no longer allowed to be a member of the knights and he was wandering through the wilderness: completely on the bottom. An old wise man explained to Parsifal that the mistakes he had made were due to his biography. That fact, repentance, and further heroic deeds made it possible to be again admitted to the Round Table, this time even as king of the Grail.

This two-peak-model of the novel showing the development of a character can be rediscovered in the interviews: The course starts somewhere in the middle, followed by emotional depths, and the first high-flights with alcohol (usually in the respective peer group). Later follows the fall induced by alcohol, and then, down on the bottom, isolation and regret. Enlightenment, the re-admittance to groups followed and again a social rise show the new upwards movement to a new height. This can be realized for example by becoming the leader of a group of the Alcoholics Anonymous.

The model of the Parsifal-novel connects several metaphoric concepts of height and depth and brings them into a meaningful sequence. More than two thirds of the interviewees had contacts with the Alcoholics Anonymous, and it becomes very obvious that these groups function as narrating factories for their male members, and that they install this central myth of the sequence of heights and depths with powerful effects.

We have to ask whether these metaphoric patterns are applicable to the alcohol-consumption of women (some interviews are available, but yet not looked through). Furthermore it has to be mentioned that this model applies to some interviewees only partly.

Back to problems of generalization: It is shown that a metaphoric concept is framed by other metaphoric concepts. Only on this background can it obtain its specific meaning.

#### 4. Competing metaphoric concepts

Previous metaphor analyses have discovered metaphorical concepts with contrary implications, which can represent quite different aspects of the phenomenon or which overlap only partly in their implications. This leads us to the conclusion, that generalization needs the search for opposing examples. Hereinafter I'd like to introduce shortly four different competing metaphoric concepts and to sketch their implications to change.

Alcohol-abuse and dependence are a struggle for life

There were several bottles, that we had *massacred* there (B20)

Yes, well I am not a *competitive drinker* [laughs] (B24)

Before that, on the railway station Löbau, we made a *proper strike* again (J1)

Naturally, by noon the bottle was empty. Then *supply* was wanted badly (J1)

that was practically a *fight for survival*, from early morning on one had been craving for closing time and to start drinking again (R3)

The fight against alcohol ends in defeat and humiliation

There, being in such a ... hospital, I was *put out of action* (J1)

I know what alcohol makes out of you ... I think; it is by all means much *stronger than a human being* (J4)

I didn't want to be looked upon just as a *problem-case*, or a *failure*, or just a *weak man*, who *doesn't have any control* about drinking  
 I felt *humiliated* and *exposed up to the bones* (J6)  
 Someday she had said: "Daddy, you are a *failure*", and that has *hit me badly* (R4)  
 I also must be honest to myself, that I have a *very, very weak* character. I simply need the AA (J4)

The acceptance of defeat is an escape from battle

The first step is to *admit being powerless* to resist the alcohol, and to *surrender unconditionally* (J1)

Instead of further quotations I remember Gregory Batesons famous article "The Cybernetics of 'Self': A theory on alcoholism". In this writing Gregory Bateson, too, appears as a supporter of the metaphor of fight, although he reflects in other writings again and again the metaphoric character of thinking. The metaphor of fight is in its essential parts compatible to the rock-bottom-model and is also used alike by the AA.

But, in this case the systematic metaphor analysis can as well limit the range of the metaphorical meaning. According to Bateson and in the model of the AA the fight is over after the unconditional surrender. This metaphorical myth has to be doubted, though:

Abstinence is battle, too

have *survived* it that day, too (B10)  
 With our experiences we are *supporting* each other there (J1)  
 there I found a few *comrades-in-arms*, who had been released from the clinic at the same time (J3)  
 one is being encouraged to *fight back better*, and that one can also cope with it, that one *does not hide in a corner* because of peanuts, seeking for one's 'best friend', but that one is able to *counter* again (R3)  
 many people don't understand [...] that it is a daily *fight* (R5)

Result: There is only a minor change in the fight-imagery relating to the change in the course between addiction und abstinence: The fight against the alcohol is continuing. Addiction means defeat and thereafter the fighting against drinking, respectively the desire to drink, continues.

Another metaphor of the change shows the drinking man as a machine:

Alcohol consumption sets the machine out of order

That I had always been drinking extremely much at all kinds of celebrations until I really was beyond myself. So, as if something was *unhooked* (J6)

then such *stops* came, then the first detoxication (R2)

right here... in the head, the *trigger* hasn't been completely *pulled down*, that one is fully on the track drinking again (J2)

Well, my memory has got such a *blow* through boozing, my brain *cells are destroyed* (J3)

Sometime it became more and more extremely, the *breakdowns* in the job, too (R1)

Technical improvements and "the click" indicate the change to abstinence

[after alcohol-poisoning] cardiac catheters had been put. I don't now know whether this belongs here, anyway, there it has "*clicked*" in me:

"O boy, you have had just a narrow escape from death" (B11)

well, I'd say it was like a *click*, I didn't need to worry about it any longer, everyone knew it anyway, now this pressure was taken off me (R2)

because I had to comprehend that it was her way. For me the way was the so-called "*click*" (R5)

and I was put down by Mrs. F. [therapist, R.S.] sometimes, it was like being "*remoulded*", so that I would have liked to stand in a corner and cry (B11)

In the metaphor of technology, we find mechanical alterations in the sense of improvement. "Remoulding" and "to click" show that abstinence can be seen as a change to renewed functions of the machine. The first case (B11) is compatible with the imagery of the deepest point. But the second case (R2) happened after loosing the driving license, the third one (R5) long after withdrawal: Insight can happen before and after "rock bottom ." If we compare it to the Parzival-scheme or to the imagery of fight, their overlaps in meaning can hardly be found.

Only few overlaps with the previous metaphoric concepts appear in the imagery of the container:

A person seen as a container for negative emotions  
and if you don't speak about it and only *swallow* it, it is just a  
question of time that *you are fed up to the back teeth* and you can  
reach for the first glass again (R3)

I was completely destroyed, *full of dejection, full of uncertainty, full  
of self-doubt* (J1)

there *I took the gloves off*, and hauled out all that guilt and sin from  
*inside me*, and then I was discussing that with a BROTHER, who was  
there, and we prayed together (J7)

Alcohol as a tool to open the container

Some other people *open* themselves more when they are a little  
drunken ... apart from that they are intimidated, *locked, closed* (B10)

There I cannot come *out of myself* (B11)

Well, because the people don't *go out of themselves* then (B23)

I was *locked inside myself*, I was a *reserved* type (J1)

The atmosphere was really relaxed in this drunken state, I felt good  
then, so that I could *come out of myself* (J6)

Abstinence and new openness

I like the cosmopolitanism, the *openness* of the mind at the AA (J1)

With the anonymous alcoholics this *open-mindedness* pleases me (R7)

[in the past:] I thought, it is not done to have feelings, to *disclose*  
them publicly and to do this even as a man (J1)

I go to the AA, and today I can speak *openly* about it (J4)

With the abstinence it has changed, you are *unlocked*, also to  
problems (R2)

Openness exists as metaphor of change before and after abstinence:  
Openness is a central metaphor in reasoning about drinking alcohol AND  
in reasoning about abstinence. However, what has changed is the achieved  
openness as behavior, value and life-condition, and not to force openness  
with a substance any more. Not the metaphor has changed, but the be-  
havior to achieve this metaphorical status of social interaction. If we dis-  
cuss this finding on a methodological level, we will have to make two  
inferences:

- A thorough metaphor analysis can correct narrow research-questions:  
It was a mistake to look for metaphors of change only - there are

metaphorical concepts that are necessary to interpret both, drinking as well as abstinence.

- Metaphor analysis is not restricted to words only, but also includes behaviour: This analysis has provided us with the insight, that in real life there are different activities to achieve a certain status of social interaction, which is constructed by the same metaphor.

Let's look at the last example:

Alcohol is a precious small treasure

here a little wine, and there *a sip of champagne as a special treat* (B2) *good stuff* counts, but *only a little*. That is, *not a large quantity of alcohol* (B2)

in the evening a *a bit of brandy*, you hear from older people (B4)

Well, when I come home I *need a small beer* (B22)

A *sip* every once in while doesn't matter, I think (B22)

Alcohol as a good and obligatory gift

my mom doesn't drink at all. ... She frequently gives to me *expensive bottles of wine as a present* [...] "There, take this bottle, it's *something good*, keep it in case you will some time be having a child", and such (B6)

we [students] also had had a sponsorship-contract with a brewery at that time and, of course, that has had the effect that from time to time *a small keg came rolling up* when we were having a party. *We got that for free*. Well, *of course you did empty it*, sure. You *couldn't let it get spoiled* (B8)

because there was a bottle of wine there. One *doesn't leave the wine untouched*. *I had to drink* the whole bottle by myself because the girls didn't want any wine (B1)

From *passing on spirits to spiritual exchange*

I take part [in AA] [...] because of the basic ideas of the self-help that I can *offer my experiences*, but also *to take in some of the offered experiences* (R1)

[Groups] These are the things that just *give you* the necessary backbone (R2)

as a result, they *offered* me a week of contemplation, and the self-help-group Z. *accepted* me (R3)  
 I visited them at home for getting to know something that *I could take along with me* in order to escape the addiction to drinking (R6)  
 The community and the belief *have given me immensely much* (R7)

The imagery of the gift, of giving and taking, constructs a type of social interaction, which remains unchanged in socially tolerated drinking, in dependence as well as in abstinence. However the source area changes: Instead of exchanging "the good stuff" the social interaction takes place as an exchange of emotional contribution and attention. Like in the imagery of openness the source area of the imagery remains, but the structures of the target areas change: "Openness" through conversation instead of alcohol, affection instead of liquors as "gift."

Now, I don't want to go more deeply into the differences between the metaphoric concepts of alcohol consumption and abstinence. I rather want to derive methodical deductions. The most important one is that we usually cannot assume one single "core-metaphor" or "root-metaphor" or similar metaphorically shortened results of metaphor analyses. Relevant for the meaning of a metaphoric concept is its position in the total of the metaphoric concept-system of a person, a group or the cultural ideas concerning a phenomenon. Metaphor analyses generalize in an unacceptable manner, if they don't present the entire system of metaphoric concepts of the phenomenon in question. (On the present stage of analysis there are fourteen different metaphoric concepts in dealing with alcohol.)

## 5. Generalization and cultural horizon

To illustrate this point, I have no example from the current study; it is rather the reaction to an error in an earlier publication (Schmitt, 1995). At that time I had looked for metaphors of help and change related to the social-pedagogic casework and family-help. Admittedly nine metaphoric concepts could be reconstructed, where for example psycho-social help was comprehended in pictures of school ("he still has got to *learn* that..."). However, the organic imagery of the psychic "*growth*," usual in the non-directive psychotherapy (see Leihener, 1997), wasn't represented in the material. This deficit would have contributed to the description of casework, in which such processes of "growth" apparently have little impact. I could have identified this gap if I had looked beyond my sample for

further metaphors concerning helping and psychosocial change. This kind of search aims at the entire cultural context and is hardly to achieve without leaving any doubt. I therefore propose an investigation outside the narrower research-context based on the theoretical sampling. Such an analysis drafts cultural pattern that will help to notice especially the absence of metaphoric models. Generalizations of metaphor analyses cannot perceive characteristic restrictions of the given metaphorical system, if they don't use the cultural horizon as a background.

#### 6. Generalization and the researchers' blind spots

At this point of discussing possible restrictions of generalization I also refer to my first publication, where I fortunately realized an error at the end of my evaluation. Only within three years of doing research I suddenly realized that expressions of acting in the context of psycho-social help also have a figurative content: "emotional *work* ." This expression constructs helping as crafts-work. This late discovery is of course connected with the authors preference in "seeing" the world as labour and to take this for granted, instead of treating this as a (problematic) way of perceiving it. Schulze (private discussion) has therefore proposed the utilization of an interview with the researcher himself: The first of all other methodological steps is to ask the investigator himself about the topic. Next he must work out the used metaphors in his interview. It seems to be much easier to identify disturbing and striking metaphors, which are not compatible to the own preferences. Metaphor analyses need protection from overlooking of metaphors that follow the researcher's patterns of thought.

#### 7. Required efforts and sampling

Systematic metaphor analysis happens in a process, in which all metaphors are extracted in a first step with their context from the interviews. In a second step the metaphoric concepts are composed out of these single metaphors. This strict separation of identification of metaphors from the reconstruction of metaphoric concepts is a protection against premature and incomplete analyses which primarily search for confirming the firstly perceived meanings. Beyond that this strict separation works as a force to classify all metaphors patterns in metaphoric concepts in order to achieve completeness. This very thorough but reliable work leads to higher efforts

however: For a ten-page text, I estimate three working days. The systematic metaphor-analysis is an elaborate process even it is not the most elaborate one. Therefore it is important to sample carefully and adequately. The strategy of the "theoretical sampling" according to Glaser and Strauss seems the most appropriate.

#### 8. The procedure of a systematic metaphor analysis

The procedure of a systematic metaphor analysis is already published (Schmitt, 2005b), so I only want to sketch it.<sup>2</sup>

##### Procedure of a systematic metaphor-analysis

- a) Identification of the target phenomenon and the research question (Subject, theories, material)
  - About which subject does the researcher seek cultural or individual metaphors?
  - Which theories touch the topic?
  - Which material is already available or could be collected?
- b) Collection of cultural background metaphors assigned to a phenomenon; analysis of the researcher's metaphors  
This preliminary study aims at an encyclopaedia of possible metaphor-fields related to the topic. It uses heterogeneous material from everyday life as well as theory and literature in order to record usual metaphors of a topic in a given culture.
- c) Sampling of materials in the sense of the "theoretical sampling"
- d) Systematic analysis of subcultural / individual metaphors
  - Identification of metaphors and deconstructive segmentation of texts  
The texts get segmented into their metaphoric components in a word-by-word-analysis; all metaphoric expressions are extracted together with their immediate context in a separate list).
  - Synthesis of subcultural / individual metaphorical models

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<sup>1</sup> Key-examples for definition of metaphors und metaphoric concepts, a list of heuristic strategies, specific criteria of reliability and validity, and further working means: see <http://de.groups.yahoo.com/group/Metaphernanalyse/>

This second step is the pre-interpreting and reconstructing act that gains metaphoric concepts from the collection mentioned above. The expressions from the list of single metaphors are grouped, if the source area and the target area are common (see the examples above). According to the research question it could be aimed at concepts of groups or of individuals.

- e) Interpretation with the help of heuristics  
Interpretations are formulated with the help of heuristics (e.g.: comparison of metaphoric models among each other, formulation of attention-focusing and fading functions of the metaphoric concept etc.)
  - f) Triangulation of methods and theories, criteria of quality  
Also the metaphor-analysis has its weaknesses that can be compensated with the application of further methods. The triangulation of theories is dependent on discipline and research-question.
  - g) Presentation  
The typical metaphoric patterns of thinking, feeling and action can be presented in a narrative way, as well as the meaning of striking or missing imagery and the reconstruction of social or biographical contexts, which can be explained with the metaphoric patterns found in the texts.
9. Systematic metaphor-analysis as systematic limitation of non-reflected generalization

The systematic metaphor analysis limits non-reflected generalizations of metaphoric patterns in multiple senses:

- It refers to a reflected theory of metaphor and is based on the reconstruction of metaphoric patterns as metaphoric concepts, which bundle many single metaphors with the same meaning.
- It reconstructs all the metaphoric concepts of a text, which possess a reference to the research-question, and not only striking metaphors.
- It puts metaphoric concepts in context in comparison with other metaphoric concepts with similar, but also with contrary and com-

pletely different meaning-structures in order to get the complete conceptual system of a speaker, a group or a phenomenon.

- It refers on reflected strategies in the sampling.
- It offers protection against overlooking metaphors due to the researcher's patterns of thinking.
- It covers the cultural context and allows an interpretation of the absence of metaphors; in the same sense it allows an identification of the usual cultural metaphoric scheme, which avoids individual over-interpretation.
- It offers heuristic help to generate interpretations from the material.

This method meets the demands of a metaphor analysis, whose results are reliable, that means limited generalizations.

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**The identity politics of qualitative research.  
A discourse analytic inter-text<sup>1</sup>**

Pascal Dey & Julia Nentwich<sup>2</sup>

Abstract

We intend this paper to be read as an inter-text between selected FQS [Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung; the eds.] articles, which in one way or another engage in the identity politics of qualitative research, and the broader discussion of quality in the social sciences. Subjecting those texts to a discursive investigation, we highlight how the semantic scope of what is called "qualitative research" is decisively delimited by the positivist associations of "good research." Our overall aim is to take issue with two binaries that are commonly employed by qualitative researchers and thus collide with the evolution of creative/aesthetic science. Simultaneously, however, we seek to enliven qualitative research by providing an (ancient and thus marginal) understanding of research and of approaches that are still outside the prevailing canon. To this end, we start by investigating the binary between quantitative and qualitative research that is perpetually reified as our colleagues invoke the positivist quality criteria, subordinating the qualitative pole to an inferior position. Second, we provide examples of the ways that qualitative research is habitually separated from "non-research" such as the arts, journalism and fiction, ostensibly to justify calling it "scientific." Pondering how these binaries endow qualitative research with a limited identity and a supplementary status, we draw on some postmodern works so as to elaborate on alternative understandings of "science" and scientific quality. Finally, we argue for a "politics of difference," which we envision as a point of origin for extending qualitative research by multiplying its genres, styles and tropes.

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<sup>2</sup> This paper has been written as a collaborative effort. We have placed our names in alphabetical order but this should not be misread as a hierarchical distinction between "first" and "second" author.

## 1. Introduction

"[C]riticism is not a passion of the head, but the head of passion."  
(Kamenka, 1983, p.117)

Historically speaking, academic psychology has often determined its identity in concert with questions of methodology (Rose, 1985). Thus, more often than not, such identity politics have been pursued in conjunction with the polarity between qualitative and quantitative streams of psychological research. While it is arguable that the discourse on methodology has kept scholars in the social sciences busy at all times, we would like to point out that the polarity between the two methods has led to certain rebarbative tendencies. In recent years the "naked hostility" (Burton & Kagan, 1998) between qualitative and quantitative researchers has been partly mitigated, due partly to the growing recognition that no single methodology can provide a universal, exhaustive understanding of the phenomenon at hand; still, we can hardly depict the current situation as affirmative, respectful or cooperative. After all, given that some of the initial antagonism has continued, the least detrimental approach to date appears to be mutual ignorance. A second, more conciliatory, mode of interaction looks for pragmatic solutions to the avowed incommensurability between qualitative and quantitative research; its practitioners encourage, for instance, a "paradigm of choices" (Patton, 1986) or "mixing methods" (Brannen, 1995). While some say that mutual ignorance disrupts the dialogue on and negotiation of epistemological and ontological differences, that very engagement forces us to decouple the philosophical grounding of research from questions of methodology.

For quite some time, acute discussions have been occurring in various research traditions on the incommensurability of methods, methodologies or paradigms (e.g. Kuhn, 1970); we contend, however, that the question of what it means to "do science" and to work scientifically has gained particular importance in relation to recent identity politics in the sphere of qualitative research. What we argue in this article is that the status, legitimacy and support for qualitative research within the scientific community has become a pivotal concern in the FQS, especially in the FQS 6(2) and 6(3) issues on *Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving, and Reuse* and *The State of the Art of Qualitative Research in Europe* (Knoblauch, Flick & Maeder, 2005; Mruck, Cisneros Puebla & Faux, 2005; Eberle & Bergman, 2005; Bergman & Coxon, 2005; and especially Eberle, 2005). More precisely, what we construe as examples of identity politics in the FQS issue on "*Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving and Reuse*" relates to the

plea to promote qualitative research by developing national (research and archiving) centres. In the "The State of the Art of Qualitative Research in Europe" we see this process happening in those investigations that highlight the differences and diversity within qualitative research in different European national cultures so as to "provide unique insights into the variety and richness of qualitative social research in Europe" (Mruck et al., 2005, par.4). On its face, the political agenda of what is called "qualitative research" seems to thrive on building acceptance and proliferating its methods and practices. Although many of the articles in the above two FQS issues contain both urgent and worthwhile arguments and ideas, we would like to point out that the resulting constructions of "qualitative research" are also conjoined with implications that require critical attention.

Consequently, the starting point of our reflection is the question of how "qualitative research" is discursively constructed in the exemplary texts pointed out above, and what major consequences derive from these identity building processes. We thus use the term "identity politics" to denote the establishment of identifiable groups through binary distinctions, such as "qualitative versus quantitative" or "research versus non-research." Conceiving identity as a discursive creation and the processes of identity building as reflexive endeavours, it becomes clear that any use of these binary distinctions is accompanied by a (re-)construction and, therefore, reification of the very distinctions. Beyond that, identity building also reinforces the respective hierarchy between the invoked categories and therefore perpetuates particular conditions of oppression (Butler, 1990). In consequence, defining what qualitative research is (i.e. the obvious presence of ideology) will also invariably determine what it is not (i.e. ideology's deliberate absence; cf. Law, 2004). We most notably aim to render this process both visible and problematic.

Thus our critical comments delineate a particular inter-text which is inserted at the nexus between both the FQS 6(2) and 6(3) issues. We use the term "inter-text" not only because we discuss issues relevant in two issues of FQS, but also because we want to take a discursive perspective (e.g. Gergen, 1997) to reflect on and extend a so far mainly political agenda. Hence, we will focus on the question of how specific ways of discursively constructing the identity of "qualitative research" cut off evolving alternatives for qualitative research by virtue of creating and reifying distinct binaries. To address this issue more specifically, we will use our magnifying glass on two different kinds of binaries: the one between qualitative and quantitative research, and the one between research and non-research. These reifications have consequences for identity politics

but also for the stipulation of criteria for qualitative research; analysing these consequences will hence allow us to discuss the implied relations of dominance and exclusion. In conclusion, we will provide some tentative ideas on what qualitative research could become if we could restrain ourselves from ultimately defining what it is. Emphasising the existing diversity within qualitative research and drawing on theories and approaches from other academic disciplines and non-academic genres, we suggest a more open and inclusive approach to the identity (or, better, alterity; cf. Levinas, 1999) of qualitative research. To make our argument more vivid, we draw primarily on exemplary vignettes taken from Eberle (2005) that let us render concrete and intelligible the problems we see emerging from current conceptions of (qualitative) research. We do not suggest that this is an exclusive attribute of Eberle's text — far from it. Rather, we see it as characteristic and illustrative of how "qualitative research" is constructed in contemporary discussions and publications about qualitative research.

## 2. Qualitative versus quantitative research:

### Dismantling the hierarchy

"In modern social science, the concepts of validity, reliability, and generalization have obtained the status of a scientific holy trinity. They appear to belong to some abstract realm in a sanctuary of science, far removed from the interactions of the everyday world, to be worshipped with respect by all true believers in science." (Kvale, 1995, p.20)

Probably the most important division that arises in the identity performance of "qualitative research" is the qualitative-quantitative binary. Thus it does not seem exaggerated to claim that this binary has become an accepted dividing line in social science research, at least since Lazarsfeld's proclamation in Lerner's (1961) seminal "Quality and Quantity" (Coxon, 2005). Despite its obvious popularity, we proclaim that this binary is less than helpful for our present objective and that the realm of qualitative research could actually gain much by sidestepping the line between qualitative and quantitative methods/research (Dachler, 1997, 2000) or by obliterating it altogether (Rehn, 2002).

Before doing so, however, we must take a look at where the identified binary obtrudes and interferes in the determination of "qualitative research." Arguably, it still seems utterly commonplace to display qualitative research methods against the backdrop of their quantitative counterpart

(e.g. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As Mruck et al. (2005, par.2, paraphrasing Atkinson, 2005) make unmistakably clear, "[p]ositivism and its concomitant quantification are worthy adversaries, indeed making it a struggle, for many, if not most, social scientists aim for scientific respectability. And respectability is assessed most often through the lens of positivism." On the face of it, the positivist epistemology is undoubtedly pervasive (Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998, p.515), though some have hinted that it is in fact "dead" (Mottier, 2005, par.5). Yet, Mottier (2005, par.6) simultaneously admits that the "strongest remnants of positivism are now possibly to be found in the social rather than in the natural sciences." A cursory glance at the prevailing qualitative research thus reveals that many scholars perpetually try to justify their work by relying on the "scientific holy trinity" that is, validity, reliability and generalisation, all of which are cheerfully encouraged by positivist epistemologies (Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998; Lather, 1993; Schwandt, 1996; Seale, 1999).<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the abundance of so-called "new" or "alternative" approaches for imparting the criteria of qualitative research (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Kvale, 1995; Lincoln, 1995; Reason & Rowan, 1981), we argue that it is still possible to recognize the positivist assumptions that the world is objectively observable (read: objectivist epistemology), provided that one uses the pertinent procedures (Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998). What is revealed quite prominently in such endeavors is a listing of preordained criteria which are usually based on or at least influenced by variations of the positivist criteria of validity, and (to a lesser extent) of reliability and generalization.

We argue, on the other hand, that such undertakings are futile to the extent that they fail to recognize that validity, reliability and generalisation represent a set of quality criteria which are commensurable and tenable only to researchers working on the basis of a (post-)positivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Following Sandberg (2005, p.43), we further posit that the "problem with embracing positivistic criteria when justifying

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, putting out "generalisation" as the topic for last year's Workshop for Qualitative Psychology in Velden (Austria) implies making reference to a quality criterion which is quite obviously rooted in positivist ontological and epistemological assumptions about good science and which, therefore, is deemed untenable for a debate on qualitative research. In our view, this state of affairs might lead some to equate "positivist" criteria with "scientific" criteria without reflection; doing so invariably presents some risks and problems regarding the identity of qualitative research.

the results of interpretive approaches is that they are not in accordance with the underlying ontology and epistemology."

To be sure, Sandberg's argument is by no means new, but it does seem to be ignored all too often. Hence, when talking about either qualitative or quantitative research, the focus is often directed towards "methods" and not towards the question of ontology or epistemology. Thus "qualitative research" becomes associated with specific "qualitative methods" such as interviews, ethnographies, and participant observations, while "quantitative research" is conventionally conjoined with "quantitative methods" such as questionnaires, surveys or experiments. As Sandberg (2005) argued, qualitative researchers are presumed to work on behalf of an "interpretative paradigm" (Wilson, 1970) which hinges on theoretical traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, or constructivism (Mottier, 2005).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the interpretive tradition is "supported by and dependent upon a line of thought that is orientated towards meaning, context, interpretation, understanding and reflexivity" (cf. FQS 6(3): Knoblauch, Flick & Maeder, 2005, par. 5). Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, often depart from a "normative paradigm" which corresponds with theoretical traditions such as positivism or post-positivism. Therefore, to avoid having a "subtle realism" (Garrat & Hodkinson, 1998) penetrate our understanding of what can count as "sound" qualitative research, we must be careful with the ontological and epistemological grounding of our arguments.

In addition, we must remember that thinking in dualisms or binaries (read: "dualist ontology"; cf. Sandberg, 2005) such as "qualitative" and "quantitative research" has a long tradition in Western thought (cf. Derrida, 1976; 1981). The operation of binaries is revealed, for instance, in oppositions such as subject-object, female-male, nature-culture, sane-insane (e.g. Hughes, 2002; Plumwood, 1993). Such binary constructions of identity categories have been cogently analysed and/or deconstructed by feminist researchers (cf. Hughes, 2002; Plumwood, 1993), and post-colonial (e.g. Sachs, 1992) and critical scholars (e.g. Derrida, 1976; Lyotard, 1993). Thus it is important to notice the *modus operandi* in binaries: each side always needs the other side in order to become meaningful (Derrida, 1981). For instance, as Hughes (2002, p.15) cogently pinpointed, "[i]n the male-female binary, to be a woman requires us to have a

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<sup>4</sup> We make this specification to account for our understanding of qualitative research and, in particular, to distinguish between interpretive qualitative research (which represents our home ground) and qualitative positivism (Prasad & Prasad, 2002).

corresponding concept of man." By extending the constitutive dynamic of binaries we thus come to see that the concept of "quantitative research" makes sense only in opposition to "qualitative research."

Importantly, while both sides of a given binary need one another to sustain a sense of stability, self or identity, they also entail a hierarchical relationship, meaning that in any pair one side always tends to dominate the other. As described by Derrida (1981, p.41), "[o]ne of the two terms [of the binary] governs the other [...] or has the upper hand", which further implicates that there can be no question of a "peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*" (emphasis in original). Following Derrida, we see that binaries are irrevocably determined by "violent hierarchies;" this holds true both for the opposition between women and men and for that between qualitative and quantitative research. Allegorically speaking, qualitative research can be equated with women's position in the binary system and quantitative research with men's position.<sup>5</sup> That is, the dominating side is always valued as being higher in the hierarchy, as being more sophisticated, competent, beautiful, powerful, etc. — a situation that corresponds to current (and very pervasive) gender stereotypes (cf. Schein, 2001; Spreemann, 2000). Another important consequence of binary constructions is their exclusiveness. It follows from this that the moment one is said to belong to one side of the binary one logically cannot belong to another (Lyotard, 1993). This logic of "either-or" explains why binaries give rise to the "building of camps" and "monocultures" (Eberle, 2005) which support the establishment of ostensibly stable identities, while simultaneously disabling them and closing off any possibility of their intermingling with one another.

Relating binary thinking back to the identity politics of "qualitative research", we have at our disposal a scheme which provides us with some insights regarding, for instance, the problems pertaining to the stipulation of quality criteria. A first problem, briefly alluded to above, is that positivist quality criteria such as generalisation, validity, reliability and objectivity are omnipresent and virulent — which allows them to fortify the binary as well as the hierarchy between qualitative and quantitative methods. If we accept "their" criteria, that is, the quality criteria of the "quantitative camp," as important and indeed superior to those of qualitative research, we perpetuate the dominant position of the former rationality (cf. also Fielding & Schreier, 2001).

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<sup>5</sup> See also Gherardi and Turner's (1999) insightful essay "Real men don't collect soft data."

A good example of this subtle pervasiveness of the positivist criteria occurs in a section of Eberle's (2005, par.11) article where he supports the construction of a centre for qualitative research in Switzerland. By assigning an autonomous architecture to qualitative research, Eberle seeks to raise its very visibility and thus to lift it onto the same hierarchical level as quantitative research. Yet, only a few sentences later he claims that this would imply "an investment in the quality of qualitative research" (Eberle, 2005, par.11) because it would otherwise attract "students as well as practitioners who are not at ease with demanding quantitative procedures and who expect that in qualitative research they can substitute methodological sophistication with common sense."

Three questions force themselves upon us at this stage. First, why does Eberle highlight how demanding quantitative procedures are and at the same time talk about qualitative ones as being close to common sense? By doing so he suggests that quantitative procedures require a certain specialist knowledge and training, while qualitative techniques can be easily handled using everyday knowledge. Second, why would these ostensibly uninformed students and practitioners have the power to define what qualitative research is? Taking their judgements as seriously as Eberle does almost treats them as experts and thus may give them more voice than they deserve. And third, how does he legitimise his assumption that the quality of qualitative research is not good enough today and needs this prospective improvement towards higher rigour?

Eberle, so it seems, introduces these premises in a subtle way. He hence continues to argue for more rigour in qualitative research on behalf of a rhetoric that trades on a binary that we might describe as "good rigorous [quantitative] research" and "predominantly bad, without quality criteria (anything goes) research which is qualitative." More precisely, quoting Silverman (2001, p.34), Eberle and Elliker say the rigour they are arguing for should be achieved by defining (general) quality criteria for qualitative research, which are juxtaposed with, for instance, "anecdotalism, the habit of many qualitative researchers to present a few, 'telling' examples of some apparent phenomenon, without any attempt to analyse less clear (or even contradictory) data" (Eberle & Elliker, 2005, par.12). Evoking a binary that distinguishes between "good" and "bad" and associating it with "quantitative" and "qualitative" research, Eberle and Elliker are very much in danger of falling into a positivist rhetoric of "rigorous research" which will do nothing but reify the qualitative-quantitative binary and its hierarchical relationship.

Departing from these elaborations, it is our firm contention that the opposition between qualitative and quantitative research demeans rather

than strengthens qualitative research and that qualitative researchers must come up with an answer about what makes their work valuable and unique starting from assumptions beyond the quantitative orthodoxy. It follows that if our objective is to empower qualitative research/methods within our scientific community, we might be well advised to put forward autonomous quality standards that ignore the dominant logic of positivism (cf. Kiener & Schanne, 2001). This would entail, among other things, building research communities that work on behalf of independent values, awards, scholarships and grants, journals, centres, etc. This proposal is much in line with feminist strategies to build "women only" spaces or "safe spaces" (Hill Collins, 1991) in order to create a community for women that does not interfere with men's spaces. Such initiatives reveal that, if we are to leverage the inferior pole of the binary, we must disturb the deadlocked hierarchical relationships of the system. Additionally, as the dominant term of a binary can never be "completely stable or secure, since it is dependent on that which is excluded" (Finlayson, 1999, p.64), it is always possible to undermine the quantitative-qualitative binary by calling into question the very root assumptions of positivism. Such a nitty-gritty approach would necessitate direct confrontation and continuous discussions with "quantitative researchers," but also with qualitative researchers who support these assumptions. As we see it, our paper is but one preliminary step in this endeavour. We are writing it in order to deconstruct what we perceive as the predominant way of writing about quality criteria in "qualitative research."

To this end, we want to point out another problem that derives from the qualitative-quantitative binary: the homogenisation (Plumwood, 1993) of the category "qualitative research." What we mean by homogenisation is that if one places qualitative in opposition to quantitative one gets to elicit the impression that each side of the binary represents a homology wherefore one gets to ignore the irrevocable diversity of qualitative research. By implication, following Foucault (1984, p.197), it is facile to understand how "the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences." Yet, to accept *prima facie* that qualitative and quantitative research build a homogeneity would be a gross misunderstanding since both signifiers would be bereft of their undeniable variety and diversity (Hammersley, 1995). Thus, it is harmful to homogenise qualitative research because whenever doing so conceals the richness and variety within its practices and theoretical assumptions. Consequently, adhering to seemingly clear-cut categories through a stereo-

typical representation of the respective poles not only denies the differences within each category but also helps to maintain the hierarchy between quantitative and qualitative research.

Again, the debate on homogeneous categories has been prominent, for instance, in recent feminist publications (cf. Evans, 1995) that point out that the category "women" is inappropriate for accounting for all the potentially infinite possibilities of "being a woman." When women are labelled stereotypically, they are all subjected to a single category which then keeps the hierarchy within the dualism of women and men. What about black women, Moslem women, women in leadership positions, women being mothers? Are they all the same and thus capable of being subsumed under a single code? Obviously not. Be that as it may, grouping all women by using stereotypical characteristics makes the label "woman" more visible than other possible features, for instance being a skilled engineer.

Returning to the issue of research, to scrutinise the impression of clear-cut, distinct and uniform categories, we need to enhance the visibility of both qualitative and quantitative research's diversity, equivocity and heterology. Hence focusing on multiplicity instead of unity, we can no longer hold the biased polarity, with qualitative research being on the one end and quantitative on the other, or the situation in which "any mention of qualitative research seems to conjure up images of diverse philosophical perspectives, research techniques and procedures, and styles of presentation" (Prasad & Prasad, 2002, p.5).

As Prasad and Prasad make clear, qualitative research does include an abundance of hybrids such as qualitative positivism which makes it intuitively compelling to believe that not all quantitative researchers work on behalf of a positivist paradigm, nor do all qualitative researchers or students try to get away with unsophisticated methods (Eberle, 2005). This said, we must all admit that qualitative research derives its inspiration from such a wide range of sources that we must relinquish any assumption of unity.

By and large, the 2005 September issue of *FQS* appears to be very valuable because it highlights the differences in qualitative research in European countries; in particular the qualitative-quantitative binary seems to have concerned research scholars in France much less than those in other European countries (cf. Angermüller, 2005).

"Whatever the reason, it appears that the boundary between qualitative and quantitative research is not as distinct as it is in most other countries. It is as if the weak impact of the interpretive paradigm on French methodological social scientific thinking was the cause that made the

cleavage between qualitative and quantitative research appear [of] much lesser importance in France than elsewhere" (Knoblauch et al., 2005, par.5).

Exploring what is "taken for granted" in other countries about different versions of qualitative research could provide some valuable insights and help us step beyond the qualitative-quantitative binary when trying to (re)construct what "qualitative research" might become.

Consequently, if we take up the effort of leveraging qualitative research within our scientific community, we simultaneously need to reduce existing hierarchies and establish autonomous identities. As a first step towards that end, we should continue and increase the search for diversity, but not only across nations (as in the case of FQS 6(3)). Exploring different approaches towards data collection and analysis, methodology, theory, paradigms, philosophy of science and epistemology, we might discover even more differences than we initially expected. Following the characteristics of the interpretative paradigm and considering the different levels and spheres of what has so far been called "qualitative research," we need to take a close look to determine if we really mean the same thing while talking about interviews, discourse analysis, constructivism, etc. FQS so far has done a wonderful job in that respect: it has initiated a debate about the different approaches of qualitative research. Yet, what we are still missing in most discussions about "qualitative research" is the paradigmatic level, that is, a debate on the level of philosophy of science. Discussing these issues and pinpointing the basic assumptions of our research in order to define our standpoint would help us all see that it is in fact a misunderstanding to exclusively relate existing differences between and within qualitative and quantitative research to the level of "methods." To put this slightly differently, good research is not only a question of sound methods; it is equally a matter of epistemology, philosophy of science, paradigms, theory, methodology, data collection and analysis (Eberle, 2005).

In the face of the irreducibly rich diversity of qualitative approaches, what we are suggesting is that we cannot define "good" qualitative research by defining fixed and transcendental quality criteria. Rather, in acknowledging the uniqueness of the single (qualitative) approaches, we are called upon to define and in fact to invent, quality criteria for the respective study at hand while still considering the epistemological position of the respective project. Hence, if we think of the research question as defining methodology and methods (Mottier, 2005, par.2), we concomitantly claim that epistemology defines the criteria for judgement. Having provisionally argued that the qualitative-quantitative binary is futile and unhelpful, we

would like now to reflect upon a different kind of signification for "qualitative research" and, by doing so lay a foundation we can use to change and extend its very meaning.

### 3. Science versus non-science: On the etymology of science as "making knowledge"

"A new archivist has been appointed. But has anyone actually appointed him? Is he not rather acting on his own instructions? Certain malevolent people say that he is the new representative of structural technology or technocracy." (Deleuze, 1988; cited in Jones, 2004, p.50)

Arguably, the qualitative-quantitative binary is by far the most prominent frame for representing and arguing for (or against) qualitative research. However, we would like to intensify the discussion on the identity politics of qualitative research and show how binary distinctions determine what does and does not count as scientific research. At this juncture, let us return to the discussion of a Swiss Centre for Qualitative Research introduced by Thomas Eberle in the 2005 May edition of FQS 6(2).<sup>6</sup> Eberle points out that the goal of the initiative would be to reach a "consensus on quality standards and teaching requirements, and to explore the viability of an archive and resource centre for qualitative research" (Eberle, 2005, par.1). In delineating the criteria for inclusion in the archive, he specifies that "[p]ostmodern approaches which proclaim that 'anything goes' and which draw no distinction between social science, journalism and art, and which call the methodological practices of qualitative inquiry a 'bricolage' [...] are not particularly helpful" (Eberle, 2005, par.11).

Given Eberle's claim, we should hardly be surprised at what unfolds in front of us: the construction of another binary. This binary, so it seems, makes it possible to distinguish between proper qualitative research (respectively social science) and its "supplement" (Derrida, 1976), which takes the form of non-research such as fiction, art, and journalism. Hence, we can see that Eberle stimulates, by means of an essential "dividing practice"

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<sup>6</sup> This initiative has its roots in a conference co-organised by the Swiss Information and Data Archive Service for the Social Sciences (SIDOS) in April 2002 where leading researchers deliberated about the current peculiarities and future requirements of qualitative research in Switzerland (Eberle, 2004).

(Rabinow, 1984, p.8), a normalising judgement that "introduces [...] the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved [...] [here] the rule [must] be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected, or as an optimum toward which one must move" (Foucault, 1984, p.195). We thus construe Eberle's text as engendering a decisive game of the insider-outsider and as controlling the enunciation of qualitative research, that is, what qualifies as qualitative research and how it must be practised, conducted, disseminated, etc. It follows from this that a research centre must be reflected as an institutional domain that operates and thrives on a particular rationality and that advocates a certain and, importantly, exclusive kind of knowledge (Foucault, 2000). Eberle quite obviously seems to invoke the archive as a sort of "expert system" through which certain practices come to be described, categorised and valued. While it is beyond question that the repercussions of archiving are univocally positive, Derrida (cited in Cohen, 2001, p.1) reminds us that "[t]he technical structure of the archiving archive also determines [...] its relationship to the future. The archiving produces as much as it records the event."<sup>7</sup>

Hence, to understand the "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1984) that Eberle is so keen to suggest, we must look more deeply into his attempt to draw a demarcation line between research and non-research, that is, between art and journalism and genuine social science research, because this distinction presupposes a particular rationality about what actually constitutes research. In other words, to grant such a distinction, some distinguishing features must belong uniquely to one tradition and by logical extension be lacking in the other. Eberle provides the reader with two arguments that seem to justify his partition.

The first difference Eberle identifies between social scientific research and non-research is that the social sciences rely on approaches which "make explicit in what way they employ methodological procedures which can be learned and discussed" whereas the latter represent more of "an art which can only be judged by the authority of some charismatic 'master'" (par.11). While Eberle is by no means the only person to think this way, it is interesting to note that his argument comes to hinge upon a peculiar fusion of method and science; thus it gives the impression that just by properly explicating one's method it will be possible to "translate from the field [...] to the printed page [...]." This translation is deemed vital;

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<sup>7</sup> For a more extensive elaboration of the issue of archiving consult FQS issue 1(3) on Text, Archive, Re-Analysis and the more recent FQS issues 6(1) on Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data and 6(2) on Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving, and Reuse.

without it, "science has no transparency, no basis for replicability, no way to persuade" (Hardy & Clegg, 1997, p.146).

The second rationale Eberle puts forward is that qualitative researchers need to "present their whole dataset to the public in the same way as most quantitative researchers now do" (par.12). The underlying logic of this second argument is that only if researchers make their data available can other researchers carry out "secondary analysis" and "foster critical debate" (par.12). Eberle rests his account on an understanding of research with two premises worth examining. He assumes, first, that research is primarily a matter of transparently applying proper research methods and, second, that interpretations can be judged post hoc regarding their plausibility, truthfulness, etc. Given this state of argumentation, it is hardly surprising that such a logic hinders our ability to see fiction, narratives of the self, performance science, polyvocal texts, responsive readings, aphorisms, comedy and satire, visual presentations, and mixed genres (Hardy & Clegg, 1997) as legitimate forms of scientific knowledge. Essentially, this logic does not challenge the existence of a natural dividing line between (social) science and non-research, and thus leaves completely unexamined the question of knowledge's status and legitimisation (Czarniawska, 2004).

At this point we would like to call into question Eberle's assumption that proper methods are sufficient to entitle one's research as "scientific." The pivotal problem we sense in such approaches is that any over-involvement, or dare we say obsession, with method (i.e. our efforts to "improve" them) is quite detrimental to our objective of producing exciting and valuable knowledge. As we move "closer" to (the truth of) our subject matter by means of an ever-heightening engagement with method we risk thwarting the aesthetic appeal of the text. Thus, it seems, a dilemma materialises between the precision of method and a given text's aesthetic quality. Or, as Van Maanen (1995, p.139) eloquently observed,

"it seems to me that the more we try to be precise and exact, the less we are able to say and that the harder we try to follow a rigorous [...] system, the more we are tempted to fill it out with uninspired observation [...]. This state of affairs recommends that we put our theories forward with an awareness of a haunting irony: To be determinate, we must be indeterminate."

What we are saying here is that method, at whatever level of sophistication, does not necessarily guarantee that a particular piece of qualitative research truly "works" (Deleuze, 1995). If we follow Bloom's assertion that "there is no method [...] there is yourself, and you are highly idiosyncratic"

(cf. Salusinszky, 1987, p.67), then, to put it bluntly, we can no longer "hide" behind the argument of having followed the state-of-the-art rules: the proper technique of qualitative research.

With this in mind, we must first recognise that Eberle's enunciation of research is canonical and thus well accepted; etymologically it can be traced back to the modernist understandings, respectively of "scientific inquiry" (1939)<sup>8</sup> and "non-arts studies" (1978). We should consider, however, that science — before it had been construed in contrast to the arts and hence in conjunction with rigorous procedures and rules which gave it a pompous and meaningful position in post-industrial society (Lyotard, 1984) — was interpreted differently. That is, the word science, which derives from Greek "epistemonikos" (making knowledge) and from Latin "scientificus" (scientia: knowledge and ficus: making), originally alluded to the contingent and creative potential of knowledge (creation). Given this etymological sense of the term, we prefer an understanding of qualitative research that thrives on the idea of "searching closely" (from French "rechercher", 1539) which we deem more apposite for venturing beyond the modernist understanding of science, especially its over-alliance with method. Importantly, both of the above etymologies — "scientific inquiry" and "non-art studies" — testify that the meaning of research or science / scientific has only recently been used to draw a line between the arts or philosophy and the kind of scientific method and knowledge that is commonplace today in social science and humanities departments. In contrast, the notion of "searching closely" embarks on an exegesis of research that appoints appropriate space to creativity and opens up towards multiple ways of knowledge creation.

This being said, we would like to vote for an understanding of research that liberates us from the "straitjacket" of method. As mentioned before, for one's research to qualify as qualitative does not presuppose that one adheres to certain (pre-established) procedures or methods, nor is there any justifiable imperative to disclose one's "data" so others can judge their accuracy. Quite likely, "searching closely" does away with the quality criteria of the positivist paradigm; we additionally concede that we do not mean to rashly sidestep the discussion on quality. By arguing for a novel understanding of research and science we have at our disposal good arguments for blurring the boundaries of our historical heritage of qualitative research, and to actively seek to "resist the rules of positivism, or to be confined, policed, and disciplined by outdated notions of its limits" (Prasad

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<sup>8</sup> These and the following dates and significations are derived from the Online Etymology Dictionary; cf. <http://www.etymonline.com/>.

& Prasad, 2002, p.6). As a consequence of what we have discussed so far, in the next section we describe why we must rethink the accepted limits of what is called "qualitative research" and reflect on what we can gain by importing or actively inheriting textual practices that have thus far been kept away from the canon of qualitative research.

#### 4. Rejuvenating qualitative research: Some postmodern suggestions

"Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance." (De Saussure, 1974, p.33)

As mentioned above, one of Eberle's primary aims is to facilitate a consensus regarding the quality standards of qualitative research as well as the "minimal requirements for the training of students in qualitative methods" (Eberle, 2005, par.13). What we deem problematic here is that he is trying to base his effort on consensus. Where it is accepted that consensus has considerable power to establish the norm, to normalise a particular understanding of qualitative research (cf. above), it becomes clear that every time a group adopts a prescriptive code it eradicates any possibility of knowing differently. Therefore, we defy consensus as the *modus operandi* for channelling the interpretation of qualitative research (in Switzerland as well as elsewhere); instead we would like to return to what we said earlier about the diversity of qualitative research and invoke Lyotard (1984) in order to delineate a viable alternative.

In referring to Lyotard as one of the major figures in postmodern theory, we are reminded that Eberle's own conception of postmodernism is utterly negative, since it is rhetorically tied up with the notion of "anything goes" so as to give the impression that postmodernism is nothing more than a limitless and disoriented tradition. His appropriation of "anything goes," of course, is utterly cunning: it makes it possible to repudiate postmodernism by alluding to the commonsense assumption that its relativistic supposition represents a nihilistic and hence unworthy mode of thought (Carr, 1988).<sup>9</sup> In opposition to that view, we favour a different

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<sup>9</sup> As many know, the term "anything goes" is quite prominently linked to Feyerabend's (1975) seminal book "Against Method" which has often been deliberately misread by its critics to undermine and ridicule postmodern theory.

view of postmodernism. It places some emphasis on enlivening "qualitative research" and provides a rationale that works out the opportunities inherent in difference; that is, it highlights the problems that would arise if it were eliminated. This brings us to the point where we admit that "postmodernism" is an elusive concept which we partly use for the lack of a better signifier.<sup>10</sup> However, while we accept that postmodernism has stipulated the crisis of representation in order to put forward a language-based understanding of science (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.17), we still believe in the merits of this code because it is important to show the value of being open toward newness.

In order to facilitate difference within "qualitative research," we turn to Lyotard and advocate his "politics of difference" (Smart, 1993) which actively seeks to counteract universal judgements and theories (i.e. meta-narratives; Lyotard, 1984). With its operational principle of dissensus (and not the consensus suggested by Eberle), Lyotard's politics is grounded on an openness towards multiple language games;<sup>11</sup> still, what distinguishes and thus legitimises it is the very fact that it conveys a tolerance for complete otherness, or what Lyotard (1988) himself called the "un-

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<sup>10</sup> The adjectives "postmodern" and "postmodernist" are among the most often used in contemporary social science and humanities writing. At times they are contrasted with "modern" and "modernist," and sometimes not; at times they are used synonymously, sometimes not. We do not aim to sort out the semantic confusion once and for all, but we do wish to propose a temporary order for the purposes of this text. We therefore use the term "postmodern" to denote a special kind of attitude, a sensibility which has its roots in one or another kind of disenchantment with what LYOTARD calls "the modern project" (1984). This exegesis of "postmodern" thus comprises an "attitude of scepticism towards the solutions of modernism ("more control, better control") combined with the realisation that actions aimed at wringing order out of disorder seem to be necessary, albeit they are at best only temporarily successful" (Czarniawska, 1999, pp.26-27). On this note, we understand the notion of "postmodernism" not as a distinct historical period, but as an epistemology that is counter to modernist paradigms such as logical positivism (cf. for example Cooper & Burrell, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> Notice that Lyotard & Thébaud (1985) draw inspiration from Wittgenstein's "language game" theory.

presentable" or the "differend."<sup>12</sup> Lyotard (1984, p.xxv) thereby makes unmistakably clear that "postmodern knowledge is [...] not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy." In his treatise on difference and knowledge Lyotard describes the most powerful antidote against the delimiting forces of unifying theories — which quite clearly includes the kind of restricted orthodoxy of qualitative research that Eberle (2005) proclaimed. This antidote is hence meant to resist the fixed boundaries of signification and to refuse freezing the free play of language games. This plea for an "irreducible plurality" of language games is thereby well in line with Feyerabend's (1975) advocacy of pluralism, specifically the "epistemological anarchism" he established in his still timely "Against Method." There Feyerabend states that there has never been a unified science and that there has always been, however oblique, a multitude of practiced sciences, which more often than not stood in harsh contrast with each other. In the following paragraphs we elaborate on how we can conceive of the "maceration" of our understanding of research and/or science as a necessary prerequisite for extending our ideas on what qualitative research could become.

#### 4.1 Innovation through boundary-crossing

"An invention always presupposes some illegality, the breaking of an implicit contract; it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things, it disregards properties." (Derrida, 1992, p.312)

Because we take seriously Feyerabend's scrutiny of the omnipotence of (positivistic) science, we are keen to discuss some of its implied ramifications for qualitative research against the backdrop of Serres' (2000) notion of "cross-fertilization". Here, we use that term to signify the extension of epistemology through approaches that are conventionally deemed non-scientific; we assume that not all streams of science proceed by means of "paradigm shifts" (Kuhn, 1970); rather they proceed by blithely ignoring

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<sup>12</sup> The "differend", following Lyotard (1988), represents the silencing of a player in a language game. It occurs when there are no agreed procedures for deciding what is appropriate and legitimate (be it an idea, an aesthetic principle, or a grievance) to be presented in a particular domain of discourse.

ruling conventions (e.g. verification or falsification, cf. Feyerabend, 1975) in order to impose a radically new view on social reality.

Assuming that "progress" in science depends just as much on aesthetic creativity as on better theories (Breuer, 2000; Huber, 2001) and on un-daunted boundary-crossing, we would like to exemplify this assertion on the grounds of sociology, which has been the dominant discipline in recent issues of FQS as well as the discipline from which the September 2005 edition of FQS insolently tried to define the state of the art of qualitative research. In that context, what we want to claim is that theories and models now accepted as being "sociological" initially necessitated the inclusion rather than exclusion of innovative thinking. Hence, in response to Eberle's rebuttal of "postmodern bricoleurs", we like to assert that if sociologists had always been rejecting movements external to their own academic discipline there would never have been any possibility of innovative development. To illustrate this argument, we refer to Game and Metcalfe (1996). They show convincingly that Comte, who seems to have coined the term "sociology," is described in many textbooks as the founding figure of academic sociology. Several other names lead the lists in contemporary textbooks, according to Game and Metcalfe's meticulous analysis: Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Mill, Mead, Gramsci, Adorno, etc. Where contemporary sociology seems to thrive on those big names, respectively their work, we are told by Game and Metcalfe that many of those "celebrities" either worked before the invention of sociology or actively rejected any association with academic sociology. Game and Metcalfe conclude that, if in fact many so-called sociologists were not "really" sociologists, the volume of university textbooks would shrink to a peculiarly small size. Importantly, this is not meant to say that sociology is a sloppy or rogue discipline where "guards patrol in the name of the founding fathers, protecting the discipline's "integrity" from the incursions, profanations and seductions of improper sociology" (Game & Metcalf, 1996, p.74). Instead, we would like to affirm that, as in any discipline, the boundaries between insiders and outsiders represent a distinct cultural creation.

Regarding the discipline of psychology, our own academic home ground, Parker (2004) particularly reminds us that some of the discipline's most creative methods and approaches were quite evidently derived from outside it. For instance, the "qualitative turn" in psychology quite evidently borrowed ideas and developments from other disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology, literary and language studies and, of course, sociology (Burton & Kagan, 1998). The tenet we are eager to postulate

here is that it is not necessarily a misdeed to "breach" (Van Maanen, 1995), that is, to make use of styles of writing that are not in accord with conventional textual practices in the respective field of "science." On the contrary, we argue that it is commendable to take measures that will help us better explore our scholarly black boxes and to harvest the prolific results that become possible through the influx and appropriation of paradigms, genres and tropes from other scholarly disciplines. Applying SERRES' notion of "cross-fertilization" to qualitative research would thus entail permission to take ideas, models and methods not only from neighbouring academic disciplines but equally so from literature, movies, poems, art, etc. Additionally, following De Certeau's (1984) advice to resist the purity of a singular unity (as revealed, for instance, in Eberle & Ellicker, 2005), one should deliberately borrow from whatever appears inspirational (Czarniawska, 2001). Such a move could possibly bring us to the point where, as Lyotard and Thébaud (1985, p.5) remind us, we might start asking: "Is there a real difference between a theory and fiction?", and to ask "Don't we have the right to present theoretical statements under the form of fictions, in the form of fictions? Not *under* the form, but *in* the form" (emphasis in original).

Admittedly, we are deliberately pushing the envelope here, but this, in our assessment, is necessary to foster the awareness that if we sustain academic/disciplinary boundaries and the prevailing understandings of qualitative research, we suppress inventive forms of knowledge creation. Yet, it appears doubtful at best that the genres, styles, tropes or more general modes of representation that have been excluded from academic discourse by means of inherited convention will be given credence as proper means for our scholarly endeavours. As a consequence, in the next section, we re-elaborate the insights derived so far in order to investigate their implications for issuing quality criteria.

#### 4.2 A plea for aesthetic knowledge

What follows most notably from the advocacy of radical pluralism, as endorsed by both Lyotard and Feyerabend, is that qualitative research does not lend itself to the formulation of universal quality criteria (cf. also chap. 2). Provided that our exegesis of qualitative research as "searching closely" and "making knowledge" implies a particular sensitivity to the historical and cultural context of the respective inquiry as well as to the research question being investigated, it is beyond question that the quality criteria being employed to evaluate and judge a particular piece of research must be sufficiently receptive of its very particularities. That is, in opposition to

positivist research which envisages quality criteria that arrogate transcendental practicability and thereby provide an "iron grid" which invalidates everything that escapes its very scope (cf. above), we would like to follow Parker's (2004, p.2) suggestion that "the criteria for good [qualitative] research are *guidelines that are closed enough to guide evaluation and open enough to enable transformation of assumptions*" (emphasis in original).

Parker's account of quality criteria thus engenders the image of a tight-rope act: it requires a vigilant balancing between the two poles of "anything goes" (conceived in Eberle's narrow sense) and "dogmatic prescription" (in the totalitarian sense of positivist science). Being resolute against the latter sort of prescriptive judgement, we also acknowledge that as research traditions multiply and researchers extend our fortified understandings of good science, we risk becoming impotent, that is, unable to judge the quality of a given piece of work. Yet, returning to Lyotard (1992) in our quest for a "way out", we are allegorically reminded that qualitative research might in principle not be "governed by pre-established rules" and, therefore, that it should not "be judged according to a determinant judgement, by the application of given categories to this text or work" (p.15). However heterodox this statement might appear, the appeal to counteract a view of quality criteria as God-like rules actually complies well with Bergman and Coxon (2005, par.1) who, in a previous FQS article, said they did "not believe that the quality of qualitative research can be encapsulated a priori within a set of rigid rules."

Following Serres (2000), we are compelled to endorse the idea that worthwhile qualitative research may be less a matter of ever more sophisticated methods than a question of imagination, whereas imagination also heralds the postmodern focus on the aesthetic (Welsch, 1991) and affective (Grossberg, 1992) aspects of our research undertakings. In other words, while discussions on qualitative research have predominantly focused on its philosophical groundings, especially its "methodism" (Rehn, 2002), a postmodern perspective would stress that (qualitative) research must emphasise the aesthetic aspect over the functional. Given this, we claim that the iconoclasm being implicated in Feyerabend's rejection of the division between science and non-science could result in a creative shift from method to style. If we construe qualitative research as both a craft and an artful practice, then what renders a respective piece of qualitative research worth heeding (i.e. of high quality) is not only its capacity to present an ostensibly objective matter in a precise, mimetic way. Instead, the cornerstone of quality would be its ability to disrupt our commonsensical understanding of the matter by means of imaginative representation and by illustrating how a respective truth claim comes into being

and becomes legitimated. In consequence, if we reflect on "qualitative research" in terms of its ability to impart knowledge that induces novel understandings, that enables us to see the world in a "different light", we begin to imagine that the imperative of qualitative research would be to produce work that transforms the coordinates by which a topic is usually understood.

Speaking about quality as aesthetic practice would thus lead to the question of whether or not a particular piece of qualitative research "discovers" or "constructs" something new (cf. Breuer, 2000) and whether or not it can reflexively embed its account within and against its respective historical and cultural context. Thus, the notion of imagination, which we have employed as a meta-symbol for transgressing the "moral economy" of method and un(der)reflected quality standards, is deemed worthwhile to the extent that it emphasises that (qualitative) research must not solely be appropriated to be good but equally to excite, evoke and surprise (Lacan, 1977). What we further want to foster here is the recognition that we all too easily forget that "good" research can in fact coincide with beautiful work (cf. Reichertz, 2000). Importantly, such a leap would quite noticeably entail a transition from content to form. This would mean, among other things, that by virtue of new tropes and language games, our research would get to engender "imaginative play" (Bruner, 1986, p.4). Still, we must be careful not to misinterpret such an "aesthetisation of knowledge" as an attempt to put content into oblivion. Instead, we must balance form and content so that we can facilitate new ways of knowing (episteme) while we simultaneously recruit "the reader's imagination" in order to "enlist him [or her] in the performance of meaning under the guidance of the texts" (Bruner, 1986, p.6).

Admittedly, the plea "to develop aesthetic knowledge" (Gherardi, 2003, p.355) has a distinct (though still minor) history (e.g., Kaufman, 1992; Sandelowski, 1995). Importantly, we see some indications that the interest in aesthetics is grounded in the Italian (cf. Bruni & Gobo, 2005), American (Gergen, Chrisler & Locicero, 1999) Austrian (Weiskopf, 1999) and British tradition (Clough, 2004; Linstead & Höpfl, 2000), but at least to our knowledge, hardly an echo is to be heard in conjunction with Swiss or German qualitative research. This lack leads us to provide some concluding comments, especially trying to show how we personally envision the prospective agenda of "qualitative research."

## 5. Concluding comments

"The question before us [...] is not whether or not one closes, but of how one closes." (Jones, 2004, p.57)

Within the confines of the present paper, we have focused on developing a space where we could reflect critically on the demarcation lines that ultimately channel us in conducting our research and which determine the sort of knowledge being produced in the name of qualitative research or social science at large. Therefore we have not aimed primarily to obliterate the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, and between (qualitative) research and non-research; instead we have tried to nurture a sensitivity towards the delimiting ramifications of those identity politics which devise qualitative research as a distinct and fixed kernel.

The pivotal premise underlying our argument has been that we must acknowledge the fundamental role of binaries and the delimiting force of denotation. In particular, we tried to point out that binaries do not only function to sustain the system (i.e., qualitative research) by virtue of marking off unities. Rather, we are equally called upon to see that binaries are always constitutive moments as they distinguish between a "this" and "not this", between the inside and the outside. Having highlighted the constitutive element of the binary and its implied hierarchy, we find Cooper's (1990) work both helpful and inspiring. In concrete terms, he reminds us that we must not necessarily think of the boundary as a strict line, as the instance that separates the two sides of the binary; rather, we should see it as a "source of paradox and contradiction" and as a "complex, ambiguous structure around which are focused both the formal and informal organizing processes of social life" (pp.168-169). By speaking of ambiguity and contradiction we see more clearly that boundaries are always the subject of negotiation and, therefore, amenable to change.

Having exploited Eberle's outline of a Swiss Center for Qualitative Research to make our point, we have shown how innovations coming from outside the ancestral tradition have often enabled the established disciplines to extend their modes of knowledge creation. Based on our deliberations, we have emphasised that relying on pre-ordained definitions of qualitative research would require many knowledgeable and valuable voices to remain unheard, with the result that only a small fraction of stakes would be satisfied. Yet, it has not been our aim to make definitive suggestions about what should prospectively count as "qualitative research", as this would simply mimic the logic of the modernist teleology.

Instead we tried to destabilise Eberle's attempt to fix the meaning of "qualitative research" and by doing so to release some centrifugal forces within our dialogue on the matter.

In line with Weiskopf (1999, p.16), we suggest that it is vital to "appreciate, and indeed learn to live with the uncertain, undetermined and undeterminable" and to "emotionally and aesthetically appreciate the unready, and indeed the "undecidable". In contrast to those who construe qualitative research as a distinct and closed homology, we opted for an imagery that hails polyphony and thrives on stylistic multiplication and therefore is inclusive of voices and representational practices which are related as much to fiction, literature, poetry, etc. as to science.

The issue of quality within such a heteroglossic<sup>13</sup> understanding (Bakhtin, 1981) of qualitative research was meant to embrace the question of what styles, genres, and tropes are pertinent for tackling our respective research questions and what contexts and research topics favour this over that style of representation. Arguably, the focus of such an endeavour quite noticeably stipulates a shift from seeking generalisable truth statements to discovering contextualised and locally emergent stories, that is, "small narratives" (Lyotard, 1984). The creative and synergetic conjoining of a critical and affirmative trajectory has been most eloquently expressed in the September 2005 edition of FQS: "we need to know more about what is happening in the different (national, disciplinary, medial) 'peripheries' to learn about the conceptual roots of our current practices and to act in a future globalised academia, opening our minds to the fascinating diversity (and unity?) of our memories, images, styles, focus, strategies and life-worlds as qualitative researchers" (Mruck et al., 2005, par.9).

Having posited that analytic rigor cannot possibly be separated from stylistic/aesthetic effects, it is conceivable that the arguments running through this paper most notably revolve around issues of imagination and innovation. As no method, model or theory will ever be capable of devising a collective and consensual path for science, we insist upon the utility of Feyerabend's anarchistic theory of knowledge (Feyerabend, 1975; Lakatos & Feyerabend, 1999) since he makes it clear that we can only obtain novel ways of understanding if we give in to new or yet elided movements, that is, alternatives to the status quo. Thus, in our understanding, innovation comes to circumscribe two venues for development. The first kind of innovation proceeds by enlisting a new argument to the established order. The second, more radical, kind of innovation accords

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<sup>13</sup> From Russian "raznorecie": multilingualness.

with Derrida's (1992) understanding of genuine invention,<sup>14</sup> meaning invention which transforms established rules and thereby turns the "paradoxical into the accepted" (Czarniawska, 2001, p.14). We believe both forms of invention are needed if "qualitative research" is to progress, or if we are to better imbue and revive its realm. This said, we do not intend to throw out the baby with the bath water; that is, we prefer to conceive tradition and innovation, old and new, as complementary, not exclusionary (cf. Nentwich, 2004). Entailed through this logic of synergy and (non-hierarchical) supplementation, we envision a relationship of mutual inspiration between the approved and the minor, the beautiful and the useful, the aesthetic and the practical type of qualitative research. In such a relationship, both parts of the polarity derive their energy through their coexistence with the other.

Against all odds, we would like to express our deep belief that only through an ongoing dialogue or "multilogue" (Dachler & Hosking, 1995) can we extend the idea of qualitative research beyond its current confines. Our understanding of such a negotiation comes closest to Bakhtin's (1981) idea of "dialogisation", which circumscribes a conversation between oppositional views without targeting either consensus or closure. Though we must anticipate that such a conversation will be riddled with conflict and antagonism, our aim is neither to suspend Eberle's suggestion and replace it with our own "postmodern alternative" nor to negotiate a definite agreement on quality criteria and, by extension, what is to be coined "qualitative research." Our suggestion, quite to the contrary, has been to stimulate movement or "transgression" through which we cross ostensibly stable and orchestrated boundaries and, accordingly, are called upon to open "a free space for innovation and creativity" (Martin, Gutman & Hutton, 1988, p.163). By implication, we are curiously awaiting responses from the anonymous audience to which our plea is addressed and thus are grateful for the chance to use the FQS as a springboard for pursuing and intensifying future deliberations.

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<sup>14</sup> Derrida (1992) made a thoughtful distinction between the kind of (pseudo) invention which brings out the same, a "mimesis" so to speak (Hobson, 2001), and the sort of invention that responds to the call from the wholly other.

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**Integrated methodology: From self-observation to debate groups to the design of intercultural educational materials and teacher training**

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We present a study, which has been planned to build and to apply a model of design of teaching methods that favours the intercultural learning-teaching process. The research process has been carried out in the geographic area of the autonomous region of Castilla-La Mancha. It was mainly focused on Primary and Secondary Education (cases have been studied in each phase) – both centres are respectively situated in the cities of Valdepeñas and Manzanares.

This area is partly described in Don Quixote's book. This year is the fifth centenary of Cervantes, the author of the book. We have wanted to contribute to his memory with our teaching research task. We continue with the studies presented in 2002 in Perlova, and 2003 in Blaubeuren.

Continuing with the work developed in the previous years and as a compromise of it, to advance with the qualitative methodology worry us. We are also interested in depth about the methodological processes (almost subprocesses of a big qualitative significance): observation (self-observation) and debate groups, we talk in our next publication about the line of the mixed-integrated methods (Medina & Domínguez in press, *Revista Española de Pedagogía*).

Why do we understand as a big contribution the reflection and analysis of the information, by the self-observation and the discussion groups around an essential core of the teaching work: The design of teaching methods for an intercultural teaching-learning process.

We have confirmed in this research and in the early one: "The observation process of the practice: analysis of the competencies," that both methodological processes are essential for knowing the lively pre-recorded aspects of the teacher-student researching action.

Sense of the methodological integration: The mixture between self-observation and the discussion groups

The objective and basis of our work are self-observation and discussion groups. What are they? What do they contribute to the improvement of the application and the design of teaching methods for the development of an intercultural education? What is their value in the global design of the investigation?

These two methodological processes mean the research of the most valuable information for knowing the appropriate teaching materials, for the improvement of the intercultural learning process.

The self-observation is the attentive knowledge of the practice of teachers and students. The self-observation requires for a more thorough understanding of the reality to know, the support of an observation model and the use of a scale which offers to each participant the most valuable dimensions and the actions to carry on. They have to be the object of a rigorous attention. In our case the scale has been built with the support of the very teachers and it has been elaborated from both of the most relevant aspects of the formative practice and of the teaching methods.

We raise an essential aspect again: How do the methods have to influence in the intercultural formative process? And what is their effect in the professional development of each teacher? Notwithstanding this method has been used with the support of the scale and has been increased with the different technique resources, in such a way that the self-analysis has been required in the practice: "Design of teaching materials."

In the process of elaboration of materials we establish objectives, our plan of integration-innovation, and overall we value the investigating role that each teacher has developed in his practice.

The self-observation is a micro-method which is characteristic of the observation of the participant, that makes to the reflective practical person the possibility of understanding easier. It also helps to analyse in all this complexity the formative task during the very learning-teaching process in its the most investigating option.

This method of pre-recorded reflection and self-observation, about what we have developed with the support of the scale in the school context led us to analyse the designed material's appropriateness, its application and perspectives in the improvement of the intercultural learning process for students.

Self-observation is a process of rigorous research covered by researcher's subjectivity, but that discloses the real indicators of the content-

matter to investigate. These indicators and questions have been built among different researchers: experts, practical people, teachers...

Decreasing the limits, which an excess of subjective reductionism could have. Subjectivity has been accepted and consolidated as a basic complement. It must be completed with autobiographic information, with in contrast with others observations and observations in groups, in which the group of teachers shares its points of view, its contradictions and deepens in the strong points raised of the self-observation and the global process of personal reflection. The debate groups, that we presented in a previous work (Medina & Domínguez, 2002) are heterogeneous broad and it contributes all the advantages of an interview. However, the debate groups improve interviews with the shared study and the reflection among all the participants.

Complementariness between both methods has been carried out:

- to use in both the same kind of scale.
- to participate in the group, teachers have answered to the personal scale, the one applies in the self-observation.
- to analyse individually and collaboratively both scales.
- to deepen in the raised aspects in self-observation and to value them in their context and perspectives for the development of intercultural process.
- to understand the characteristic features of the involved people and the quality of the designed material.
- to understand the teaching behaviours with true finds detected in the distant self-observation.
- to respect the most representative aspects of all the involved people, as teachers in the development of the research.

With the previous tasks of the methodological complementariness we stress the progress of subjectivity of self-observation by the support of the members of the debate group and overall by the support of the basic elements which make up the scale:

Teaching-learning methods.

- Design of the elaborated methods.

Appropriateness of the materials for improving the intercultural process.

- General structure of the methods.
- Coherence among methods, tasks and the formative results.
- Impact in the professional development of teachers.

Virtual impact in the intercultural community.

The explicit information in both methods is clearly complementary, we find in self-observation a true research and a continuous increasing of the perception field of the person. While in the debate there are a progress and a complementariness of the personal with the support of the shared dialogue and the analysis in collaboration.

#### Object and research field

We have done a research focussed on the building of a model of didactic material design for the development of intercultural learning-teaching process.

The problematic field of the research has been to know and to understand the plural reality of the teaching Primary and Secondary centres, which contributes to make the improvement of the formative process easier, in accordance with the intercultural principle (Medina & Domínguez, 2005) and to design new processes of teaching communication in schools and in multicultural communities.

The main object of the research has been to elaborate in collaboration with the Primary and Secondary centres the keys of designing didactic materials, which offer teachers and students new ideas, tasks and a suitable environment for reflecting. This environment is favourable for the building of an intercultural school and for the didactic method design more suitable for the intercultural development.

#### Problematic core

The nature of the research is innovative and it was intended to know and to bring forward to the participant centres the future challenge of the multicultural schools, which are common in a community (Castilla la Mancha) with deep plural groups in two of its regions Guadalajara and Toledo. While in Ciudad Real, the region of our study, these groups are growing.

The central core has been the design of a teaching model which stimulates a gratifying intercultural learning. We have designed as basic focus of the research a group of the most suitable didactic methods, that contribute to the teachers the keys of a collaborative culture and configure didactic methods of genuine intercultural importance, such as a web page which helps us to know the context of the period in which the converted muslims were expelled of Spain as focal point of the debate.

We can find another web page model, where the Caribbean Culture appears together to an investigating style of narrative and geo-historic relation with the different cultures in Primary Education. This relation has become the base of an imaginative speech and innovative methods which offers in advance pupils and teacher the intercultural challenge.

#### Purposes and objectives

In the research, that we define as the innovative design of didactics methods for the intercultural development, four kinds of coherent and multicultural objectives were raised:

1. To design a learning-teaching model, which is explained in the elaboration of integrated interdisciplinary didactic units in the middle cycle of Primary Education.
2. To elaborate the most suitable didactic methods for the realization of the intercultural learning-teaching process, from the creative narrative to the design of the motivating web page.
3. To carry out a reflexive application process of the adjustment and the necessity to adapt the methods elaborated through out the education of the student and in the development of an open remote model for the improvement of teachers and the consolidation of intercultural communities.
4. To support teachers in the design of methods. To apply and to validate for an optimum professional improvement. To transform communities into intercultural ecosystem.

The secondary effects of the didactic method design were both to design the improvement of culture and to increase the sensibility with the real problems that in the future the region and teaching environment will face up.

#### Approach of the research

We have carried out a research which its main characteristic is its innovative content: to design didactic materials for the school improvement and it can be situated itself in the modality of an investigating research focus on the practice. It is designed for the improvement of the communication process.

The research has a basically qualitative character, which deepens in the self-reflection, reflection in group and multi-reflection of the formative process carried out. It is located in the action-research model, or more exactly the practice reflective one.

We have explained the research in a natural frame, where all the participants take part in the project, from the global teacher to innovative researcher agents.

We have mainly applied the collaborative knowing construction, we have promoted the debate groups, the material-documents design, the personal reflection around the personal self-observation and observation in groups, last one increased with the continuous dialogue among different cultures: Venezuelans, Brazilians and Senegalese. They work together in an open emerging shared intercultural designed model.

The works of the years 2003, 2004, and 2005 (Medina & Domínguez) with others have helped us as base and innovative perspective for increasing constantly the reflexive practice. This practice appears in the concrete didactic methods that has been the most direct answer to the challenge of the intercultural progress.

The justification of the personal collaborative investigating process has been specified in:

- The design of the project of innovative didactic method which are accepted and recognised from a competition of innovative investigating Education.
- The consolidation of teacher groups in the Primary and Secondary Centres, which collaborate in the elaboration of the didactic methods.
- The fortnightly debates and seminars with the support of video-conference, in the same scene of the others groups of research of the other three regions.
- The self-observation and the debate groups that have consolidated themselves in the different moments of the process: beginning, every three months, annually and overall the end of the second year.

Consideration of the formative quality of the designed methods and their application for the development of the intercultural learning-teaching process

The environment is a suitable instrument for favoring communication between teacher and student. The methods are the summary of the con-

ception and resource group. They are suitable for carrying out the formative process of the student.

The methods designed by the teachers in collaboration with the experts are the result of the thinking model and teacher's action, that stimulates the collaboration of the students both in its design and its development .

The elements which define the methods are the text, the image, and attribute's group, which define each one of their aspects. These methods can make the investigating role and the learning improvement easier.

The intercultural teaching raises again the design and particularly the content of the message that have been created in that environment. The intercultural option represents a researching method of new means, of creative forms and of recognition of the diversity of the human being.

The methods in their oral and written codification must cast the most different ways of closeness and expression of the life scene and the improvement that characterised them.

To consider the formative quality of an environment is to value its appropriateness, its communicative power and lively for connecting with values, concepts and norms of relation among the different cultures which find themselves in the classroom.

The environment's quality reflects itself on its three communicative aspects:

- 1) Semantic clarity.
- 2) Syntactic relational power.
- 3) Appropriateness to reality or programmatic level.

They must be increased with the empathetic potential which make the interpretation of reality that the environment represents easier.

We have valued the formative appropriateness of the designed methods paying attention to the learning types that promote, and to level's activity that make up in the students.

We must also think in the style of closeness and in the narrative clarity of the environment that we have used.

What do we have to value in this environment? Coherence and relation with these values, different styles of life and the integrated potential of a method for the different cultures of the class, and particularly for each student who understands the messages expressed in the environment.

The designed method for Primary Education has been linked to the one of didactic units for teachers, and to the interests and expectations of the students that they are going to use it and to complete with a web page which shows the Latin American environment.

In Secondary Education we have chosen an historical core with literary character. This intercultural learning core is the expulsion of converted muslims in the Don Quixote. It has let us to understand how complex is the relation among the different cultures and the decisions that can be taken in moments of great tension. This core is a challenge for thinking manners and it creates the bases of a full intercultural coexistence in the educational centres.

#### Underlined didactic model

The group of teachers and experts agreed an expressing model of the cultural and intercultural teaching-learning process, which is coherent with the development of interests that gives freedom to people of the communities.

We elaborate material that promotes learning and improvement of the relations among the different cultures. The formative objectives of the model have been:

- to establish serious knowledge of the subjects adding the expectations and meanings of the cultures present in school.
- to assume the challenge of the different cultures in the class.
- to add to the formative project of the school the expectations and interests of the different communities.
- to value the wealth of the different cultures and to increase the innovative sense of each human group.
- to educate students for understanding the breadth of the new cultural approach.
- to design methods and material that held with the cultures.

A basic component of the didactical model in our investigating action project has been to research about the didactic methods more suitable for the improvement of the intercultural learning-teaching processes.

The verbal and non-verbal speech is the basic component of the intercultural processes and projects, with it, we deepen in the closeness among the different cultures, and in the investigating understanding for thinking and consolidating the narrow relation and complementariness among the human being.

The speech about a didactic method is the essential component of it, in which the interaction model and the formative actions among cultures become real.

The didactic method have been designed themselves in connection with a new axis, the Secondary one: the vision of Don Quixote in which the expulsion of the converted is related and its involvement for helping to understand the difficulty of the integration and the relation among the different cultures. The contribution of the Primary school has been the design of didactic units: Diversity enriches us. In what world do you live? International afternoon snack: Venezuelan Arepas.

Both designs were presented in the web page that specified the way to follow and in both cases we apply and interdisciplinary global vision. We are aware of the value of the interactive motivating environment that the presentation of the material in internet can have for other educational centres.

### Structuring and organization of the didactic material

The designed material for being used in internet has been structured over two thematic axis with global sense, which has left us to attend to the formative value of the thematic cores and/or didactic units, the different methods have been organized round them.

- Didactic guide, which make the way to follow for taking advantage of their national use easier for teachers and students.
- Documents of synthesis such as tales, information resources of the different cultures and texts given by institutions.
- Design of specific interactive web pages that give and increase value to the group of discussed subjects.

The interactive web pages have encouraged teachers to create new reflection knowing outline between teacher and student. In Secondary Education the links and the breadth of the information are remarkable parts. In the case of Primary Education the outline of the page has been organised in the next phases of access: beginning, web page, teachers, students, project, images, hyper-links and complementary accesses.

The methods have synthesised the vision of the learning-teaching process and they have been useful for the rapprochement and continuous

investigation of teacher. They deepen in the real keys that have to include and to develop the educational quality process.

### Intercultural practices

Interculturality has designed the innovative process that we have done overall the practice of the design and the development of the use of the methods elaborated. The formative practice has had an special value for consolidating the group of teachers, both in the design and in the experimentation to the formative quality of the materials.

The practice carried out in the design has consisted of to delimit a focus with full formative sense, which is adapted for Primary and Secondary Education. It tries to involve to teachers as group and to create an authentic understanding intercultural frame.

Practice has let us to observe motivation, identification and effort in students in the computer class, in which we work with the web page design that we have elaborated.

We have observed these three qualities in couples in the Secondary Education. They analyse concepts, values and processes that the plural world ask us, and where the historic facts are linked to the speech that Cervantes related. Students have showed an interest in to know the characteristics of that time and in the possibility of make transfers to the present moment and to the current model of coexistence in the local environment.

The application in Primary Education has an added value linking the iconic activities and components of the web page with the culinary experience of other cultures.

In both applications the materials and the formative process gave an important innovation: this last one very influential for creating a closeness open multicultural scene, which laid two bases of a creative relation among the current cultures and the future one, in class, in school and in community.

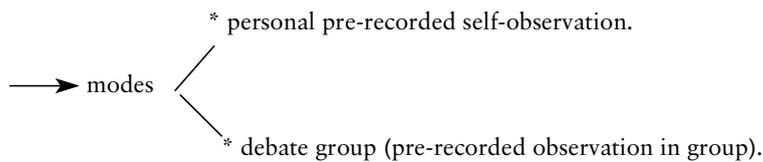
The intercultural design has been possible because the consolidation in both centres of the investigating group of teachers (seven in each one), and the continuous collaboration with fellows in the university UNED).

We have made sure the support to the consolidation of the groups, of the emerging didactic model and coherence with the design of materials. The tangible design of the integrated method, that we have elaborated, is the base of the task and it has allowed that teacher reflects and adopt

modes of investigation in coherence with an school and a formative intercultural practice.

### Methodology and research techniques

In coherence with what we have presented at the beginning of this work, we have chosen qualitative methodology, like in a previous work (Medina & Domínguez, 2005 at press REP). We have considered the importance of depth and that is the main contribution of this collaboration. We must know the quality of the intercultural didactic methods when we apply a methodology of observation and we complete it with the



What do both methodological possibilities contribute in this research? Which survey with full questions is the less applied in the documents of the investigation?

We have designed an "ad hoc" questionnaire as complement, we have applied in an individual personal way and after it we have applied in the three group of debate. We have also increased the questionnaire. We have valued it, and we worked with under two main perspectives:

- (1) What influence has had the design of innovative didactic methods on your professional development?
- (2) What methods have we designed for creating intercultural learning/teaching processes?

We can add another perspective:

- (3) The perspective in the personal and community life.

We have further differentiated each of these perspectives. The first one was differentiated into nine questions, the question number five again is subdivided into ten questions. The second perspective has been divided in three questions, two questions have been subdivided in three questions, two questions have been subdivided into five questions linked to a global innovative-intercultural process and to the community teaching life.

Analysis of the results of the answers of the teachers to the pre-recorded self-observation process.

Synthesis of the answers

We analyse the first perspective using the answers of the teachers:

Pre-recorded self-observation:

- To advance in the intercultural integration in the centre.
- To improve the work in group among teachers.
- To apply and to evaluate materials for education.

Debate groups:

- They are a gratifying experience.
- They have improved sensitivity before interculturality.
- They have supported an innovative style which produces social improvement.

In what have we improved as teachers?

- Self-observation.
- Discussion groups.

The following terms and sentences reflect the synthesis of what we have discussed:

- Design and development of didactic materials.
- Improvement and to promote the learning communities, but we must continue working with students and their families.
- Promotion of an open school.
- To make good use of the languages tasks and the relation among cultures.
- A way to come into the intercultural plural knowledge.
- We have learned to understand interculturality.
- We have developed a model of construction and integration of materials: maps, photos, texts, outlines....
- To involve more and more senses.
- We must advance in the deep control of topics and in the better design of materials.
- We have increased the intercultural awareness.

- To take new decisions for learning and improving intercultural problems and intercultural processes.
- We have increased the personal compromise and the one of the centre before other cultures.

Above we asked what the newly developed methods have contributed to the education of the students? Which is the model of methods that we have elaborated for students in their intercultural integration?

The debate groups have expressed among other contributions to the questions the following answers:

- The materials have lent students to know other cultures and to suggest ideas for a better relation among them.
- The designed web page has been the direct method of integration of the other methods.
- This method has enriched the work way of other curriculum areas such as the English language.
- It has helped student to discover the needs of self-observation and the needs of groups of the TIC.
- The design of materials has make the cohesion among fellows easier and it has improved the learning-teaching model.
- The intercultural project has completed and increased the use of the methods and they have lent a better and creative use of other of TIC.
- The structure of the group of elaborated methods has answered both to the arisen learning-teaching model like the challenge of the intercultural education in itself in one centre.
- "If I do not apply it and I do not reflect about the use of the designed web page for the Secondary Education I do not discover students though before interculturality".
- We are aware that the project in itself and the design of material is a contribution, but we must increase and complete it with a bigger compromise of all the teachers.
- The design of materials have been knowing for other fellows, although they have valued it, however they do not involved in it, but they focus all their on teaching their areas.
- In the school a group of teachers value the effort and the importance of the project, but they have not involved interculturality as an important challenge for future. However they have valued it as a valuable formative aspect.

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## Perspectives of the innovative intercultural experience

In the answers of discussion groups:

- The experience has helped to understand the new work scene and the challenge that interculturality sets out us.
- We have found the best application in our own professional practice in different aspects.
  - \* We have learned to work better and more intensely in group, in the involved schools.
  - \* We have confirmed the effort in group and we have learned to design didactic methods more suitable for students needs.
  - \* We reflect better about practice and the use of the TIC for the group of teachers.
  - \* In both centres, above all in the Secondary one, the involvement of the directive group has been intensely and several centres have become aware of this new field.
  - \* It has been added to the Secondary centre as a general objective which characterise the centre before the plural society.
  - \* We underline the big effort that as institution we still have to assume and we value what we have carried out like incentive, like hope for innovation at school.
  - \* In the Primary centre we think that is necessary to include in the formative project of the school the intercultural formation with an important objective.
  - \* The involvement of families has been bigger in Primary school, they have raised that they must work harder in order to reinforce the collaboration of the facilities from different cultures in the life of the centre.
  - \* The general impression is that families have not involved as much as they could, overall the families from very different cultures, such as the Magrebi. We must work harder in integration and collaboration.
  - \* We have observed that people are generating attitudes, particularly among teenagers and young people, they accept partly certain cultures, called problems.
  - \* The project has had more influence in the professional-social life of the teachers that we have been involved in this project. For the rest of the partial part this problem is future no present, for us it is an immediate educational challenge that must be treated.

### Methodological complementariness

The information expressed with more serenity in the scale discloses that self-observation is synthesised in the group of questions of the scale that has offered us the most explicit precise information and the most valuable phrases of the debate group.

We must declare that several teachers in the fruitful discussion in their group had the answers of the scale written personally. The group has been able to increase what was expressed in the scale. We have observed a correlation between what they have written and what they were discussing. The participants have endorsed with the group discussion what they have done individually in their work environment.

The process of self-observation is the basis for one of the groups, it helps to have a closer hand it is a proof of what we have carried out. We have combined the memory effort with the direct observation of the professional intercultural practice.

The discussion in little groups, understanding as a creative meeting among fellows and it has also helped to take some decisions for better knowledge and for the incorporation of new improvements in the design of methods in the formative practice in the school culture in the education project of the centre. However, self-observation has some limits, such as its limited scene of vision, the strong personal involvement, and the trend to value in a too subjective way. As a consequence these limitations are usually surpassed with a debate/dialogue group given that the personal reduced answers of the self-observation are completed with the vision of his fellows. The interviewer's subjectivity is contrasted with the fellow interviewees' subjectivity. They produce a process of the practice knowledge in relation with different theory point of views.

Both methods give us the intensive value of knowing and feeling what is personal and it helps us to create scenes of self-observation with complementariness of debate groups among the observers and the reality with the group.

### A final reflection

- Methodological complementariness.
- Analysis of the information: personal group answers: Professional formation and professional development.

*Self-observation: Results.*

Professional performance and formative impact of the experience developed in the centres. The answers of the teachers to the scale have been:

- An innovative experience as teachers, which has favoured us the knowledge of interculturality
- Work in group:
  - \* Learning of new knowledge.
  - \* Real knowledge of the people who share their cultures with us.
  - \* We have become aware of a new reality, which creates a new sense and a long way to walk
  - \* To design didactic methods.
  - \* The intercultural teaching practice.
  - \* The way to look the world.
  - \* The personal satisfaction is the most chosen in the most of the self-observation processes, while the institutional one and community one are chosen in less cases.
  - \* We have before us a long way in which we will support students in the development of the interculturality.

*The design of interculturality means*

- The effect of the material's quality in the education of students is valued between acceptable and very good.
- The web page has been the best valuable method, and after it the didactic guide,
- The structure of the materials and the creative elements have been the most appreciated and after them the projects of work and the analysis of problems have been the most appreciated.
- The aspects less appreciated have obtained a respectable punctuation of three.

Effect of the innovative intercultural project in teachers and in the educational-intercultural process

*Professional life:*

- A stronger interaction in the different tasks, such as planning tasks, tasks of development and tasks coexistence.
- A better compromise for an intercultural teaching.

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- Recognition of the foreigner families that have given their different and rich point of view.
  - Found new possibilities of intercultural interaction between teachers and students.
  - Found a great richness in different cultures, in our case, the English one.
  - New design of didactic means creates a bigger participation among colleagues.
  - Great effort for the construction of our web site.
  - Presentation of new mass means such as video, tape recorders and classic masterpieces.
  - An autonomy for creation our new means among teachers.
  - A bigger implication from teachers' side.
  - Decreasing of the real sense of educational integration.
  - Schools' implication in the implantation of interculturality among everyone.
  - Discussion among colleagues is positive for a teaching an educational improvement.
  - More implied teachers in our work have been improved strongly in their professional lives than the ones who participate less.
  - Intercultural aims is connected with the personal and educational sensibility.
  - Teachers and students need interculturality.
  - Different human beings are linked when they share similar experiences.

*Teaching practice:*

To reflect and to explain personally in what we have to change and to give a new direction to our teaching obligations with a better practices and more suitable for our students "it could be a new fresh puff."

*Teaching institution:*

- Increase of responsibility and collaboration of the institution in the daily task, with the purpose of improving the teaching offer by better strategies and the teaching training.
- Request for a bigger involvement of all the participants in the complex intercultural reality.
- More openness to different cultures.
- Consolidation of a new line of design of means thanks to our web site.

- Integration of international images and tests for improving the reality of each culture.
- Our design of didactic means have improved our professional lives.
- Our autonomy has suffered from indifference by some of our colleagues at the university.
- Increase of sensibility at interculturality and the students' families.
- Intensification of our compromise at interculturality and at the processes of teaching and learning.
- Thanks to our didactic means, there has been an enrichment at schools. For instance, students say that "We have learned more about different people and countries, and we have spent a great time."

*Intercultural community:*

- There is no implication.
- Another kind of relationship is required.
- Recognition of the complexity and particularity of the intercultural community. Also there are worries, needs and real demands from the teaching task. In fact, this task gives a practical knowledge that answers from a deep reflection and the plural advance with the other cultures.
- Assumption of taking risks from our historical and social present.

Our institutional transformation is complex because we want to create an institution as an intercultural and innovative educational centre that has an active participation from families that are from other cultures.

Our survey has reached to the conclusion that intercultural teachers must show new didactic means among different cultural communities. In fact, this new way of teaching is richer and more exhaustive than the traditional ones.

#### Methodological Complementariness

In order to collect explicit data, our investigation finds that self- observation is more valuable than our recollection of data from our discussion group. In fact, after giving the answers, our interviewees found their self-observation more interesting than their individual work. Actually, they discussed their new found abilities than the given texts among the rest of the group.

However, self-observation goes with intercultural teaching experience because both of them create autonomy and closeness.

Among our discussion groups, teachers have found new ways of knowledge and teaching thanks to self-evaluation and co-evaluation. Because of this, these teachers can consolidate intercultural communities.

Our methodology tries to join personal deep knowledge and practical sense at schools, but self-evaluation has several limitations. For instance, a narrow vision, strong personal implication and excessive subjective point of view. However, these limitations are solved with discussion. In fact, our discussion groups share ideas that wide the personal subjective vision. These technical methods intensify teachers' ideas when they share similar experiences.

Conclusions about the experts' meeting and their influence on the project of investigation: design of didactic materials through distance communication in intercultural education

After a long discussion, we have reached to the conclusion that the construction and development of our project is a positive influence towards the following fields:

*Influence of the process of innovation in the professional development.*

This project is a new advance in our professional development because we focus on the present model of intercultural school. Therefore, there has been an increase of teaching sensibility towards the phenomena of interculturality. Besides, our formation has a dual structure: on the one hand, it is scientific because it adopts concepts related to interculturality; on the other hand, our formation is didactic because it works with intercultural and curriculum materials.

*Improvement in the process of teaching and learning thanks to new didactic means.*

The process of teaching and learning has increased, especially in transversal areas of curriculum (education about health, peace, environment, convenience, etc.), at the students' motivation due to an active education that is closer to reality and the centre. Also the groups of students have changed creating a benefit at the co-operative group's learning.

*Improvement of professional practice.*

Our professional practice has improved entering into the circles of reflection and action. In fact, these circles are closer to the processes of Eliot's investigation and action which are overcome the technological paradigm and they have changed our normal methodology because these circles are roles more oriented to guidelines than the teaching itself. Another important aspect that we have overcome is the didactic solitude thanks to the sharing work.

*Impact on educational institutions.*

In the educational community there has been an impact on all levels such as:

- Parents' level: they have involved into programmed activities of intercultural character (recipes of world, customs...).
- Students' level: they work activities that are related to intercultural reality.
- Implied teachers' level: they have constructed and performed our project.
- Programmatic documents of the centre: they are included as part of an annual general programme. Also they are planning to include some conclusions of this experience at the educational project of the centre and at the curriculum projects of time.

Conclusions and reflections of methodological complementarity: Self-observation (practical self-analysis) and discussion groups

- Different reflection of educational practice and self-observation gives new data from teachers' past and present.
- Self-observation is a technical method for investigation and teacher formation because it improves our knowledge.
- From teacher formation and development.
- Capacity for designing and the application of intercultural and didactic means.
- Valorisation of the given projection of the academic personal and professional life in intercultural institution-community.
- Widening the conclusions from other investigations that are still in progress (Medina and Domínguez, in press).

- Practical educational teacher formation: complementariness between self-observation with co-observation in teams and discussion groups.
- Self-observation as a guide for teachers to investigate actively about the practice itself. In fact, this method improves the didactic and professional knowledge.
- Taking the point of view with practical experience, self-analysis gives the better conception, design and development of didactic and intercultural means.
- Differentiated self-observation (design of means, web pages, didactic guides, video and integrated means) gives an elaborated capacity for analysis and comprehension to teachers.
- Our contribution is the widening of self-observation. Also we show its contrast with the practice and teams when they are discussing about the improvement of students and teachers' careers.
- Our innovative essay (Domínguez & Medina, 2002) is a complex reflection about the richness of ideas when we take different points of view from students, their families and teachers.
- Complementariness is an early teachers' self-analysis where there is a valorisation of their practical action and the formational development.
- The teacher discussion groups innovate the value of their professional life and they transform the design for intercultural means when they imply the headmasters of their schools.
- One of our conclusions is the complete innovation of integrated means from multicultural communities both Secondary (e.g. with Don Quixote on a web page) and Primary Schools (e.g. Ibero-American countries).
- Quality and methodological complementariness goes with the intercultural education of our innovation group. Actually, this group is based on self-observation and its analysis in a singularised practice and knowledge.

#### Self-criticism

Our project is focussed on the quality of the design in didactic means. However, we do not take notice the value of the investigating methodology. In fact, we do not pay attention to the potency for improving the teaching task of these means neither. Finally, we do not measure the value of our quality itself.

Our project of innovation is a complex complementation for a different self-observation and the discussion groups.

#### Future model

Thanks to the example of the Don Quixote web site, there has been an improvement of interdisciplinary education and a bigger implication from teachers of different educational areas from Secondary education. For instance, teachers show the intercultural formational Cervantes' work in order to create an intercultural community which would be completed with a methodological complementariness of co-observation. An example of this can be seen in primary schools where there has been an enrichment of intercultural ideas thanks to this Cervantes web site.

**From feedback about resources to the improvement of the curricular design of practical training as a generalization process<sup>15</sup>**

Tiberio Feliz Murias and M. Carmen Ricoy Lorenzo

**Abstract**

This article analyzes the process of curricular improvement starting from specific data and information collected by the requested or occasional feedback. We focus the process of improvement of the resources used in the practical training of the social educators in Distance Education. We state that this process of improvement is based essentially on qualitative strategies of generalization, starting from concrete information and modifying the general design.

**Resumen**

Este artículo analiza el proceso de mejora curricular a partir de datos e informaciones específicas recogidas a través del feedback solicitado u ocasional. Focalizamos el proceso de mejora de los recursos utilizados en el marco de la formación práctica de los educadores sociales en Educación a Distancia. Defendemos que este proceso de mejora se basa esencialmente en estrategias cualitativas de generalización, partiendo de informaciones concretas e implementando el diseño general.

**1. The training design of the practical training**

The practical training can be curricular or optional. This one is considered to be an integral part of the curriculum or academic program. The practical training in professional contexts is an important ingredient of the training of social educators. At the Spanish Distance University (UNED),

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it covers 350 hours in two periods. The training design is also very complex in the distance education. We review the different components of our framework. The general idea is that the practical training has to be analogue to the real practice of the educators. Starting from this basic principle, the professors' team has designed a broad framework to support a wide, organizational frame allowing the specific, diverse developments for each student, each context, and each situation. We have already discussed this model in other meetings (Blanco Pesqueira, Ricoy & Feliz, 2005). This general scheme has three phases or steps:

### 1.1 Planning

Usually, the educators prepare their training intervention. According to the diverse kind of educational situations (formal, non-formal, or informal), the different modalities (in-presence, blended, or distance), and starting from the determinants of the training processes (aims, duration, students, resources, contexts, workers, etc.), the educators (teachers, professors, trainers, animators, and so on) have to prepare their work. According to the previous considerations, this preparation could receive several names such as programming, designing, planning, etc.

The main idea is not the name or the kind of preparation but the insertion of an initial moment of *pre-paration*<sup>16</sup>, when the students, negotiating with the centers, the professionals, and their tutors, are collecting data, thinking about the reality, and their requirements as students, and they are trying to adjust all the variables into a proposal for their own practical, training project.

### 1.2 Developing

This is probably the most important phase in this process that we need to pay attention mainly to. This is also the traditional way to conceive the practical training. Usually, the practical training in professional workplaces is a participative process where the students are developing activities (normally, professional ones) and they are participating in the institutions, enterprises, or associations' everyday life.

But doing by doing is not a real process of learning. It is different to learning by doing. The action needs reflection. Therefore, the action

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<sup>2</sup> Etymologically, a previous mobilization of what you need for doing or making something.

needs some resources to collect the experience and to allow coming back on it to analyze, to reflect, and to construct knowledge. In this case, the professors' team has introduced the diary to suggest the students a way to support what they remind.

As there are two steps in the *practicum* (one in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and another one in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year), the professors suggest a progressive strategy from an initial, observing point of view to a more participating one. This is not always possible, that is true: sometimes, a simple observational position is an obstacle to develop adequately the training process; other times, the full participation is not recommended – or allowed – because they are only students and the intervention should need professional capabilities or permissions. But, this general principle is always useful because it transmits the idea that the practical training has to be also a progressive process: the students have to gain in more implication and more participation, a growing learning process that facilitates a progressive maturation.

To sustain this development phase, the tutors organize periodical sessions of tutorship, meetings with the central team of professors, and a permanent, communicational process supported on technological media as the phone, the videoconferences, the e-mail, and the forum (bulletin board).

### 1.3 Reflecting

To construct knowledge, the action is not sufficient. We need the reflection. But the reflection needs an object as the experience, but this object is very inconsistent if we use only our mind and our remembrances. Starting from the diary content, it is possible to get back the feeling, the events, the reflections, the traits, the problems, the resources, and so on.

The problem is that it is difficult to train the students in the content analysis because there are no specific, complementary classes and the tutors have very diverse capabilities, not always on this topic. This is the reason the professors have suggested a simple method based on a dialectic interaction from the concrete data to the conceptual construction. The students write their diary. The analysis starts from a synthesis, they have to analyze of the most relevant elements of the diary (persons, traits, resources, events, occurrences, etc.), and they finalize by the conclusions.

This phase is an important component of the practical training, because it facilitates the construction of knowledge starting from the experience. This capability is very infrequently developed through the

theoretical subjects but is a very relevant one to improve the practice of the educators.

## 2. The evaluation of the resources of the practical training

One of the central problems of any curricular design is its improvement. The evaluation of the diverse resources has to be contextualized in every phase according to our training model (reflecting on the practice). The curricular design is a general framework that allows the training process. The improvement of the resources is in fact a generalization process. Starting from the specific, collected information, the professors decide the modifications that they are including in the training process. In fact, specific data from specific situations allows reviewing the general design to improve it.

Trochim (1998) exposes three general steps in an evaluation process: determining data-collection methods, collecting data, and analyzing and interpreting data. About the methods, we are explaining the different sources which are giving us the information using specific instruments, the decision making to modify or implement the different resources and the process of the conceptual generalization that it implies. We are analyzing the value of the feedback and the difficulty to interpret quantitative data for the improvement.

### 2.1 The informants about the process

One of the first steps is to find knowledgeable informants (Trochim, op.cit.). For us, all the participants are knowledgeable informants. To implement the model and to introduce proposals of improvement, we collect data from three kinds of informants:

#### *The tutors*

The tutors have regular, face-to-face meetings and seminars with the students to assess and orient them in the course of the process. These are the nearest persons to the students in the university and they can provide useful information about the process. Once a year, they meet also the professors of the central team.

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*The professionals*

The professionals are the workers who received the students and are guiding them during their staying in the center, association, or institution. They are the reference that contacts the work center to the training institution.

*The students*

The students are the stars of the process. In distance education, we observe that their profile is very diverse according to their age, situation, family, previous knowledge, and so on. This diversity is one of the axes to design a general frame that can integrate every student. This is the reason why the framework has to be open and point of reference.

## 2.2 Feedback for the improvement

The feedback, as the information – structured or unstructured – that the professors collect, is asked by them through several tools, but frequently it is also occasional, contingent, or involuntary. Some authors state that the evaluation process has to allow a continuous feedback to the principal and participants (Edelenbos & Van Buuren, 2005). Some examples of tools that allow collecting data requested by the professors are the different reports that the training partners – the tutors, the professionals, and the professors themselves – have to realize. These reports have a mixed design, combining scales and open questions, about all the goals, the means, the process, and the results. This content is complemented with the students' questionnaire, with a similar design and content.

The feedback varies along several domains, including rate of feedback (infrequent vs. frequent) and type of feedback (general vs. specific) (Cromey, 2000). However as we are seeing, the most useful information comes from sources that are not specifically designed for the feedback, but are part of the general process. For instance, the assessment instruments, as the portfolio or the exam, are usually excellent sources to detect functional problems, as much on the process as on the achievement of the goals. There are also other occasions to collect good feedback as the daily, participative observation, the occasional, communicational situations, or the continuous support to the different needs that emerge along the process.

The communicational situations are very important moments. Through the mails about the initial orientation, the phone calls about

conflicts and problems, or the forum participation about the process difficulties, the professors collect a lot of data. The problem for them is to detect the sensitive information, to select it, to analyze it, and to imply it in the process, as a circular process of feedback. To facilitate this come-back, we have to mention the personal reflection and the team meetings. These moments are important because these useful feedbacks can converge and produce improvement.

### 2.3 Sources of evaluation

The sources are an important point to consider in the evaluation design and it ought to be a balance in data between the various components of teaching and data sources (Center for Learning and Teaching, 1997). We have designed a questionnaire, combining open questions and evaluation scales. But as we see, most changes come from particular observations, specific feedbacks, or singular designs. Most improvements do not come from statistical analysis of the evaluation scales but from particular elements or observations that the professors' team analyze and make the decision to improve or modify the initial design.

The feedback used is very diverse and need some comments. Some examples of feedback are:

- The comments, reactions, and questions of the students in the forum, the phone calls, the meetings, the diaries, and their analysis:

Along the process, there are a lot of situations and occasions when the students give useful information to the professors. Sometimes, these situations are demanded by the professors, as when they ask about the experience or about the development of the process in a questionnaire, but most of the time they are occasional, fortuitous, contingent, unexpected situations. This no demanded information is a very important source of significant information because their content is usually about unpredictable problems or perceptions and guides the professors to detect shortcomings, deviations, or incidents that were not predictable.

- The comments and observations of the tutors and professionals:

In the formal meetings or in occasional conversations along the course, the tutors and the professional always realize comments or manifest their opinions about the design and its elements that could be interesting for the improvement of the process. Both are different perceptions, but both are next to the development of the process and facilitate real information about the difficulties and possibilities of the design.

- The problems that we have to solve during the process development: During the process, some problems appear. These problems are unexpected. There are different kinds of problems. Some of them are due to inadequate understanding of the guidebook, to imprecise interpretation of the tutors, to the defective application of the orientations by the professionals, to the irresponsible attitudes of the students in the development, but there are also problems that are simply the result of the impossibility to foresee all the possible, real cases. This is a common difficulty for any curricular design or aspect, but it is incremented in the practical training because the contexts to develop it are very diverse.

- The readings, books, workshops, etc. that allow knowing the suggestions and new experiences of others professors and teachers:

Along the process, the professors participate in activities such as meetings, workshops, or conferences; they read news, magazines, or reviews; they visit web pages; or they involve themselves in professional forums such as professional associations. These are useful sources to obtain new ideas. Through these media, they get diverse kinds of information. Some of them are more practical as the experiences descriptions of other professors or teachers; others are more theoretical, as the result of the conceptualization or the research. All of them facilitate opportunities to think again about the own experience and to improve the design.

- The self-observation and self-learning of the professors:

As any educator, the professors have to reflect about their experience. The regular meeting to make decisions, to review the resources, and to improve the design are occasions to reflect about the own work. Anyone can contribute starting from his/her experiences, feedback, and perceptions. Everyone can propose changes, modifications, or transformations arguing his/her point of view. This self-reflection can be individual or in group, and it is a real crossroad where all the previous sources converge with the professors' reflection.

## 2.4 The improvement of the resources

The actual, different resources are the result of a process of development. We are describing some situations how we arrive at them:

- The general framework

The general framework starts from the classical organization of the practical training in many countries: the students go to a work center, they participate in the work, and, sometimes, they realize any kind of recapitulative activities about their experience, for instance a report or a memory. This general, common framework has an important problem: these students can prepare their stay with the professional or not. Sometimes they do it and other times they do not. This unplanned intervention can facilitate consequent problems as false believes, irrational expectations, or disagreements about the behaviors, the implications, the responsibilities, or the participation. Some of these problems were detected the first year and motivated the professors to introduce the *initial plan*, that is to say, a first moment to collect information, to contact with the persons in charge and the educators, to negotiate the participation, and to agree the main axes to develop the practical training as the timetable, the level of participation, or the activities in which they are participating. This was a great, general idea, starting from some very few problems.

- The diary:

The first year, the students had to do a special report about the context and their experience. The result was very frustrating because some of them where a simple copy from Internet information. Others were really disproportionate. For instance, the context part was too long in comparison to the analysis of the experience. These deformations were unexpected and suggested some changes. One of them was to change the support to collect the reality and the analysis. The diary is also a traditional tool to support the data collection from a personal perspective, stimulating the reflection and the retrospection. This is the reason to improve the process with the diary. As the contexts and experiences are quite different from one center to another, the diary model that we suggested was an open model to allow self perceptions and experiences.

We are still in presence of an improvement in the general process starting from some occasional observations that suggested us another approach to the data collection and to the reflection process.

- The observation guide:

The third year, we had a diary. The problem now was that some students did not know what they had to write in it. Really, it is a problem with the open resource. Some students wrote about their feelings, others did about the events, others about technical descriptions, etc. The diversity was not a problem, but the selected approach facilitated the sub-

sequent analysis and some of them were really very superficial and poor. Some others were really very short and episodic.

The professors discussed about this circumstance and decided to help the insecure students with an observation guide. This is a new tool that allows the students reviewing their experience after each session and focus diverse aspects of the reality to decide what they will write about. The guide is a kind of open framework that reviews different aspects such as the space, the time, the bodies, the events, the resources, etc. They do not have to fill the whole observation guide but to think about these different aspects to observe if they have to write about or not.

This is another case where the professors have included an improvement starting from some singular observations. Most people wrote in their diaries. Most people wrote abundantly and quite well. The content of most of them was sufficient and useful to facilitate analysis. But some of them did not. These singular cases caused already a change in the general design.

- The final report:

According to the previous changes, the classical format of report is not yet functional. The diary allows another approach. But our problem is that the issues about the educational research are traditionally more experimental and statistical basis. We needed a more interpretative, participative, and empirical based on. The professors debated this question and there was a proposal combining a very simple scheme of analysis and a dialectical mechanism between the abstract, conceptual level and the concrete, experiential one. This frame had to be also very simple to learn and to apply because it was very difficult to train the students and the tutors for it.

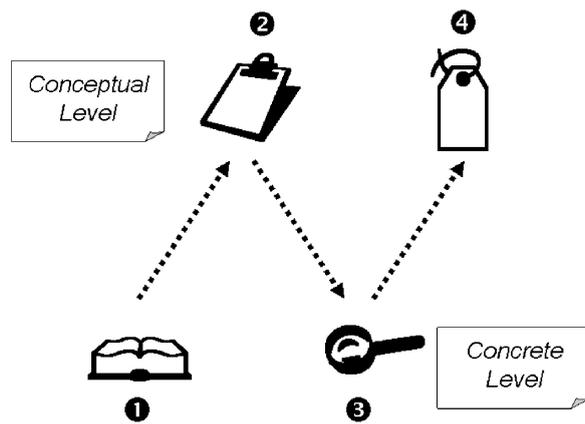


Fig. 1: Knowledge construction in the practical training

Firstly, the students have to write regularly in their diary (1). This diary is based on the contrast with the observation guide. The first step in the content analysis is a synthesis (2). They have to write a general view of their practical stay. They can write about the events, their feelings, their reactions, the bodies, the spaces, the times, etc. In this place, they have to analyze the content (3). This is the real phase of analysis. They have to search specific, relevant, significant elements in their diary and they have to deepen in: justifying why they are relevant, explaining and interpreting them, and valuing them (adding a suggestion of improvement when required). At the end, they have to explain their conclusions (4).

This analysis frame is very simple and has demonstrated to be useful for beginners without previous experience in the content analysis.

This improvement is the result of other changes in consonance with the difficulties to apply an analysis technique with very little possibility to train the analysts. This improvement is based on the constructed hypothesis starting from the knowledge of the students and their previous training.

- The exam:

The exam is not usual as a tool to evaluate the practical training. This tool was incorporated in the second year, valuing the difficulties to assure the honesty of the reports and the collected information. It is really diffi-

cult to assure that the document, the data, or the reports are authentic. Sometimes, it is even impossible to visit the students during their practical training in the center. It is very easy to fool the professors.

They discussed this problem and, after an extended reflection, they decided to include a final exam at the end of the process. The problem of this evaluation tool in the practical training is again the diversity of circumstances, contexts, centers, educators, developments of the practice, etc. In this case, decided to orient the exam towards a combined instrument, with very precise questions as the kind of users, the degree of the workers, the financial sources, the timetable, the types of intervention, etc, and more open questions where the student can explain some traits or features of the center, for instance the difficulties of the training, the resources that are used, the kind of strategies, etc.

In fact, the exam allows contrasting the information in it with the data of the diary and the final report. It is a way to validate the content of these tools. The exam is the result of a fear and a subsequent caution to avoid possible falsifications or frauds.

- The online recordings:

The last improvement that we want focus is online recordings. There are meetings and seminars, but sometimes some students cannot participate. In this case, they can access to the forum (bulletin board) in Webct. But some students do not like these tools. They have no time, no training, or no computer. Additionally, the tutors do not know how to develop the seminar actively and usefully. For these two reasons, it was useful to record some videos with explanations, examples, practical situations, and solid orientations to allow them to understand the sense of the strategies.

These records are available online and on VHS system. They can watch them in a computer or in a TV.

This is an example of solution to a practical problem. It is not frequent and nor permanent but it is possible and we can anticipate a good, previous solution to avoid it.

## 2.5 The quantitative data and the improvement:

For several authors who focus on designing and executing research, interpreting results is integrated into the quantitative, researching process (Black, 1999). By means of the different kind of reports, we also obtain quantitative data about the different components of the curricular design and the different resources. An example of report data (scales) is this

graphical representation of the students' evaluation (from 0 to 10) of the different tools involved in the practical training.

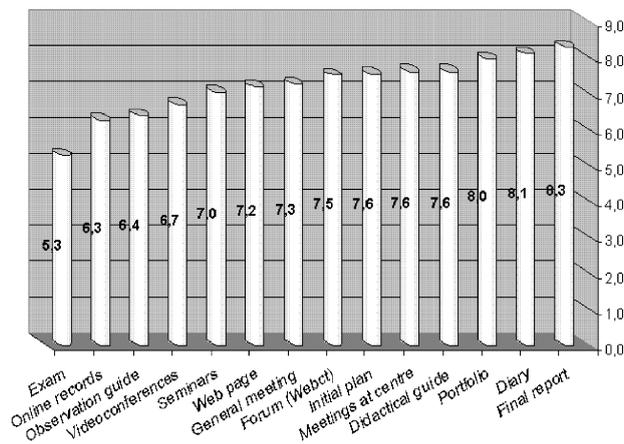


Fig. 2: Results of the students' scale about the different tools involved in the practical training

The data are really objective. We could compare and order them easily. But, what is the real meaning of these numbers? Is it possible to understand them without knowing the elements in their context and without contrasting them with other data and sources? What does mean that the final report has the highest value? Does that mean that it is easy, it is formative, it is well-done...? What is the meaning of the lowest value (the exam)? Is it an inappropriate instrument? Is the content derisory? Is the design inadequate? What is the meaning of the value "7" to the seminars? Do we have we to maintain them as they are? Have we to conserve them? Have we to organize more? Have we to improve them? In which aspects?

These and others could be examples of the difficulty to interpret the quantitative data. They are very tempting because they generate a lot of references, that could compare, order, and calculate, but it is very difficult to improve a curricular design starting only from this kind of data. We need other perspectives and sources, to complete, to contrast, and to interpret these results adequately.

## 2.6 Some examples of assessment data:

In contrast to this perspective, there are other sources and perspectives. The assessment data are a meaning and useful source improve school and student performance:

*(...) different types of assessments can be tied to these variables and to evaluative questions relevant to various educational stakeholders. It also suggests the rich yet complex array of assessment data available to teachers and administrators in their efforts to improve school and student performance. (Cromey, op. cit.)*

An example of assessment data is those from the final portfolio. The evaluation of the portfolio gives substantial information to the professors. We could group it into two segments:

- Major difficulties:  
Some elements manifest a patent, evident difficulty that some students solve adequately and others do not. Some examples of difficulties are the diary redaction, the content analysis, the poor conclusions, the organization of the portfolio, and the excessive number of annexes. At this point, we detect the difficulties. Afterwards, we have to analyze them and to improve them.
- Well-done aspects:  
The best aspects that we can find in the portfolio are the initial planning, the good presentation, the active participation, the real activity, the reflective experiences about the participating observation, and their reflection. Generally, the best points are related to the action and the feelings.

Discussion:

The curricular improvement as a generalization process

We are now discussing several aspects to extract some conclusions:

(1) The useful feedback information is based on specific instruments (i.e. reports) but also on occasional observations too (Cromey, op. cit.). The professors have to be very sensitive, observers, attentive, and receptive. Prejudices block our mind: too strict, preconceived ideas about

where, when, or how the problems are, impede to detect when, where, or how they actually can appear. To support this self-observation and collection process, some tools could help us as a diary, a registry, a field notebook, or a simple agenda.

(2) The quantitative data has to be interpreted in contrast to qualitative ones (Thomas, 2003). Only the quantitative data offer so many difficulties for a good interpretation and for an appropriate application of this knowledge. It is true that the quantitative data means something. The problem is tune the sound well to facilitate significant data and meaningful ideas to improve the curricular design.

(3) The incidence of a critical reference about the whole design is not related to its occurrence but to its relevance (Denzin, 2005). The occurrence does not assure the relevance. Most students could prefer to pass the subjects with a report instead exams. Most diaries could be written badly, but it does not mean that the diary is a bad tool. Most content analysis could very superficial and short, but it does not suppose that the analysis strategy is an inadequate one. The professors have to evaluate the relevance of the problems and it is not related to their frequency.

(4) The relevance depends mainly on our perception of the uncertainty (Reith, 2004). On the contrary, the relevance is frequently related to our perception of the danger predictability. That is to say, the professors propose changes when they agree that the problems, the situation, the person, or the strategy can appear at any time or more frequently. Our capability to foresee, to predict, or to anticipate the future situations is very important to decide what, when, and how we have to change, to improve, or to transform something.

(5) The possibility to promote a change also depends on the interpretation of the event: particular or structural causes (Dworkin, 1987). When the causes of a problem are particular – they depend on very few persons – and the problem is very limited. The possibility of a repetition is related mainly to specific persons. Working as the specific situation, we are more likely to solve the problem. But when a problem is a structural one – it involves general structures, common functions, ideological believes, or traditional habits, for instance –, as the absence of planning, bad training of tutors, or lack of means, the perception of problem is clearer and also the need to solve it. A structural problem or lack could more probably affect any situation than a particular one. The solution is more needed. Solving this lack, you could avoid a lot of problems.

(6) The easiest improvement focuses aspects that could be interpreted as mistakes (Ellis, 2005). When there is not a manifest responsibility or irresponsibility, the professors perceive it as a mistake, an error, or an

omission. These situations are easier to solve because they do not have to identify a culprit. In other cases, the person has to confront other persons and they avoid frequently doing so. It is also easier to improve some aspects to avoid irresponsible behaviors. The professors prefer to prevent, than to reproach. This facilitates the improvement of the process.

(7) The curricular improvement is in fact a generalization process that is frequently based on qualitative data and strategies (Deitmer, 2004). In a very specific field as Education, the improvement is realized by specialized workers, with participant strategies, and they use a lot of qualitative ones, starting from the occasional data, open tools, unexpected situations, other educational experiences, the team reflection, and so on. Their experience and training enable them to analyze the possibilities of the occurrence of the problem (predictability) and the best solution to avoid it (improvement).

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**Competencies design as a qualitative process of generalization. Designing the competencies of educators in the technological resources<sup>1</sup>**

M. Carmen Ricoy Lorenzo and Tiberio Feliz Murias

**Abstract**

This article analyzes the sources to design professional competencies. We sustain that this process is not a simple description of the profession, task, or workplace but rather it integrates the improvement processes as well as the foregone development guidelines. We use the competencies of the educators in technological resources to analyze as a process of general definition of a profession starting from concrete data and perspectives. This process outlines a strategy of qualitative generalization for a general definition of the professions.

**Resumen**

Este artículo analiza las fuentes para el diseño de competencias profesionales. Sostenemos que este proceso no es una simple descripción de la profesión, tarea o puesto de trabajo, sino que integra los procesos de mejora así como las líneas de desarrollo previsibles. Utilizamos las competencias de los educadores en recursos tecnológicos para dar cuerpo a este análisis que nos permite un proceso de definición general de una profesión a partir de datos y perspectivas concretas. Este proceso plantea una estrategia de generalización cualitativa de una definición general de las profesiones.

**1. The competencies set as a definition of a profession**

The origin of scientific use of the word competence was probably in the linguistic field according to the generative approach (Chomsky, 1957) and

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the communicative one (HYMES, 1971). In the field of labor, it was used in the eighties to describe an ability to competently perform specific workplace tasks and roles. The competency would be observable in the workers' behavior when they perform a specific job well. A definition that is illustrative of these parameters applied to the training is from Ducci (1997, p. 20):

The labor competency is the social construction of significant, useful learning for the productive performing in a real situation of work that one obtains, not only through the instruction, but also – and in great measure – by means of the learning by the experience in concrete situations of work.

Several elements could be commented:

- Considering the competency as a social construction, it cannot be considered in isolation as a unique, unilateral, universal form but in consonance with the social, historical context in which it is developed.
- This definition outlines explicitly the significant, useful learning, as opposed to the traditional relevance of the theoretical knowledge.
- The goal is very clear: the productive acting. Results are expected.
- The work situation has to be real, that is to say existing. It is difficult to imagine future situations or unpredictable ones.

But this initial point of view changed through a large debate between the behavioral approach and the cognitive one, and they confronted the competency idea to the capability one. That was in the nineties. As a result, we arrive to a nice synthesis when the competencies are defined starting from the capabilities. An example of this kind of definitions is the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Secretary of Political Public of Employment of the Ministry of Work and Employment (MTE) of Brazil one (2003), that define the competency as:

The capability to articulate and to mobilize the intellectual, emotional conditions in terms of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and practical, that are necessary to perform a function or activity, in an efficient, effective, creative way, according to the nature of the work. An individual's productive capability that is defined and measured in terms of the real performing and demonstrating in a certain work context and that it is not only the result of the instruction, but rather of the experience in concrete situations of the occupational exercise.

This definition facilitates these observations:

- In the first part, it focuses clearly the capability to organize and to enter in action (*to articulate and to mobilize*). It confirms the new orientation towards the practical references.
- They consider not only intellectual conditions but also emotional ones in diverse planes: knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and practices. Practice is important but is not sufficient.
- The way has to be in an efficient, effective, and creative. It introduces new indications about the predictability: not everything is predictable.
- In the second part, it explains that the competency has to be defined and measured in terms of the real acting. Therefore, it strengthens the empiric sense of the term.
- The emphasis on the acquisition of competencies is also interesting: experience in concrete situations of the occupational exercise is the referent source.

But this definition also means a conceptual evolution: they are defining the competency based on the capability. The competency is not a capability. The *Education for Capability Manifesto* (1996) is an example of the response to the need for developing the competitiveness in a new, rapid, changing context. Cairns (2000, cited by Phelps, Ellis, & Hase, op.cit.) defines the capability as *having justified confidence in your ability to take appropriate and effective action to formulate and solve problems in both familiar and unfamiliar and changing settings*. Perhaps, this point is the main change in this definition: they consider the significance to answer adequately in new contexts, new situations, or new circumstances and this kind of acting is not always foreseeable. The reference to Cairns (op. cit.) gives us the opportunity to comments the possibility to adapt people to new situations. Nowadays, a good competency is bad if it does not include a component for potential updating. Now, we know that the problem of education is not only the acquisition of good knowledge, but also

- to learn to acquire new learning;
- to learn to maintain the learning;
- to learn to update the learning.

## 2. Diversity and unity in the job descriptions

The workplace is a concrete job with its own specific tasks or tasks. If we design or define its competencies, we are joining local, particular features

in a conceptual upper level. This is a process of generalization. This conceptual generalization allows considering a set of diverse workplaces as a job. Therefore, a sailor as a job is a grouping of all the sailors existing in the world (and in other worlds). Finally, a job is equivalent to the word that represents it. It is a concept and, consequently, a conception. We could consider that every job is in fact a first level of abstraction because it represents a set of concrete workplaces that are usually different and specific. Sure, there are not two sailors absolutely identical. But they are similar enough to be considered all of them as sailors. That is what Saussure named *signifier*, the representation of the *signified* (1916; 2001). Therefore, the word is expressing a meaning, a concept. This is a first level of generalization that we can understand and use since the first words that we learn.

However, the words are not independent realities. They belong to a cultural, productive, ideological world where they interact, influence, and receive the action and reactions of other words, that is to say, of other concepts. The jobs are related to other words in two dimensions: by similarity / difference, and by familiarity. In the first case, we talk about *semantic field*, and in the second one, about *lexical families*. The lexical family joins the words related to another one by their root. The sailor is related to sail, sailing, sailboat, sailcloth, etc. In this way we could initiate the description of the job and expand it to instruments, tasks, difficulties, etc. This is a first step to define a job. This step initiates a longer one towards the competencies.

The semantic field is a set of words (therefore, of concepts) that are related semantically. The synonyms are a kind of these words. However we are interested on the semantic similarity of jobs. The semantic field of *sailor* could include seaman, able seaman, fisherman, navigator, boatman, waterman, crew member, captain, marine, etc. In this way, we arrive at a complex field where we have to trace the map, a conceptual map, where we have to contrast similar jobs, expressing the differences. Thus, we construct an occupational group: a group of jobs / occupations / labors that have something in common: Perhaps a central aim or task (the health professionals), perhaps a common method (the construction sector), perhaps a specific context (the forest workers). This is an occupational group: a group of jobs that are joined by any reason. One of the problematic questions is the criteria to realize these groupings, but this is another problem that we are not analyzing now.

Sometimes there is another situation to consider: the same word is designing different activities. The tasks that workers named sailors are doing could be very different. Consequently, the competencies each one needs

could be very different. Therefore, this is a main question. A sailor can use angle or mesh, can sail a boat or a ship, and so on. All of them are named *sailors*, but really their work is quite different. We could maintain all of them as the same job, but is it useful? Perhaps not, because if we have to select people for these different workplaces or if we have to train them, we should use different references, specific goals, specialized activities, and distinctive contents. This is the reason, also when there are no different words (*signifiers*); we have to distinguish several jobs in one. This is a practical problem related to a semantic / lexical one, but we need to consider different meanings because they are different realities. These specific meanings are the occupation profiles. A profile is a concrete realization of a general job. An occupation profile is a set of very similar workplaces.

Starting from the workplaces and grouping them, the process produces a progressive construction to upper abstract levels. The features of these sets of jobs are more and more general, as they describe larger groups of jobs. The competencies are a kind of descriptors of the jobs. Depending on the level of abstraction and their position concerning the diversity of tasks and workplaces, different types of competencies have to be considered.

### 3. Types of competencies according to their degree of generality

In agreement with the glossary of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Secretary of Political Public of Employment of the Ministry of Work and Employment (MTE) of Brazil (op. cit.), there are several types of competencies according to their degree of generality:

#### 3.1 Basic competencies

Those competencies are developed on the first school levels like reading and writing. Many abilities at this stage allow us to develop more specific ones. The basic abilities are not only common to all the professions but rather they constitute the formative basic baggage in a specific social, historical context. Technology use is too complex to be considered as a basic competency but they are useful the basic ones to use the technology well. This is a perspective of increasing interest: the key competencies that allow performing in a wide spectrum of labor areas (Vargas Zúñiga, 2005).

In figure 1 we represent the synthesis of the different kinds of competencies.

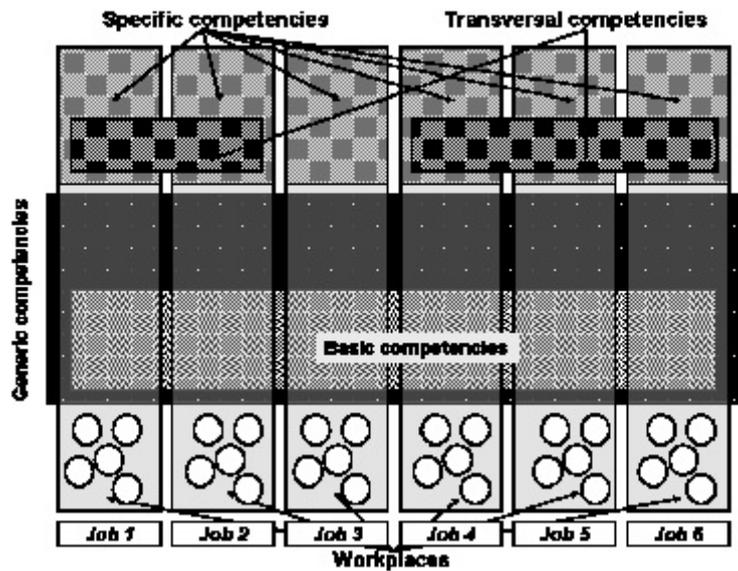


Fig. 1: Different kinds of competencies

### 3.2 Generic competencies

These competencies are useful for the exercise of any professional activity. Their development is helpful in order to perform any profession well. These abilities can be indifferent in many ways but they will embrace the entire personality. It is reasonable to include, therefore, abilities of cognitive character, but also psychomotor, procedural, emotional, and attitudinal aspects. In fact, generalizing so much this type of competencies is a hyperbole. There are always some ways to adapt a job position to people with disabilities. An actual example is the accessibility to the computer for people with disabilities (Candelas Arnao & Lobato Galindo, 1996). Technology use is too concrete to be considered as a generic competency but we use the generic competencies to use the technology well.

### 3.3 Specific competencies

They would be developed for and in a specific profession. They are those we should develop if we want to be formed for a profession. It can have diverse degrees of specificity. There is a more universal level in which the abilities would be defined as characteristic for the whole group of those graduated or professionals, for example, for all the teachers. However, some characteristics are specific for some specific contexts, for example, for some intervention areas (immigrant people, leisure, kinder garden, etc.). Also, in every workplace, we can find specificities. This perception is very evident when we compare the competencies described for the usual school context (Perrenoud, 2004) and for open training contexts. The technology use can be considered as a specific competency. An educator has to use different kinds of technology and with some specific applications.

### 3.4 Transversal competencies

These competencies are common to diverse, professional activities but they are not general. We can outline many competencies that are useful for many jobs. These transversal competencies facilitate adaptation to new situations and they also can have a hierarchy when they are common to job families, occupational groups, occupation profiles, and/or specific jobs (see the figure 1).

It allows us to speak about *job families* that contain a set of diverse professional activities. They can group and relate diverse professional trajectories. We can do a functional analysis of a job family or labor sector. Based on it, we can generate occupational groups that congregate several occupation profiles. An occupation profile is a set of specific, similar jobs.

This process of categorization of jobs is an inference process, starting from concrete jobs and going to upper levels of abstraction. It is a conceptual construction related to a generalization process.

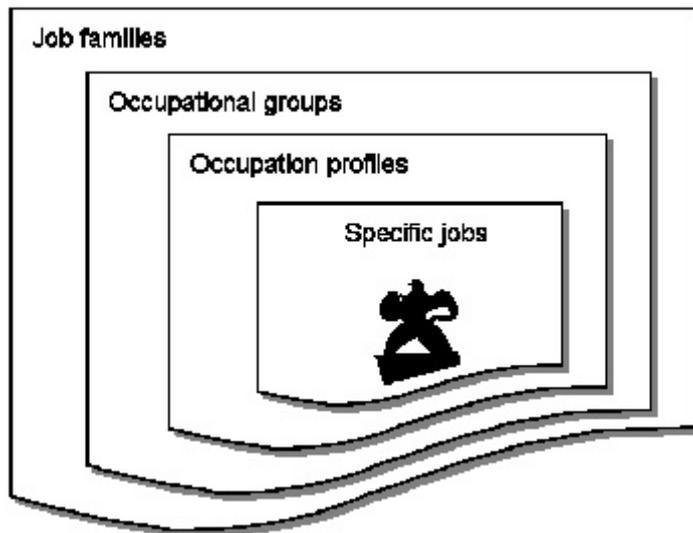


Fig. 2: Conceptual structuring of a professional family

#### 4. The sources of the competencies. The case of the educators in the technological resources

Therefore, the competencies are descriptions of the jobs that we have to consider on several levels: from the more concrete ones to the families. There are some techniques to design the competencies and to facilitate effective evidences to evaluate them (Agudelo Mejía, 2002). This point of view generates descriptions that can be valid, authentic, reliable, sufficient, and current. As we use them to design the training for these jobs, a simple description is not enough. We need to know the reasons why a skill, a piece of knowledge, an attitude, an ability, etc. is including in a competency. Therefore, we have to establish more dynamic criteria and a prospective methodology to design competencies. We have to consider necessarily:

- The actual, real state of the job: how are the workers developing their work nowadays?
- The actual, desirable state of the job: how ought the workers develop their work nowadays?

- The predictable, desirable state of the job: how are the workers projecting their work in the future?

The first consideration is important, but the second and the third ones are also very important. Why? Firstly, we cannot design a model, plan, or course of training without analyzing the actual quality of the job practice because the training is an improving activity. When we are training, we are looking for excellence. We cannot train only to reproduce the actual reality, but to improve it.

Secondly, the training activity is preparing for future changes. Actually, we can observe the quick rhythm of the changes. Probably the most actual knowledge that we transfer to our students is already out of step with the state of arts when they are beginning to work. Both considerations, the optimal state and the future prevision, are necessary to describe the competencies of a job or activity. For these reasons, the competencies design is not a merely description of the reality; it is also its analysis, its improvement, and its prevision in the future.

We have to consider the sources that we can use to design the competencies. To reflect on it, we are starting from the competencies of the educator in the technological resources. Our experience to train educators on the technological resources is an excellent reference to consider the coordinates of the sources to design the competencies.

To explain these suggestions, we are developing the discourse starting from an example, as a piece of the reality, and we are discussing the reason to consider the foundation of the decision.

#### 4.1 Best practices versus worst ones

An example of good practice is the development of autonomy to solve computer problems. Autonomy is more effective in future problems solving. As any machine, the computer causes several moments when the user have to solve problems, as he/she does not understand what is happening, as he/she does not know how to do what he wants to do, as the hardware or the software is broken down. An autonomous person has more opportunities to solve the problems and to go on his/her task without need of any external personal help.

The observation of best practices is an appropriate way to describe a job. Really, the bad practices are also good sources, but they are models to neither imitate nor reproduce. As they are bad, this kind of practices allows us considering what we have to avoid; the best ones orient us to consider what we have to learn. In this case, we could observe that the

dependent individuals need much more external help and have to stop their activities until somebody is solving them the problem.

#### 4.2 Paradigmatic models

The use or management of tools is a procedure. Learning the management of tools by means of the exercise is a usual practice. It is also a usual, informal way to learn out of the schools and other formal, training places. Since we begin to learn to do anything, we are practicing: crawling, walking, running, talking, etc. We learn not only because we see others doing it but because we practice.

Learning by doing is already a classical principle. The active construction of knowledge is a traditional, paradigmatic model in the pedagogy. The foundation of knowledge is conditioning the future learning. If we construct it actively, it is more prospective that we are able to learn apply this knowledge in our life and to learn new things.

#### 4.3 Deontological codes

The new tools for communication had created some problems about privacy. When we mail, we hope our messages are confidential. Knowing non-commercial software is another example of decision in behavioral dilemmas. Supporting the non-commercial efforts reinforces the development of our own interests, creative potentials, and non-profit organizations.

We need deontological rules to know what we can do and what we cannot do. In the professional contexts, this set of rules is named deontological code. The human behavior needs also orientations in the professional contexts. Even with flexibility and freedom, respect and other principles are necessary to assure coexistence and community development.

#### 4.4 Scientific knowledge

The atmosphere has to be comfortable. We need an agreeable, pleasant, and friendly environment to work effectively without damaging our health. Light, noise, and temperature are examples of parameters that we need to monitor to obtain an enjoyable task development. We associate the simultaneous stimulus: learning and environmental perceptions. At the same time, the ergonomics are another example of useful, scientific knowledge to promote healthy practices at the job.

Science has to be useful to help us to realize our tasks and work the easiest way. Greater effectiveness has to be healthy and comfortable. Nobody has to oblige others to realize non-healthy activities. Science has to serve human welfare, as individual, as social.

#### 4.5 Social needs

The problem of technological training is its availability. Is a tool useful if you cannot access to it? Not only, it is not useful, it is also a way to explicit the needs, the necessities, and the differences among people; and it is also a way to put out of action the educational intervention. Really, there is already a large segment of population that does not use computers and other technological devices. For several reasons such as geography, labor, family, status, age, training, and so on, neither have they used them, nor have they learned to use them.

Under the present circumstances, mainly thinking about educational projects in some deprived neighborhoods, in some rural contexts, in the third world, and many others, it is important to maintain the training of non computer-supported means. The computer is not yet a universal resource. In this sense, the recycling abilities are very useful for any kind of educators. About the computers, the outdated hardware has to be useful in a parallel way to the most modern.

#### 4.6 Individual traits

Everybody is different with regard to others. Each individual has his /her own features that convert him/her in a special, specific, non-repeated, unique person. Therefore, some people have special characteristics that create sometimes difficulties to use some kinds of technology. Starting from the Warnock Report (1978), these people are usually named people with special needs. Supporting the integration of people with special needs, we contribute to a better society with much more cohesion and diversity.

Everybody has the right to develop him/herself; people with disabilities also. An educator has to be able to facilitate the accessibility to everybody. There are several kinds of accessibility. We can consider four general types: physical, cognitive, sensorial, and social. Every kind of disability needs a specific way of technological accessibility.

#### 4.7 The lifelong change

Everyday life is in permanent change. We attribute to Heraclites of Ephesus this thought that was quite original at his epoch, but is a very general, evident assertion nowadays. However, further training is not only a problem of increasing knowledge; it is mainly an attitude to innovate and update competencies. If the educator does not consider the relevance of the advancement, it is difficult to improve it in the practice. At the same time, we must value the changes separating them from the commercial promotions or a fashion race to get the latest invention. We are thinking about the change as a personal, progressive, developing perspective.

For the technological competencies of the educator, we need to consider the lifelong changes towards his/her personal consideration and towards the students' one. As a person and a worker, an educator has to develop him/herself and to update his/her knowledge, attitudes, and procedures. As an educator, he/she has to facilitate this improvement to the students. This training has to be oriented to their autonomy, not to their dependence to promote or to encourage further advances.

#### 4.8 Technical development guidelines

Observing the technical development during the decade 1995-2005, we can consider future, immediate guidelines. In the hardware, we observe the significant development of a large offer of portable devices where the mobile phones and similar tools are kings (or queens). The computer uses are developing towards a large compatibility (interpolarity) with other devices. But in the software, the interfaces are becoming more and more friendly. In this tendency, the environments and the software are being more intuitive. The computer is developing intuition-based interfaces that do not require advanced, technical knowledge. Analyzing the transformation from the MS-DOS environment to MS-Windows one, based on the McIntosh one, the graphical interface allows a very intuitive use of the computer. This allows, for instance, promoting the learning based on the trial and error. A large number of computers users employ it.

The educators have to be able to open their mind to new devices and to train the students to use them adequately. We cannot understand how we do not teach about some very daily, common advices in the schools as a washing machine, a videotape recorder, or a phone. The technological education is not limited to the computer and, day by day, every kind of devices is being based on the computer without being really a computer.

On the other hand, we need to promote the intuition potential, the immediate thinking, and the insight possibilities. People who have a reflexive style of learning (Crosling & Webb, 2002) need also this development.

#### 4.9 Practical problems

As we have said, the actual computers based on the intuitive interfaces allow solving problems by trial and error. However, there are more effective ways to do essays and more useful ways to learn from errors. Really, the trial and error is a method to construct autonomously the knowledge. The classical, experimental design of research, starting from a hypothesis, is related to this kind of knowledge. When somebody tries a solution, s/he is suggesting a possible solution. Trying it, s/he is testing it. Observing the results, he/she is learning about the viability and effectiveness of his/her initial believing.

We say usually that the growing complexity of the computers makes difficult a rational solving. The trial and error method is a real, effective, useful strategy. The educators have to train people to use this method as a genuine construction process of knowledge that we can make better and improve. Finally, the educators have to train to research as a usual way to solve problems.

#### 4.10 The success of graduated students

A good technological training makes possible a better insertion at an educational workplace. As well as the training issue is not technological, the educational institutions, associations, or centers, their persons in charge, or their staff usually prefer the educators with technological capabilities, especially with computer-based capabilities. Nowadays, the labor market demands computer users at educational workplaces. The administrative, organizational, designing, evaluating, training, or researching tasks require more and more computer-based capabilities. These demanded capabilities are usually the common ones for the everyday jobs as a word-processor, a browser, an e-mail program, an anti-virus, a compressor, an image-viewer, or some documents readers (for instance, *pdf* readers).

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<sup>2</sup> Portable Document Format (Adobe Systems Incorporated).

The schools, the associations, the institutions, and the enterprises need a good technological competency for the educators. In our social context and independently from the training subjects, the technological capabilities promote the labor insertion of the new graduated students. This assertion is not related to being able to develop training processes without the sophisticated technology, as we have previously said.

## 5. Discussion

Our point of view is based on three assertions that we are discussing now:

(1) The competencies construction is a complex process of generalization, starting from the concrete, real workplaces and tasks to general definitions of jobs, occupation profiles, occupational groups, and job families. The competency is a feature that describes a capability (ILO and MTE of Brazil, op. cit.) of a good worker, in our case a good educator.

(2) The competency is not only a simple description of the actual tasks that the educator is practicing, but a desirable definition of the job. The opposite of this could be a competency for the incompetence, a contradiction for a training design of educators. Therefore, there is an upgrading component that we need to consider to reach a significant, useful learning (Ducci, op. cit.). Contrary to this author, we support that the competencies description is also a rehearsal to improve the real situation of a job: we train students to be better educators than the present ones.

(3) Considering only the real workers to design the educators' competencies is a circular, egocentric process that leads to endogamy and does not solve the endemic problems of the workers. It is one of the limitations of the internal knowledge sources (Foss and Pedersen, 2003). Some external references are necessary to place the job in the social environment and to improve in fact the job exercise.

(4) Several sources can be considered to describe a job. We have deepened in some suggestions as best practices and worst ones, the paradigmatic models, the deontological codes, the scientific knowledge, the social needs, the individual traits, the lifelong change, the technical development guidelines, the practical problems, and the success of graduated students.

(5) These sources are mainly a qualitative approach because the best competencies are a proposal to improve on reality, not only a description to reproduce it. The question is not *what is the most frequent behaviour?* but *what is the best capability?* The capability concept includes in fact

open possibilities to solve unpredictable situations (Phelps, Ellis, & Hase, 2001).

(6) The best practices are not the most frequent ones because reality is perfectible and professional exercise always needs updating. However, the updating is usually delayed with regard to the evaluation of the needs is a prospective process, not only a simple description of reality. This kind of anticipation is the aim of several researching techniques as the Delphi Technique (Dunham, 1998).

(7) Best practices and worst ones, paradigmatic models, deontological codes, scientific knowledge, social needs, individual traits, the lifelong change, technical development guidelines, practical problems, and the success of graduated students are as heuristics that stimulate our designs. Therefore, they are based on qualitative strategies (Feliz & Ricoy, 2003) and they create a paradigmatic reference, a desirable exercise, and a capability-based objective.

(8) In conclusion, qualitative strategies are a suggestive, significant, social, contextual, interactive, dynamic, useful, and fruitful approach for competencies design and allow to combine different sources to propose paradigmatic references for the optimal, desirable exercise of a job.

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**Youth welfare services and problems of borderline personality disorder. Suggestions from the perspective of the client – a single case study**

Silke Birgitta Gahleitner and Julia Markner

1. Background to the study

In psycho-social practice borderline disorder is considered to be difficult and conflict-laden. Young people with this disorder thus have a 'bad reputation,' both in youth support institutions and also among the general public. In view of the different behavioral patterns of these youngsters, many of which are problematic, at first glance this reaction is understandable.

Professional caregivers responsible for 'borderliners' frequently respond with feelings such as anger and annoyance and, above all, helplessness. Staff of social institutions therefore often hesitate to admit 'borderline clients.' Helper teams not infrequently come to the decision that they these clients must leave their establishments.

Which requirements should the helping network be able to fulfil in order to have something with which to counter these destructive circles that lead to drop-outs? How can we improve our understanding of these problems to include the subjective views of the youngsters themselves? How do these young people themselves see their problems? How do they experience themselves and others and the failures and behaviors they have 'provoked themselves.' What do they need to be able to accept support and to be co-operative? Which kinds of intervention do they see as helpful during or shortly after receiving from support measures and which do they consider to be destructive for their further development?

These questions were investigated in a single case study devoted to the subjective perspective of a client with borderline problems in a youth support institution. The aim of the study was to achieve a more complex understanding of the problems that would take into account the young person's own view and to use this as a basis for developing ideas as to how psycho-social workers can better adjust to these young people and their individual catastrophes, while at the same time making greater use of their resources, in an attempt to open up new ways of developing their broken identities.

## 2. Borderline problems and support for young people – the state of the art

The diagnosis of borderline personality disorder remains highly controversial. This applies particularly for young people (Markner, 2004, p. 9ff). In the classical diagnostic manuals the disorder is described as affective lability, dissociative symptoms, fear of abandonment, patterns of unstable but intensive interpersonal relationships, characterized by switches between idealisation and devaluation, instability of the self-concept and perception of the self, and impulsiveness and self-harming that may include suicidal tendencies (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; World Health Organisation, 2000).

These criteria need to be revised before they can be satisfactorily applied to children and adolescents. It is currently still controversial among members of the helping professions as to whether early diagnosis of this disorder helps to provide clients with the kind of support they need or whether it merely leads to their being stigmatised at too early a stage. However, in spite of all the difficulties and reservations, there is substantial agreement that when a high degree of emotional instability is established, psychotherapy, milieu therapy and, where necessary, pharmacotherapy should be offered and that work with youths should focus particularly on the clients' resources (Bürgin & Meng, 2000).

Research on trauma, which is currently a rapidly expanding field, has raised the issue of whether early infantile traumatization is a cause of borderline personality disorder. However, to date the etiological models of this disorder have not been able to offer a comprehensive or uniform picture. Thus, it is not possible to draw simple conclusions as to clients' personal histories in any particular direction. However, attention should be paid to these issues in psychotherapeutic and educational work with these clients (Rahn, 2003, p. 63).

This question becomes particularly significant if we consider it within the context of aspects of post-traumatic stress disorder and borderline problems that are relevant to attachment theory (Gahleitner, 2005). There is now strong evidence that attachment quality is massively impaired in persons having experienced sexual or physical abuse from persons within their immediate environments during early childhood (Brisch, 2003b). Children with developmental disturbances of this kind later often develop the fear of abandonment that is typical of borderline symptomatology. The fear induced by the trauma then becomes a permanent subjective reality and there is a danger that it will become chronic, in the form of borderline personality disorder.

This was the basis for the requirement that staff working in the care of borderline clients should pay attention to the aspect of 'holding and enduring.' This in turn requires emotional commitment, but without losing sight of the structuring and limit-setting that these clients need. The clients' caregivers thus provide an alternative experience in terms of particular behaviors and reactions which form a basis which is conducive to an initial restructuring of the borderline personality organisation (Hofman, 2002).

However, helping professionals can only commit themselves to the guidance of these young people in a responsible manner if they are able to interpret their behavior accurately against the background of their histories and current situations. This also implies regular self-reflection, supervision and a mode of working that supports transparency between the members of the team and an openness to conflict. This can help to cope with attacks on self-esteem, devaluation and threats and to prevent borderline-specific enactments (such as splitting of teams).

The helping structure needs to have a stable external boundary if the clients are to be able to achieve inner stabilisation. This approach requires a multimodal care program that is well-co-ordinated between workers of the different disciplines involved. However, this demands several levels of professional and co-operation between the different helping systems that is adjusted to the characteristics of the disorder. At the same time with these clients it is important for staff to be able to react flexibly and thus also suitably in context and also to address problems in a manner suited to the individual case (Hofman, 2002).

The study was designed to investigate these requirements for professionals involved in the care of this group of clients in detail in a single case, taking into consideration the perspective of a girl receiving care from a youth support institution.

### 3. Research question and methods

The aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of what adolescents with borderline problems need to be able to feel that their personal problem situations, expectations and needs have been expected and responded to and in a manner that helps them to break out of the vicious circle of broken relationships. The main emphasis was laid on gaining insight into what these young people, as experts for their own

situations, consider important to help them activate and make use of their (existing) resources.

In line with this objective, the two main research questions were:

1. How do young borderline clients see themselves and what subjective patterns of interpretation do they have for their own actions?
2. What do they need from youth support services in order to be able to accept and be co-operative with guidance and to benefit from it?

Borderline symptomatology is an area of research that touches on intimate and painful spheres of the individuals' lives. Using qualitative methods it is possible to approach the complex relationships between the individual life history, the person's subjective perception of their problems and their processing both in more detail and with more caution than with quantitative procedures. Thus, to begin a problem-centered interview (Witzel, 1982) was employed to access the lived reality of a 17-year-old girl with borderline problems.

The problem-centred interview fulfils the qualitative research criteria of problem-centeredness and orientation to towards the subject under investigation and process. With its narrative and insight-generating forms of communication and discursive-diaological process that alternates between existing knowledge and knowledge to be obtained (Witzel, 2000) it also follows the theory-generating procedures of Glaser and Strauss' (1998) grounded theory and is thus especially suitable for complex research questions for which research findings already exist that can be included in the considerations. The problem-centered interview comprises an interview guideline, the tape-recording and the post-script.

Closely related to the objective of adequately reflecting the complexity of the field of research is the aim not only to objectify by means of abstraction, but also for the interviewer to be open to the interviewee – "the actor's point of view" (Witzel, 1982, p. 38) in order to capture the interviewee's specific manner of experiencing and perceiving social reality (Bohnsack, 1999). We considered this to be an ethical requirement, particularly in a research field in which psychiatric diagnoses at issue and with young research participants, many of whom have been degraded to objects as a result of their experiences. However, this means actively including the interviewees in the research process and adopting an open, self-reflective stance in the research process (Devereux, 1992; Volmerg, 1988).

The single case study was carried out on a typical case. A client who had already dropped out of youth support schemes several times, but who had been able to achieve a certain degree of security and stabilization in her current institution, was selected for the interview. The decision to interview a young woman, J., was made on the basis that women are much

more highly represented than men among borderline clients. It was also considered important that this 17-year-old girl was not in an acute self-destructive phase and was already able to look back over a certain period of receiving support.

For the analysis of the interviews Mayring's qualitative content analysis (1993, 2000) was combined with Witzel's method of data collection, laying the emphasis on conducting an exploratory, inductive procedure without initial paraphrasing of the content. To aid understanding of the contribution of the youth guidance services the results were contextualized in a representation of the helping process.

In a compatible combination with Witzel's problem-centered procedure, the research process is understood as a both inductive and deductive search, in which empirical material from self- and observer-ratings (Strauss & Corbin, 1996) and theory-guided interpretation are compared and contrasted in a constant mutual exchange process (cf. content-analytical procedure with a contextualizing interim step, Gahleitner, 2003). For communicative validation (Köckeis-Stangl, 1980) the interview was presented to the interviewee for review and discussed several times with professionals practising in the field.

In the analysis the interview material obtained in the interview was assigned to 5 main categories by constructing descriptive systems. These were:

- holding and enduring,
- professionals' interpretations,
- self-reflection,
- positive aspects of professional support services,
- gaps in the professional helper network.

These main categories, which were selected on the basis of the current state of the art, were complemented inductively, provided with sub-categories in a coding guideline and assigned anchor examples. The results of the analysis were then compared with the results of previous research. In what follows, selected sections of the client's support process (for further details cf. Markner, 2004) will be portrayed and the main results of the study will be presented for discussion.

#### 4. J's support process

J. is 19 years old and has been living in a therapeutic community for one year and two months. From her perspective this is a very long time.

There have been many situations in her life in which she has broken off something and where this has had an impact in various areas of her life, whether it be residential programs, other situations in her personal life, particularly relationships, or in her school career.

In a psychiatric clinic where she underwent treatment for several months, J. was diagnosed as having borderline problems. In her case these are self-mutilating behaviour (cutting, burning), self-harming behaviour (bulimia and anorexia nervosa) and aggressive behaviour, boundary violations and unstable, but highly intense, rapidly changing relationships. She has only come to perceive the services provided by the institution where she is currently living as helpful after a very stormy, risk-intensive trial period. She first had to 'test for herself how far she could go without, as so often before, being rejected. Previously this kind of behavior had often led to withdrawal of the support. *"And then I was simply thrown out and then there I was. And I didn't know where to go. I was all on my own. Where was I to go?"*

Whether and to what extent J. was and is able to be open to receiving help was and is, according to her description, highly dependent on the phase of building up trust: *"I don't trust everybody straight away. I'm very cautious in these things. And so I wouldn't exactly describe myself, well, as different ... hmm ... Yeah, it's difficult – yeah, in a way I would."* In her last institution she had really settled in for the first time and felt understood and treated in a professionally competent manner. *"And there I really achieved a lot..., I got my school-leaving exam ... and I'm generally quite stable in terms of my situation in life."*

In her opinion a competent understanding of her 'differentness' is an important precondition for this development of trust: *"So in some things I'm different, how I see certain things, how I look at the world as a whole, I sometimes think, yes, I do see things differently and experience them differently, too. Because I have been exposed to many things more intensely and also differently. Because not everybody has been through what I've been through."*

J. also explains how important it is that caregivers should react flexibly to her needs, especially because of this background, and that they should act spontaneously to create spaces that fit the situation and find a balance between structure-building and flexible handling. *"And sometimes I don't see the limits. I usually disregard them. And with the caregivers ..., I had a lot of quarrels with them because I simply didn't want to accept many things.... And I think it's good that they don't simply say "Oh, you're lying, you're crazy," but that they listen to you."*

An important factor in this reflected handling of the problems is evidently the central role of the regulation of closeness and distance and an honest, dialogical relationship: *"That the rules are no longer so extremely strict, so strict. And that the caregivers, when they're working ... that they forget that they're working. That is, not that they completely forget it, but a bit ..."* J. came back to this need and its immense importance later on in the interview and expressed it more concisely, i.e. that while the caregivers are not *"a Mommy substitute,"* the institution is her *"home."*

In what follows the results of the interview will be discussed in light of the literature.

## 5. Discussion of the results

### Holding and enduring

In care work with children every caregiver represents a new opportunity for attachment. Psycho-social caregivers are also always consulted as attachment figures (Pauls, 2004). Thus, one of the main tasks of responsible care for young people is to create a protective space in which they reveal themselves in safety and without fear. *"Working with people with borderline disorder is only possible and workable if they feel held and protected. This applies on principle, irrespective of what they do!"* Hofmann, 2002, p. 220).

In her interview J. repeatedly emphasized her need for this supporting function, *"... simply to know, too, that somebody's there. That in itself is helpful."* The initial contact phase, in particular, can frequently be understood as a test phase in which the social worker is tested for her/his ability to provide secure attachment. Admittance to a youth care service is often associated with enormous expectations that now all wounds will be healed and stable relationships will develop. On the other hand, the new start also gives rise to justified fears of experiencing renewed attachment traumas and being disappointed (Gahleitner, 2003).

However, it frequently proves difficult to provide such a developmental space for young people without breaching the limits of the program). Young people with this symptomatology have a strong tendency to break rules, behave aggressively and manipulate. *"The initial phase was really difficult with me, (...) I messed things up and did a whole lot of things. And then the staff there said: "We can't keep J. any longer."* Thus,

to what extent young people can make use of the help offered them is also highly dependent on the caregivers' capacity to withstand stress. If the assistance is terminated prematurely, they experience it as yet another broken relationship and thus as a premature confirmation of their defectiveness before they really had a chance to reveal themselves. Summing up her assessment of institutions for young people she has previously lived in the client says: *"Well, it was never really like I was at home and settle down."*

#### Professional, self-reflective interpretation

Caregivers can only become responsibly involved with these young people if they have a broad knowledge and experience of the functioning of the borderline personality. A professional understanding of functioning in this disorder, with its variability in adolescence seen against the background of the young person's history and of the causes of his or her sometimes highly problematic behaviour, and a professional interpretation of the client's personal background that is informed by professional knowledge are therefore indispensable (Linke, 2003, p. 55).

If the psychodynamics behind the behaviour of these young persons are not understood, it is not possible to function as a stable helping factor in their borderline world, on the contrary, the caregiver tends to be at their mercy. The connection between the client's personality and her problematic behavior patterns was also repeatedly evidenced in the interview: *"If I am not feeling good or I'm feeling really bad then I get a cigarette and burn myself ... and I've lived in many therapeutic communities, but I didn't keep to the rules."*

However, this requires not only text book knowledge, but also a (self)-reflective approach. The capacity to recognize one's own states and those of others and to interpret them are basic prerequisites for the enduring function of the work. Dulz and Schneider (1997) see problems in therapeutic and supportive work as residing in the requirements for empathy, on the one hand, and the ability to regulate closeness and distance, on the other. However, to be able to provide a suitable emotional resocialization, helpers need to have a stable identity organisation. Asked what characterizes a successful helping relationship, J. said: *"That they often give the person time and attention, closer attention, more intensive attention."* Hofmann (2002, p. 14f.) also calls for regular exchange within teams on syndromes and disorders, symptoms and disturbed behaviour, allowing team members to recognize at an early stage what

situations and events are part of problematic patterns and how these can be better addressed (op. cit., p. 236f.).

Conclusions and implications for practitioners providing support for young people

If we view the results for the first three categories of the interview together, one theme emerges that assumes particular significance in J.'s support history, namely the aspect of 'holding and enduring'. "*There I liked that very much,*" says J., "*that they put their arm round you and comforted you and said: ...'We're here!'*" *And it was really true. That helped me most.*"

The necessity of having stable ground beneath one's feet becomes especially evident when it comes to the successes of the young people and the youth support service: "*Now I've been living here for a year and two months. And I've really achieved a lot (...) and I'm quite stable as regards my situation in life.*" Having this feeling gives J. the opportunity to experience stable attachments, something which she has not hitherto known. With this secure base she can then apply herself to developing her own resources. Her early self disorder can be overcome by experiencing new, constant and good enough object relations, allowing her to go through a process of finding her own self and identity.

If we take a more differentiated look at this aspect of "holding and enduring," we see that the "emotional commitment" is the first step in this direction, however, without losing sight of the clients' need for clear structuring and limit-setting. With its behaviour and reactions the caregiving system represents the "reliable attachment mirror" that makes it possible for the young people to experience a change in borderline personality organisation (Markner, 2004). Thus, the first hypothesis can be derived as follows:

The extent to which young people can make use of the assistance provided depends strongly on the caregivers' attachment skills and capacity to withstand stress.

However, this "holding" is also only possible if the caregivers are informed about the client's clinical picture and personal situation. They can only commit themselves responsibly to the care of these adolescents if they are able to reflect upon and interpret their behaviours professionally while taking into consideration their current situation.

The requirement of "holding and enduring" can only be fulfilled if the responsible caregivers are able to distinguish between their own feelings and those that have been induced by the young person and his or her

problems. It is important for the relationship that they are able to handle closeness and distance flexibly and thoughtfully and to negotiate suitable limits, both in interaction with the clients and within the setting. Transference and countertransference processes must be correctly understood and interpreted. For this the following second (hypo-)thesis can be derived:

Insight into functioning in borderline disorder, taking the client's history into account, and self-reflection are prerequisites for a professional response to the associated problems that is both specific to the indication and fitting in the respective situation.

Looking at the results more from the perspective of attachment theory, Bowlby was the first to emphasise the importance of the therapeutic attachment relationship, its function as a secure base for free exploration and of reflecting on internal attachment representations (1983). Recent studies have also shown that the attachment relationship between patient and therapist can influence the outcome of therapy (Brisch, 2003a, p. 94ff.). Brisch points out that the establishment of a secure attachment relationship between the patient and the therapist is a basic prerequisite for successful psychotherapeutic work. These insights can, of course, also be extended to apply to caregivers responsible for clients in a non-therapeutic support context.

Thus, only consistent and "good enough" relationship experiences, i.e. a "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1976) help young people to overcome their early self disorders and to go through their own self-discovery and identity-building processes. At this level they may be able to explore and work on current and past relationships and restructure their identities. Thus, the therapeutic relationship can be considered an indispensable basic requirement for the success of youth support services for young people with borderline-type problems. In fact, assistance is only possible once the clients' deep distrust has been overcome. If the problem of shattered attachments is not given priority from the start, no help can be provided. From this perspective one can speak of a primacy of attachment in the supporting relationship with borderline clients before further interventions and methodological conceptualizations can be applied.

This would also seem a logical conclusion in light of the theoretical background of borderline disorder, with its symptoms and causes. One of the causes of the disorder is insecure relationships in early childhood. These young people have often not experienced secure attachment to a significant other, or only ambivalent attachments. Their basic needs for protection and holding have not been met or have even been abused (cf.

Hofmann, 2002, p. 194). They have been unable to develop autonomy and their identities remain unstable.

Studies on attachment show clear effects of early attachment quality on the continuity or discontinuity of attachment patterns in later life, the development of social skills, coping with demands and the development of the self concept. Attachment research has also demonstrated the development of a complex system of cognitive and emotional representations of disorder that affects the entire personality (Brisch, 2003a).

It is therefore understandable that it is highly important for caregiving and therapeutic staff to be available as alternative attachment figures. New, secure attachment experiences enable clients to modify earlier destructive, insecure attachment patterns and to develop secure attachments. Only then are they able to begin working through other disturbed parts of their personalities and stabilize their own identity (Brisch, 2003a, p. 96f).

Thus there is a need for professional specialist residential workers with clients with borderline problems to respond to the early abuse of trust in attachment relationships by providing an emotionally supportive and "nurturing" relationship that is characterized by prizing, empathy and authenticity. While transference processes play an important role, the provision of a relationship must be conceptualized as going further than this. Optimally, the transference should develop into a dialogical relationship with mutuality and sincerity, which alone can offer an experience that is genuinely different from the early attachment problems associated with borderline disorder (for a more detailed account of this and the implementation of this kind of relationship in different therapeutic modalities cf. Gahleitner, 2005). Thus the following specific hypothesis can be derived.

In response to the serious early attachment disturbances of borderline clients the main task of professional caregivers working in support services for young people is to create a healing, dialogical attachment space that is firmly grounded in self-reflection and sound professional skills and in which the young person can (further) safely develop her or his identity. This ability to provide a relationship in a professional manner and informed by attachment theory can be considered a constitutive element of work with borderline clients.

J. summarized her thoughts on the provision of relationship in the youth care institution aptly with the words "*They (the caregivers, the author) are not Mommy-substitutes, but this IS my home here.*"

## 6. Generalizing from a typical single case – possibilities and limits

In contrast to a purely quantitatively based, representative generalization oriented towards the positivist criteria of representative samples, more theoretical forms of generalization can be distinguished that are concerned with the question as to whether the hypotheses drawn on the basis of a qualitative study can be generalized and applied to other contexts of certain social processes and structures.

If we classify the above research project within a range of forms of generalization, it stands for the level of a qualitative, exploratory study in a specific field of application, represented by an identified typical case. The single case presented here contains both individual and structural elements of this specific field of application. This is demonstrated both by the broad agreement with the theoretical assumptions, on the one hand, and by the fact that it goes beyond these assumptions, on the other.

The semi-structured procedure employed provides the conditions for including a previous problem analysis, but also opens up space for an exploratory approach. With Witzel's problem-centered method of data collection it was possible to obtain material that was suited to the complex questions posed. With the content-analytic, but strongly inductive strategy employed to analyze the data obtained, specific contents were generalized in a stepwise fashion.

The conclusiveness of the result is evidence in particular by the fact that the state of the art is to a great extent corroborated, but is also surpassed at specific points by the focus on new aspects that emerge in the interview. It was the insight afforded into patterns of subjective interpretations and action, in particular, that led to this new perspective on previous results and opens up a new direction for the planning of interventions: i.e., that of according priority to the relationship as an element of support. This form of generalization was repeatedly justified argumentatively by the communicative validation carried out with both the interviewee and professionals working in youth support services.

Thus, qualitative single case research can provide an opportunity to gather indications with a greater intensity than in quantitative designs, which are also by no means only valid for the specific case investigated, but can, within the respective context, also be generalized argumentatively to other situations or persons and permit statements to be made that hold for a broader field of application. However, this must be explained and justified anew for each case with reference to the concrete conditions of the subject under investigation. The present study could, nonetheless, also

be used to prepare the way for further studies, which could either, again, be exploratory or, alternatively, be quantitative and more operationalized studies with larger samples. However, until such time as this is possible, another strategy would be to carry out medium-range studies in order to access further structural elements of professional work with young people with borderline problems for both research and practice.

Finally, it must be emphasized that both authors have had the experience in youth support work that young people with borderline problems are not "hopeless hardship cases." Following the research results psychosocial work should therefore aim to provide young people with these problems with a protected space, with respect for their strengths and capacity for change. The vicious circle of provoking the expected rejection in order to obtain confirmation for their own 'badness' can thus be interrupted. This gives the young person the opportunity to show her-/himself, discover existing resources, live a more self-determined life and develop real chances of individual growth and integration into society. Subject-oriented research could play a key role in this process.

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**Intercultural competence for transnational co-operations  
between small and medium-sized enterprises in Austria  
and Hungary**

Inge Herfort, Andreas Weiss & Martin Mühlberger

Abstract

In this study, the business co-operation between Austrian and Hungarian SMEs is analysed to determine the competences required for effective co-operation. The aim of this study is to determine profiles of intercultural competences in order to manage the co-operation process. These profiles build the foundation for this paper's recommendations concerning the development of intercultural competence. Data from interviews, job descriptions and postings for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in co-operations are analysed by content analysis (Mayring, 2000). In order to be able to extend the scope of application, the following principles of generalization are applied:

1. Co-operations are selected according to a sampling plan on the basis of dimensions thought to be relevant to (intercultural) competence and also representing a maximal variation between cases.
2. The cases are compared systematically with respect to communalities and differences with respect to intercultural competence.
3. A representational generalization is achieved by establishing a link by way of reasoning from the study's empirical results to the existing theoretical and empirical framework of the research question.

1. Introduction

Going global has always been a popular strategy of large enterprises. For many European SMEs this strategy has become more realistic after the accession of Austria to the European Union. With the expansion of the EU to the East in 2004 transnational business has become more attractive for Austrian SMEs in countries adjacent to Austria, i.e. Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

Co-operations play an increasingly important role in a globalized economy (European Commission, 2004). In the view of SME-business these advantages encompass "access to new and larger markets," "reduced costs," "access to know-how and technology," "access to capital," and a "broader supply of products" (ibid., p. 19ff) .

At the same time, SMEs see themselves confronted with a series of barriers when co-operating with other enterprises: 1) "Wish to maintain independence," 2) "Lack of information with whom to co-operate," 3) "High risk involved," and 4) "Language and cultural barriers" (ibid., p. 36ff). These results suggest that the capabilities required to build transnational alliances and co-operation go far beyond the capabilities required for managing SMEs.

This research on intercultural competence profiles for SME-alliances intends to contribute to this theoretical discussion, as well as to the practice of management training for transnational co-operations. The objective of this study is to define profiles of intercultural management competence for transnational SME-co-operations. It is further intended to use the results of this study to derive principles for competence development.

Based on these objectives the following questions about transnational co-operations are asked in this study:

1) Which intercultural competences are necessary for the initiation and realization of transnational co-operations between Austrian und Hungarian SMEs?

2) What are the conclusions that can be drawn from the results of this empirical study for the development of intercultural competence for transnational co-operations?

## 2. Theoretical Background

In this section, the most important theoretical concepts relevant to this study are discussed.

*Competence* in the economic area can be seen as the capability to act in a self-organized way (Heyse, Erpenbeck & Max, 2004). Competence can be changed, i.e., learned and improved. What constitutes competence varies according to context. That is, behavioral patterns that are effective in one situation may be ineffective in others (Greif, 1996, p.163). Enterprises engaging in transnational business need culturally defined competencies to adapt to the specific culture in which they are doing business.

Following this reasoning, there is no universal profile of competencies that accounts for all economic activities and in all cultural contexts.

*Intercultural competence*, as defined by Lüsebrink (2005, p. 9), is "the ability to interact with other cultures and their members in a way suitable for their value systems and communication styles, to communicate with them and to understand them."<sup>1</sup> With "communicative competence"<sup>2</sup> Lüsebrink indicates the importance of "foreign language skills in a narrower sense," "gesture, facial expression and paralinguistic elements, such as intonation and rhythm of the language."<sup>3</sup> According to Lüsebrink, the competence to understand is the ability to read "symbolic signs of other cultures, to understand and interpret them, beginning with literature, every day rituals, dress codes and media."<sup>4</sup> (ibid, p. 9). After all, human behavior is influenced by values, norms and attitudes, some of them varying with culture (Fishbein, 1967). At the same time, the same behavior may mean different things in different cultures.

*Culture* is "... a system of orientation for a society (nation, group, organisation) being at the same time universally valid for and varying with a culture. This system of orientation influences perception, thinking, valuing and acting of people within a specific society. [...] This system being specific to a culture, is passed on to the following generations by the process of socialisation. It enables a specific society (nation, group, organisation) to cope with their life"<sup>5</sup> (Thomas, 1990, p.149f.).

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from German: "... lässt sich als das Vermögen definieren, mit fremden Kulturen und ihren Angehörigen in adäquater, ihren Wertesystemen und Kommunikationsstilen angemessener Weise zu handeln, mit ihnen zu kommunizieren und sie zu verstehen."

<sup>2</sup> Translated from German: "Kommunikationskompetenz"

<sup>3</sup> Translated from German: „Fremdsprachenkenntnisse im engeren Sinn“, "Gestik, Mimik und paraverbale Faktoren wie Intonation und Sprechrhythmus"

<sup>4</sup> Translated from German: "symbolische Zeichen anderer Kulturen zu lesen, verstehen und interpretieren zu können, von der Literatur über Alltagsrituale bis hin zu KleidungsCodes und Medien"

<sup>5</sup> Translated from German: "ein generelles (universelles), für eine Gesellschaft (Nation, Gruppe, Organisation) aber spezifisches (kulturspezifisches) Orientierungssystem. Dieses Orientierungssystem beeinflusst die Wahrnehmung, das Denken, Werten und Handeln der Menschen innerhalb der jeweiligen Gesellschaft. [...] Das kulturspezifische Orientierungssystem wird über den Prozeß der Sozialisation an die nachfolgende Generation tradiert und erlaubt der jeweiligen Gesellschaft (Nation, Gruppe, Organi-

Another important concept in this study is "*business co-operation*." It is defined as the "collaboration of economically independent players"<sup>6</sup> by outsourcing or by jointly engaging in tasks of production and provision of goods and services, while aiming at improving the economic situation of all collaborating enterprises (Wojda, 2002, p. 2). These tasks may include all functional activities of enterprises and co-operations, such as the development of a marketing concept, human resources development as well as the distribution of products.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Sampling

The focus of this study is the co-operation between two SMEs, Austrian and Hungarian in origin<sup>7</sup>. At this point, only business co-operations between two firms are included in this study's sample. This study examines cases that differ from each other with respect to the variables relevant to variation in intercultural competence (see Merkens, 1997, p. 101). Thus, an important step in the analysis is to determine the structural combinations of attributes that signal variations in the intercultural competence profiles of business co-operations. The following criteria were defined for differentiation of cases<sup>8</sup>:

(1) Stage of co-operation; initiation" on the one hand, and "realization" on the other hand. This differentiation is based on the assumption that each stage of co-operation management requires different intercultural competencies.

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sation) ihre ganz eigene Lebensbewältigung."

<sup>6</sup> Translated from German: "Zusammenarbeit von wirtschaftlich selbständigen Akteuren"

<sup>7</sup> The classification of enterprises by the European Commission encompasses several criteria for the differentiation of enterprises. In this study enterprise size in terms of people employed was used for differentiation: micro-enterprises (1 to 9 employees), small enterprises (10 to 49) und medium-sized enterprises (50 to 249) (European Commission, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> The central criteria for differentiation, variation with regards to national culture (see Hofstede, 2001) is not yet considered in this study, since at this point, only bilateral relationships between Austrian and Hungarian SME are (at this moment/point) the subject of interest in this study.

(2) Interdependence of partner behavior in the co-operation: Success of co-operations is "strongly" or "weakly" dependent on the behavior of a business partner. In this context, it is assumed that co-operations are characterized by a high degree of incomplete information with respect to the behavior of the business partner in the co-operation. The assumption is that with increasing dependency the profile of intercultural management competences vary.

These criteria of differentiation provide the basis for the development of a sampling scheme (see Table 1). It attempts to find at least two cases for each attribute combination, even though experience from a study of intercultural SME-co-operations (see Wojda, Mayrhofer, Grandolfo-Waldner, Herfort & Schlichting, 2004) show that it is not easy to find suitable interviewees in this field. This way it should be possible not only to compare cases that differ from each other, but also to compare similar attribute combinations cases as defined above.

Table 1: *Qualitative sampling plan (Number of cases, i.e. co-operations, for various attribute combinations)*

QUALITATIVE SAMPLING PLAN		Development Stage of Co-operation			
		Initiation		Realization	
Inter- dependence with respect to <u>Behavior</u>	Strong	2	2	2	2
	Weak	2	2	2	2

In the process of data collection representatives from Austrian as well as Hungarian SMEs who are actively involved in co-operations and who also have the authority to make decisions regarding the co-operations were interviewed.

Part of the data used in this study is already available from a study on success criteria for transnational co-operations.<sup>9</sup> A first review of these interviews showed that these data contain valuable information about

<sup>9</sup> Interviews from eight cases are available from a study of 2003/04 (see Wojda et al., 2004).

"intercultural competence." However, the sample needs to be completed and part of the data set has to be triangulated (see Flick, 2003) with further interviews. In addition, the data set available from the study by Wojda et al. (2004) is supplemented with further cases in order to make a sample complete. Method of this investigation is "problem-centered interview" (see Witzel, 2000).

It is also planned to install a "repository of knowledge" in order to store important background information extracted from expert interviews. Part of this expert knowledge originates from the study of co-operation's success criteria, as mentioned above (see Wojda et al, 2004). Figure 1 shows the topics included in the repository of knowledge. Where needed, further guided interviews will be conducted.

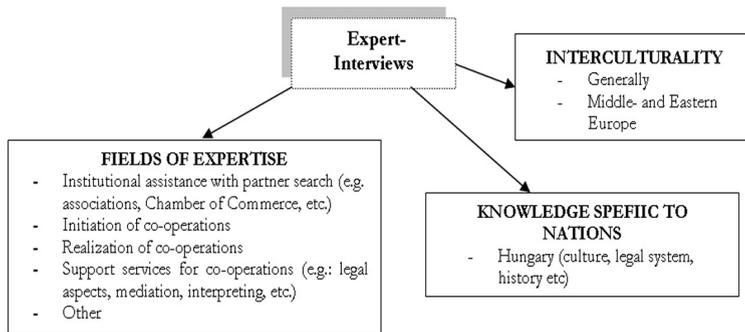


Figure 1: "Knowledge Repository:" Major and minor themes

In order to gain another perspective, job descriptions and job postings of enterprises involved in the co-operation will also be included in the analysis.

### 3.2 Analysis

In order to get an overview of the material from the study (Wojda et al., 2004), the content of the interviews were analysed with respect to the topics included in the data. Themes were extracted by thought experiment as well as by theme analysis. By structuring the data into modules according to themes it is possible to decide which parts of the interviews are relevant for answering the questions of interest and which are relevant

for further analysis. This way, it is also possible to assess the need for additional interviews (see Liebold & Trinczek, 2002, p. 50f). Furthermore, it was attempted to gain an understanding of which topics need to be added to further expert knowledge.

This study's data is analysed using "qualitative content analysis" as conceived by Mayring (see Mayring, 2003). A deductive category frame was constructed based on Lüsebrink's concept of intercultural competence (see Lüsebrink, 2005). This categorisation system is used as a starting heuristic whereby only few deductively built categories are supplemented and extended in an inductive way. By doing so, a premature narrowing of perspective at the beginning of the analysis process is avoided (see Huber, 1994). This way, the content analysis considers all attributes of intercultural competence emerging from the data in the context of transnational co-operations, i.e. the category system is continuously "revised by feedback loops and the data material is adapted in a flexible manner"<sup>10</sup> (Mayring, 2000, p. 474).

The empirical data were selected and organized with the research questions in mind. They provide the basis for the next step in the analysis, the systematic comparison of the co-operations. In this process, structural communalities and differences with respect to intercultural competence are extracted. This way, the "universally valid" should be found in the "particular"<sup>11</sup> (see Rosenthal, 2005, p. 75). The procedure of analysis is illustrated in Figure 2 (next page).

#### 4. Generalization of Results

In the area of quantitative social research it is possible to draw inferences on the basis of a random sample from "a finite number of empirically derived elements to the entirety/population in a common class"<sup>12</sup> (Lamnek, 2005, p. 720). For this to be possible it is required to precisely define statistical criteria for the random sample. The qualitative research para-

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<sup>10</sup> Translated from German: das Kategorienschema wird durch "Rückkoppelungsschleifen überarbeitet und an das Material flexibel angepasst"

<sup>11</sup> Translated from German: und damit das "Allgemeine im Besonderen" gefunden

<sup>12</sup> Translated from German: "einer begrenzten Zahl empirisch ermittelter Elemente auf die Gesamtheit aller Elemente einer gemeinsamen Klasse"

digm, however, does not include a generally recognized procedure for a precise determination of research results.

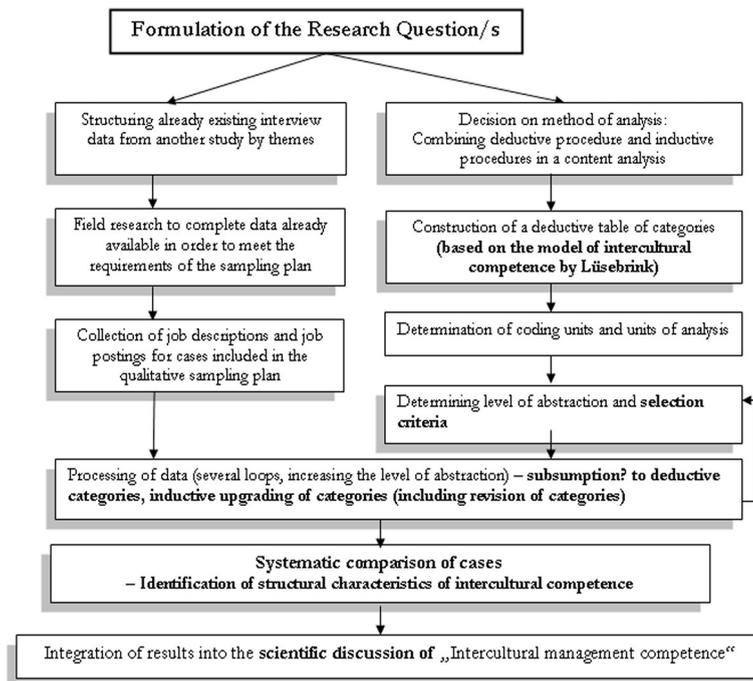


Figure 2: Procedure of the analysis

Especially in applied qualitative social research the practical use of results is of utmost importance. Therefore, it is an important point to consider the range of the validity of results. The objective of this study is the question: To what extent can a "model of intercultural competence" for the management of co-operations being derived from a limited number of Austrian and Hungarian SMEs be generalized to a broader context? In the discussion of methodology one can find different viewpoints about the research premises for the generalization of findings to cases not included in a sample. These points of view vary according to the theoretical paradigms of the researcher (see Merken, 1997, p. 97).

Kudera (1989) points out that for such generalization three principles are of interest. First of all, an adequate sampling procedure is required.

Second, it is above all a systematic comparison of cases, and finally, the linking of one's own limited results to the "context of the entire theoretical and empirical body of knowledge available." In this study, an attempt is made to respect these principles in order to be able to aim at a generalization of results beyond this study's cases. A discussion of these principles of generalization follows.

Ad 1) Designing the sampling plan to include a maximum variation of cases with respect to intercultural competence requires a maximum variation in management profiles associated with various transnational co-operations (see Flick, 2000, p. 260).

Ad 2) The cases in the sample are analysed in a comparative analysis on the basis of a category system. Purpose of this systematic case-by-case comparison is the identification of structural communalities in various profiles of competence. At this point, it needs to be mentioned that the validity aspired in this study is (for this moment) restricted to intercultural management competence profiles relating to co-operation between Austrian and Hungarian SMEs.

Ad 3). A clear-cut delineation of the "limits of applicability"<sup>13</sup> (Glaser & Strauss, 2005, p. 34) can happen only at the end of the analysis. In the literature, there are many concepts advocating for essentially the same procedure of generalization. That is, generalization on a theoretical basis, requires explicit argumentation in the way and to the extent the results (or a part of the results) can be applied to other "situations, areas, times"<sup>14</sup> (Mayring, 2002, p. 36). In this context, Mayring talks about the principle of "generalization based on reasoning that establishes a link to the existing theoretical framework."<sup>15</sup> (ibid., p. 35). When generalizing on the basis of this principle, research findings on intercultural competence for co-operations are compared to general models of competence in the field of business (e.g. Wojda, 1996, Heyse et al., 2004) as well as to other models and studies about intercultural management competence (e.g. Thomas, 1990).

The qualitative content analysis by Mayring offers several essential advantages for generalization (see Mayring, 2003). It is a systematic rule-based procedure that is intersubjectively reproducible. However, it is

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<sup>13</sup> Translated from German: "Grenzen der Anwendbarkeit"

<sup>14</sup> Translated from German: "Situationen, Bereiche, Zeiten"

<sup>15</sup> Translated from German: "argumentative Verallgemeinerung"

mostly two conditions that allow for generalizability of results when employing Mayring's content analysis. First, this method of analysis is based on a theory underlying the analysis when formulating the research question and when building a system of categories. Second, this theoretical foundation constitutes a sound basis for "generalization based on reasoning establishing a link to the existing theoretical framework"<sup>16</sup> (Mayring, 2002, p. 35f) and thus facilitates the embedding of the results in the theoretical discussion.

## 5. Discussion and research perspectives

Determining the level of generalizability is one of the fundamental challenges in projects of qualitative research. In contrast to quantitative social research there are no exact "instructions" for generalization. Also, in qualitative research there is no uniform view regarding how generalization of results can be attained and extended beyond the cases investigated. A high degree of generalizability is an important goal of applied research.

In this empirical study talking of generalization is valid for several reasons. In designing the sampling plan the principle of "maximum variation" was adhered to (see Flick, 2000, p. 260). By applying this principle it should be ensured that all of the cases' intercultural competence profiles are represented despite the limited sample (see Lamnek, 2005, p. 187). This can be assumed, as in addition to the repeated and systematic analysis of this study's cases, generalization is based on reasoning which establishes a link to existing theoretical frameworks and thus supports the results' applicability to the wider context.

Past theoretical and empirical research indicates that intercultural competence profiles are influenced by differences between national cultures (see also Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, it is possible that findings about intercultural competence for co-operations between Austrian and Hungarian SMEs may have a wider application to other European countries.

Finally, this study's results could provide the foundation for the development of a standardized questionnaire. Analysing the quantitative data collected with this questionnaire could provide the basis for testing the degree this study's findings are representative.

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

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**A study of the training needs of adults in 21st-century society:  
integrated methodological research model involving  
discussion groups, questionnaires and case studies**

Lorenzo Almazán Moreno & Ana Ortiz Colón

As members of the D.I.E.A (HUM-427) research group at the University of Jaén, we present a model of integrated methodological research involving a discussion group, questionnaires and co-operative methodology, through the use of case studies.

Our methodological approach for co-operative research is derived from Salinas (1999), Cabero (1989), Fera (1994), Zabalza (1990) and Medina (1995). This type of methodology will provide us with an overview of current training needs of adults and future potential. It also purports to strengthen knowledge on the issue and to introduce innovative practice procedures through a whole set of joint, open and committed actions.

The research methodology utilized in our previous work on this subject involved the joint use of questionnaires and discussion groups. This allowed us to become familiar with the perceptions of different professionals and to compare the various opinions of the members of the discussion group, namely, university teachers, experts, parents, students and various educational authorities, among others.

Furthermore, this methodology has a descriptive character derived from the sources consulted, thus permitting a full and comprehensive overview of a complex and vital reality, and at the same time to identify the major training needs of adults in the so-called 'society of knowledge'. Its main objective is to predict and identify the links existing between two or more variables. This is supported by authors such as Bisquerra (1989, p. 123-148) and Fox (1981, p. 477-509).

We also intend to achieve the complementarity of the studies conducted by means of questionnaires and to search for facts, beliefs and social and personal attitudes. While this procedure will provide us with a large amount of information, depth will be gained through the discussion group and the study of cases (Cook & Reichardt, 1986; Walker & Evers, 1988).

According to Callejo (2001), group discussion facilitates group diversity and experience. This means group composition must be carefully

defined. It also permits "comparing the opinions and feeling of the participant with a view to reaching conclusions and making decisions," as stated by Muchielli (1969: 107).

We believe that some of the advantages of discussion groups are direct contact with the reality under study, interactivity with the object of research, direct contact with the protagonists and, finally, participation of the people involved. Krueger (1991) considers that this type of group environment permits a faithful reproduction of emotions which do not usually surface in other types of research. The advantage of such a discussion group, preferably consisting of 6 to 10 members, is that it allows collecting information about the needs, interests and worries of a specific social sector.

Inner validation of the discussion group is obtained through the assessment of its content, on the basis of the data gathered from the questionnaire and by means of a thorough analysis of the case studies conducted in Adult Centres in Andalucía (Spain) and in the various Associations participating in the sample under study.

Our research attempts to integrate the three main axes mentioned above in order to identify the training needs of adults living in the society of knowledge and to find a way of overcoming existing obstacles. In the early 1990s, adults engaged in basic training programs had a number of specific needs having to do with communication abilities, particularly writing and reading skills. However, today communication needs have changed radically, as have, of course, the sources of information. This was already pointed out in the conclusions reached in Ortiz (2002).

The main objective of this piece of research is the thorough description and analysis, by means of the methodology explained above, of the training needs of adults in the 21st-century Andalusian society of knowledge, both in formal and informal education contexts. This overall objective may be further subdivided into the following specific objectives:

- i. To validate a methodological model made up of a discussion group, questionnaire data, and the thorough analysis of case studies.
- ii. To gather information about the training needs of adults in Andalucía regarding communication and information technologies and to analyze their incidence on the basis of the data obtained through the complementary questionnaires and case studies.

- iii. To implement an integrated methodological model that may facilitate the personal and professional development of adults in 21st-century society.

The methodological model we present aims at increasing our knowledge of qualitative and quantitative perspectives, thus favoring university research projects which may contribute to overcoming divergences and finding approaches closer to paradigmatic complementarity (Campbell, 1982; Tuthill y Ashton, 1983; Sherman, 1973). Given the fact that this sort of research is likely face some limitations at an institutional level (Área, 1999-2002), our intention is to devise a number of strategies requiring the active involvement of educational authorities and other social partners.

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## **Problems of discipline and learning in the educational system**

Samuel Gento, M.Concepción Domínguez & Antonio Medina

### 1. Justification and generalization in Qualitative Psychology

The growing concern on the situation of education is a current very important social trend. In countries of our context, as of course in our own country, there is high interest in designing and implementing appropriate and effective educational systems. But, by considering that many educational systems do not completely answer to today's people's and societies needs, a number of reports and publications dedicate themselves to studying problems that affect such systems, to explain causes of not desired results, and to put forward alternative solutions.

We can also frequently see in mass media news and comments on situations and cases where problems of discipline and learning, within educational systems, are a matter of great concern for societies, parents and for professional educators themselves. In fact, our initial idea of studying the theme we present just now came about after asking teachers' opinion about the most relevant problems they have at schools and what are the themes they would like to be treated on programs of in service teacher training.

Generalisation of this research can be found in process implementation and in the obtained results:

- The implemented processes may be useful as referential ones to design instruments for the purpose of collecting empirical data, to validate such instruments, to deal with some participation techniques, to exploit the obtained data and to interpret them.
- The obtained results, although not totally conclusive nor definitive, represent empirical evidence of opinions, expressed by professionals and involved people, on problems and causes of lack of discipline and lack of effective learning in our educational system. And, although such results show up a subjective judgement of aspects referred to the Spanish educational system, most of the enunciated problems and causes could also come out in other European and non-European countries.

## 2. Theoretical proposal

Previous to an empirical study of what is the real situation in our schools, we thought about possible fields where causes of such problems proceed from. After intense theoretical contrasts and after profound reflections and discussions, we put forward, as basic fields where causes of problems of discipline and learning could proceed from, the following ones (Gento, S., 2003):

- The educational system approach
- The curriculum design
- The personal problems of students
- The social anti-educative context
- The problems proceeding from the family
- The teacher as source of problems of discipline and learning

## 3. Empirical study

In order to empirically contrast our theoretical proposal and to obtain opinions of possible causes that, in the suggested fields, bring about problems of discipline and learning, we designed a strategy to obtain information from education professionals and involved people. To implement this study we were aided by teachers participating in teacher training courses and doctorate students in our University. The used strategy included qualitative and quantitative techniques and instruments

- Through qualitative approach we submitted to some sectors a draft instrument for the production of a questionnaire that we would – afterwards – use to obtain systematic information of fields and causes of problems. Also through qualitative approach, we collected information by using two different techniques: the cause and effect diagram of Ishikawa and the Pareto analysis.
- Through quantitative approach we collected data by using the questionnaire we had previously elaborated and submitted to validation.

#### 4. The questionnaire on "Problems of Discipline and Learning"

The questionnaire on "Problems of Discipline and Learning" has been made up throughout four consecutive years. The theoretical bases of this instrument are the ones made explicit as theoretical proposal. We initially made up a first version of the questionnaire. But, in order to elaborate a valid instrument, we successively submitted it to validation processes such as the following ones:

- *Immediate or face validity.* This validity is the one obtained by the opinion of those who are going to fill in the instrument or those who are going to take decisions related to the results produced by such instrument (Bertone, A., Poggi, M. & Teobaldo, M., 1995; Gento, S., 1989, 1989, p. 103).

In order to receive the corresponding information given by the people immediately involved in the questionnaire content, we asked different sectors such as teachers, parents and students.

- *Content validity.* This validity is obtained by opinions of authority given by external judges expert in the instrument contents and, if possible, in the kind of instrument. The authors who made up the instrument can also intervene in this content validity. In a similar way as in the face validity, this one tries to show if the instrument includes all the necessary aspects to be considered in order to guarantee the attainment of the questionnaire main goal. This way, content validity, wants to demonstrate that the instrument "measures what it tries to do as there is a logic base, and in the ideal empirical situation, to collect the instrument real content" (Fox, D.J., 1981, p. 421).

To obtain information on this content validity, we asked some university professors about the content of the questionnaire. We also had the participation of some collaborator professors who throughout four years participated as tutors in the teacher training courses on "Problems of Discipline and Learning" and on "Therapeutical Pedagogy." As the instrument's authors we also thought about and reflected on such questionnaire with the intention of improving it.

- *Construct validity.* A "construct" means an abstract conception that cannot be directly measured, but that has evident physical manifestations or practical activities we can use to measure its content (Best, J.V. & Kahn, J.V., 2003, p. 7). This kind of validity, also named as

"propositional validity," tries to show the adaptation of the instrument components and contents to the theoretical conception and to the manifestations of the studied theme (McCormic, R., James, M., 1995).

Such construct validity can be obtained by the instrument author or authors, who implement the instrument evaluation by contrasting it with the instrument archetype to the practically represented one, thus comparing the theoretical conception with the evident reality of what they made. For such purpose, authors revise the instrument to check its adjustment to the conceived model. The questionnaire author implemented the process involved in this validity, by considering not only the instrument format, but also its content in relation to the theme to be studied.

- *Contrast validity.* This validity tries to obtain an assessment of the instrument authenticity by contrasting or comparing it with other ones of similar approach or with data obtained other times on the same theme. This way, the instrument is submitted to comparison with an external criterion that can be a similar instrument. As we did not know of the existence of a totally equal instrument, we compared ours with other ones made up to collect opinions from diverse sectors in relation to problems of learning performance and of students' behaviour.
- *Validity by reaction to the instrument.* This validity estimates the effect produced on those who fill in the questionnaire or those who express opinions on the kind of questions, time given to fill it in, general level of difficulty, expressed doubts, proposed suggestions etc. (Casassus, J., 1996).

In order to obtain information that can be used to show this validity, we included at the end of the questionnaire some questions that people who had filled up the questionnaire could answer. Information given by this answers was used to re-elaborate our questionnaire.

By the processes of questionnaire validation of the types just described, we obtained a very valuable information that was used to successively assess and re-make it. As a product of these processes and information, we made up a fourth version of the questionnaire. Here, as part of this study, we will present the obtained results.

#### 4.1 Data on questionnaire validation

The people who answered the questionnaire filled in its last page, where some questions on its validation were included. We insert and briefly comment next the results of its validation, with mention of answerers who chose each category.

##### 4.1.1 Questionnaire utility

Data of answers in relation to the categories of useful and useful are the following ones (see table 1).

Tab.1: *Questionnaire utility*

Utility of the questionnaire	N° of answers	%
Useful	314	49,6
Un-useful	100	15,8
Without answer	219	34,6
Total answers	633	100

The highest percentage corresponds to the answer that the questionnaire is useful (49,6%). Nevertheless, by considering that there were some people who did not estimate the questionnaire as useful and, by looking at their observations and proposals, we have been revising the instrument.

##### 4.1.2 Questionnaire clarity

Data of answers about clarity or un-clarity of the questionnaire are included in the corresponding table (tab. 2).

Tab. 2: *Questionnaire clarity*

Clarity of the questionnaire	N° of answers	%
Clear	248	39,2
Un-clear	130	20,5
Without answer	255	40,3
Total answers	633	100

The above data show that the highest percentage corresponds to the category of clarity (39,2%). However, this percentage is lower than the one obtained for the category of utility. This could be interpreted as a

signal that, although a number of answerers considered the questionnaire as useful, they did not estimate it very clear. Most probably, on this estimation intervened the fact that some expressions of the questionnaire are not familiar to people who answered it (particularly, non professional educators, such as parents and students).

#### 4.1.3 Questionnaire amenity

In order to obtain information on the questionnaire amenity, we suggested to fill in the categories of "interesting" or "un-interesting." Data obtained for those categories are the ones of the following table (tab. 3).

Tab. 3: *Questionnaire amenity*

Amenity of the questionnaire	Nº of answers	%
Un-interesting	170	26,8
Interesting	166	26,2
Without answer	297	47
Total answers	633	100

The amenity of the questionnaire is a feature that, very probably, is related to its clarity for non professional educators: this has, undoubtedly, had influence on these non professional people's answers. But, moreover, most of the professional educators very probably considered the questionnaire useful (here we find the highest positive assessment), but not necessarily interesting for themselves to fill in it. As a probable consequence of those aspects, the category of interesting is lower (26,3%) than the one of un-interesting (26,8%). Anyway, subsequent editions of the questionnaires have been changed in order to increase its clarity and, if possible, its amenity.

#### 4.1.4. Questionnaire completeness

Although each item of the questionnaire included an open question, where answerers could express other aspects, the last part of in-process validation included two questions related to completeness: one asked if the questionnaire exceeds or not something; the other one asked if it lacks something. The results on these questions are in the following tables (tab. 4, tab. 5).

Fig. 4: *Questionnaire excess of questions*

The questionnaire exceeds on something	N° of answers	%
No	469	74,1
Yes	47	7,4
Without answer	117	18,5
Total answers	633	100

Tab. 5: *Questionnaire shortage of questions*

The questionnaire lacks something	N° of answers	%
No	257	40,6
Yes	66	10,4
Without answer	309	48,8
Total answers	633	100

According to the answers collected in the first table, most of the participants (74,1%) considered that the questionnaire did not have exceeding questions or, in other words, that the questions formulated are necessary to obtain the information we are looking for. But did the questionnaire include all the necessary questions?.

The following table offers the answer to the just formulated question, because it shows that the highest percentage of answers corresponds to the alternative that there is not shortage of questions (40,6%): in other words, that there was no need of inserting other questions. Notwithstanding, content validation and opinions of experts have suggested the opportunity of incorporating aspects not initially contemplated, which we did in subsequent editions of this questionnaire.

#### 4.2 Sectors who filled in the questionnaire

For three years we have used the questionnaire on "problems of discipline and learning at schools." Our university students of Special Education (from the psycho-pedagogical studies) and teachers participating in in-service training courses have used such questionnaire and have obtained and interpreted data collected with it. Apart from that, we have received the questionnaires used by the mentioned students and teachers, and we have processed data obtained from these questionnaires. At the moment, we have processed data obtained from 633 questionnaires used in different parts of Spain. The Spanish Autonomous Communities (Regions), where these questionnaires proceeded from, are the following ones (tab. 6):

Tab. 6: *Spanish Autonomous Communities where questionnaire have been used*

Autonomous community	Nº of questionnaires	%
Madrid	95	15,0
Murcia	91	14,4
Castilla La Mancha	87	13,7
Andalucía	78	12,3
Cantabria	47	7,4
Aragón	22	3,5
Valencia	16	2,5
La Rioja	12	1,9
Castilla y León	10	1,6
Extremadura	6	0,9
Cataluña	1	0,2
No identification	168	26,5
Total questionnaires	633	100

From the total of 633, a number of people answering the questionnaire (168, representing 26,5%) did not fill in the square corresponding to the Spanish region. Apart from that, the region with higher representation is Madrid (95 questionnaires, which represented 15% of the total number), followed by Murcia (91 questionnaires, 14,4% of total number), then Castilla La Mancha (87 questionnaires, 13,7% of total number) and then Andalucía (78 questionnaires, 12,3% of total number). The area with lower representation was Cataluña (1 questionnaire, 0,2% of total number). There was not representation of the Autonomous Communities of Asturias, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Galicia, Navarre and Vasque Country.

The higher number of questionnaires were answered by female representatives, although there is also a representation of male gender, as it can be seen in the following table (tab. 7). Apart from other reasons, it is obvious that in our educational system there are a larger number of female teachers than of male ones.

Tab. 7: Distribution of questionnaires by gender

Gender	Nº of questionnaires	%
Female	415	65,6
Male	215	34
No identification	3	0,5
Total questionnaires	633	100

Most of the representatives answering the questionnaire proceed from public schools (totally depending on public administration); but there is also a representation of private aided (or subsidized) schools and of private non aided schools, as it is showed at the following table (tab. 8). The highest representation corresponds to participants from public schools: this is, most probably, due, not only to the fact that there are in general most public than private schools all over Spain, but also to the fact (partly related to the previous one) that most of teachers participating in university studies and in in-service training also proceed from the public sector of education.

Tab. 8 *Distribution of questionnaires by type of school*

Type of school	Nº of questionnaires	%
Public schools	508	80,3
Private aided (subsidized) schools	74	11,7
Private non-aided schools	15	2,4
No identification	36	5,7
Total questionnaires	633	100

The questionnaires have been used with people working on, being involved or related with different levels or stages of our educational system. This can be seen at the next table (tab. 9). At this table it can be realized that the total number of questionnaires proceeding from our educational levels or stages exceeds the total number of filled in questionnaires. This is due to the fact that some of the people answering the questionnaires marked on more than one level or stage (this could have happened, for example, with parents having some children attending different levels or stages; or perhaps teachers working on different levels or stages: for example on Primary and Lower Secondary levels).

As this table shows, the highest representation corresponds to the Lower Secondary Education stage (called in Spain, "Obligatory Secondary Education," in Spanish, "Educación Secundaria Obligatoria" – in short, ESO – with students from 11/12 to 14/15 years). This is followed by the representation of Primary Education (from 6 to 11/12 years), and then by pre-school education or "kindergarten" (in Spain now called "Infant Education," in Spanish "Educación Infantil", to 5/6 years). The lower representation corresponds to the third University cycle or Doctorate: only one person following this cycle answered the questionnaire.

Tab. 9: *Distribution of questionnaire by educational level or stage*

Educational level or stage	Nº of representatives	%
Lower Secondary Education	250	39,5
Primary education	200	31,6
Pre-school education (kindergarten)	115	18,2
Higher Secondary Education	80	12,6
Vocational Education	44	7,0
First University cycle	24	3,8
Second University cycle	11	1,7
Third University cycle (Doctorate)	1	0,2
Post-grade training	6	0,9
Other level or stage	30	4,7
Total representatives	761	100

Our questionnaire obtained also information on membership of diverse sectors, such as students or pupils, teachers, school heads, parents, psychological team members, inspectors or supervisors, and teacher trainers. Apart from that, a space was reserved to fill in with "others ." Data related to the number of participants who were members of such sectors are shown in table 10:

Tab. 10: *Sectors who answered the questionnaire*

Sectors who answered the questionnaire	Nº of questionnaires	%
Teachers	380	60,0
Students/ pupils	114	18,0
Others	55	8
Psycho-pedagogical members	38	6
School heads or principals	18	2
Parents	17	2
Teacher trainers	4	0
Inspectors/ Supervisors	0	0
Without identification	7	1
Total questionnaires	729	100

The highest representation was the one of teachers (60%), followed by the one of students or pupils (18,0%, most of them older than 14 years, meaning that they were students from Lower or Higher Secondary Edu-

cation), and then psycho-pedagogical members. There are no school inspectors or supervisors in our sample. 8,7% of the people, who answered the questionnaire did not fill in the square corresponding to this feature. By joining all participants working as educators, we obtain a total of 440 participants (this representing 66,36% of all the people who filled in the questionnaire).

#### 4.3 Problems of discipline and learning in our schools

People answering the questionnaire had to fill in the corresponding square to mark problems existing at a school. The number of answers is collected next (tab. 11). As there was no limit in the number of answers, people could mark as many squares as they considered appropriate: as a consequence, as we can see in the corresponding table, the number of answers exceeds the number of questionnaires filled in.

If we consider that most of the people answering the questionnaire were teachers (60%) and – even – mostly educators (66,36%), we can deduce that opinions expressed about problems of discipline and learning were mostly proceeding from such teachers and educators. Nevertheless, also participated other sectors.

One immediate interpretation of the data included in the previous table shows that the most important problem is the one of "students/pupils lack of interest" (82,9% of participants subscribed this problem). This has to be interpreted as lack of interest in things made at school, whose main purpose is to promote education and learning. This initial interpretation of this index needs a profound consideration and analysis of what would be the causes of such lack of interest and how important are these causes. Most probably this would require a particular study and research.

Another important problem that people, who answered the questionnaire marked, is the "students/pupils' lack of respect to teachers." The large number of people who considered this is a very relevant problem (60,8%) manifest the actual crude reality of the situation in a number of schools. As a consequence of that, teachers feel very frequently highly disappointed and, possibly, this determines their lack of enthusiasm. And, most probably, students/pupils lack of respect of teachers is a source of "conflicts between teachers and such students/pupils." It appears, then, clear that this lack of respect is also a very worrying problem that, no doubt, demands a profound study and research that could produce information of how to solve it.

Tab. 11: *Problems of discipline and learning in our schools*

Problems in our schools	N° of answers	%
Students/pupils lack of interest	525	82,9
Students/pupils lack of respect to teachers	385	60,8
Students do not make educational activities at home	384	60,7
Lack of coordination between parents and teachers	321	50,7
Absenteeism or un-attendance	302	47,7
Conflicts between teachers and students/pupils	250	39,5
Misbehaviour is not appropriately sanctioned	234	37
Vandalism by students/pupils (materials destruction)	206	32,5
Teachers lack of enthusiasm	181	28,6
Ill-treatment between students/pupils	175	27,6
Other problems	103	16,3
Sexual harassment	31	4,9
Total answers on problems	2131	n.a.

Quite close to the previous problem is the one expressed as "students do not make educational activities at home." Although not in all the cases, it is obligatory that students and, particularly, pupils, make "homework" at home, a very important group of participants (60,7%) considered that the fact that students and, perhaps even, pupils do not make any educational activity at home is a problem that highly influences educational and learning performance. Probably this feature is, partly, influenced by the "lack of coordination between parents and teachers" and by parents lack of interest and, mainly, commitment in education.

The fourth most important problem chosen by the answerers (50,7% of them) is the "lack of coordination between parents and teachers." This is, certainly, a very relevant problem, because if teachers are the suitably prepared professionals responsible to promote education and learning at schools, parents are the main, inevitable and initial responsible source of education. When parents renounce their fundamental responsibility on

their children's education, it is very difficult that they can coordinate with teachers and really appreciate what teachers are doing for their children (Die Zeit, 2005, October 20<sup>th</sup>). And, when teachers do not accept the participation of parents and even their intervention in educational activities, the atmosphere of mutual distrust or, at least, of mutual ignorance distorts the whole educational process and prevent satisfactory educational performance.

All the other problems of our educational system (all of them chosen by less than 50% of the answerers) can be seen at the previous table (included as tab. 11). Although they are each other interrelated, each one of them is worth a profound consideration and, most probably, further studies and researches to intensify the knowledge of factors determining them and to look for possible solutions to be implemented.

#### 4.4 Main sources of problems of discipline and learning

As we have indicated when we referred to the theoretical proposal, we structured, all around six fields, causes that could produce problems in our schools. Although the questionnaire did not include the relevance evaluation of each one of these fields as cause determining problems of learning and discipline (perhaps it would have been convenient to do it), the answerers estimated the relevance of deficiencies of each one of this fields to determine problems of discipline and learning. We comment next these deficiencies, grouped around each field.

##### 4.4.1 Deficiencies proceeding from the educational system

Deficiencies from the educational system, number of people who have chosen them as factors determining problems, and percentage on total number of questionnaires are included next (tab. 12). Based on these findings we revised the questionnaire; thus, the actual version incorporates other categories, which were not included in the previous one.

According to the collected opinions, the main problem of our educational system (56,9% of the answers) is that "students/pupils effort is not stimulated." This is probably a very relevant problem, although around it there is a very polemic debate. Probably most of teachers and educators are in favour of reinforcing the students' effort in order to guarantee better performance of the educational system. But, by contrary, there are some other opinions (probably with a gravitating political component) that prefer a more social approach that would promote equality of all students, and that would set up that students would not be faced to a very de-

manding academic approach asking for a strict evaluation of student performance.

Fig. 12: *Deficiencies from the educational system*

Deficiencies of the educational system	Nº of answers	%
Student/pupil's effort is not stimulated	360	56,9
Moral or ethical values are not imbued	333	52,6
Schools are just as day nurseries	250	39,5
Working method and discipline is not demanded	36	5,7
Disciplinary measures are too tolerant	18	2,8
Other deficiencies	64	10,1
Total answers	1061	n.a.

It is also necessary to stress that the second more important problem of our educational system, according to the people who answered the questionnaire (52,6% of them), is that "moral or ethical values are not imbued." This is also probably a very polemic question, because some people (particularly many educators and parents) ask for the reinforcement of traditional moral values. But, on the other hand, a number of other people prefer a more tolerant educational approach, where freedom would be the most important value to be promoted.

A number of people answering the questionnaire chose as a relevant deficiency of our educational system its approach that "schools are considered just as day care nurseries," not as educational centers (39,5%). This is a frequently heard complaint from teachers, who consider that their main task is to promote education, particularly intellectual development; but that schools should not be responsible of other basic ones (sometimes physical problems and, other times, emotional ones) and must not be considered just as day care centres. Although there is an important part of reality on these statements, sometimes the family's traditional role change determines problems whose solution cannot be solved in any other place better than in schools.

Although there are still other problems showed up by the participants who answered the questionnaire, the percentage of answers is considerable lower in the latter ones. Nevertheless, it also would be worthwhile to study these problems more profoundly and to intensify research on them,

as on the two other mentioned before. But it would perhaps be interesting to stress the importance of the fourth showed up problem, which is that "working method and discipline is not demanded." The relevance of setting up a true working discipline in the classroom and of imbuing appropriate working methods are, undoubtedly, of high importance for the quality of educational processes and of the authentic educational product.

#### 4.4.2 Deficiencies proceeding from the curriculum design

Is the curriculum design we use in our schools appropriate for an education of authentic quality? In order to obtain information of people working in education and of people committed to it, a question was formulated in the questionnaire. The number of answers and percentage in relation to the number of answered questionnaires is next (tab. 13). Probably the formulated question of the initial questionnaire was quite general: for this reason there are not many answers on it.

Fig. 13: *Deficiencies proceeding from the curriculum design*

Deficiencies from the curriculum design	N° of answers	%
Basic contents are not treated with intensity enough	379	59,9
Themes are very superficial	46	7,3
Emotional intelligence is not educated	4	0,6
Other anti-educative curricular aspects	46	7,3
Total answers	475	n.a.

Probably related to the problem that obtained the higher number of answers in the question of problems proceeding from the educational system approach ("the student/pupil's effort is not stimulated"), the problem that received more answers in relation to curriculum design (59,9%) is the one enunciated as "basic contents are not treated with intensity enough." The logical conclusion to be reached is that, as students do not need a big effort to be promoted, the curriculum themes are not worked out with intensity enough. Anyway, it would be highly convenient to identify what are really the basic themes (in general and in relation to each level or stage), and to discover what of them are not really treated with the necessary intensity.

The problem that occupies the second position by the number of answers received a quite low number of answers (7,3%). Apart from that, it would probably be stressed that this problem, expressed as "themes are very superficial," seems quite similar to the previous one of low intensity of basic contents. For this reason, this problem has been reformulated in subsequent editions of the questionnaire.

Although it does not obtain a quite high number of answers, probably it is worthwhile to consider the problem expressed as "emotional intelligence is not educated" (0,6% of questionnaires chose it). Perhaps some authors would indicate that this reference to "emotional intelligence" is today fashionable. Nevertheless, the appropriate education of the emotional dimension of people is a permanent need, and it seems that the curriculum designs must incorporate the pertinent treatment of values of the physical-emotional dimension of human beings.

#### 4.4.3 Deficiencies proceeding from students/pupils

Quite frequently, problems of discipline and learning are caused by pupils or students themselves, as they behave in a particular not appropriate way or because they are in a particular phase or circumstance with repercussion on processes involved in learning and education. For this reason, we included students' personal problems in our theoretical study and we inserted in our questionnaire a question related to this personal field. The answers on this field are included in table 14.

According to data of this table, the main problem proceeding from this field is that "students are on a critical development stage" (68,2%). When we commented the distribution of collected questionnaires by educational level or stage (tab. 9), we indicated that most of them proceeded from lower secondary education (39,5%). As a consequence, people answering on problems of pupils/students are mainly thinking of students following this low level of secondary education, which coincides with the beginning of puberty and adolescence. These are certainly very critical development phases, that quite frequently show, apart from a reinforcement of teenagers' personality, their opposition to adults' rules and ways of organization.

As the second problem the fact that "students do not accept teachers' advice" was marked. Although the percentage of answers is lower here (46,4%), it is probably partly due to the critical situation of students, as we have just mentioned; but the family approach of education (its interest in education and its respect of teachers and communication with them) are also influencing this problem area.

Tab. 14: *Deficiencies proceeding from problems of pupils/students*

Deficiencies caused by problems of pupils/students	N° of answers	%
Students are on a critical development stage	432	68,2
Students do not accept teachers' advice	294	46,4
Students do not have habits of studying and intellectual work	69	10,9
Students do not show interest for studying	69	10,9
Students make little effort	49	7,7
Students do not respect teachers' authority	34	5,4
Other deficiencies	122	19,3
Total answers	1069	n.a.

Quite relevant, too, are deficiencies following afterwards, by decreasing importance: "students do not have habits of studying and intellectual work," and that "students do not show interest for studying" (both of them with 10,9% of answers in relation to the number of answered questionnaires). Probably the fact that they "do not have working habits for studying and intellectual work" influences their lack of interest for studying. Also the fact that "working method and discipline is not demanded by our educational system" (see tab. 12) is another cause determining that "students do not have habits of studying and of intellectual work."

We need to remember that "students'/pupils' lack of interest" is the most important problem of discipline and learning marked by participants answering the questionnaire (tab. 11). But, apart from other possible external factors affecting both these aspects (for example the attraction of television, video-games, etc.), these two problems would need profound study and reflection by educators in order to find and apply methodologies, techniques and materials that could attract students' attention.

That "students make little effort to obtain rewards" (marked by 7,7%) is also something implicit in their lack of interest. But this is something that would need a profound consideration, not only by teachers and educators, but particularly by political leaders and authorities. Although it seems difficult to solve, it would be necessary to put in action measures that could combine "equality of opportunities for everybody" with the necessary effort to trying to reach excellence.

The deficiency that "students do not respect teachers' authority" (chosen by 5,4% of participants) was also mentioned among the problems existing in our educational system (tab. 11) by 60% of the participants. Although it may be difficult to differentiate, if "students' lack of respect of teachers" is a problem of the educational system or a deficiency proceeding from students, this repetition is something to be considered on subsequent editions of our questionnaire.

#### 4.4.4 Deficiencies proceeding from the social context

It is a recurrent expression that social context surrounding educational institutions is quite frequently contrary to a true education, particularly because values predominant in this context are quite frequently contrary to those that the school is trying to promote. Collected deficiencies proceeding from this field are shown in table 15).

Tab. 15: *Deficiencies proceeding from the social context*

Deficiencies caused by the social context	Nº of answers	%
Negative influence of mass-media	507	80,1%
Drug abuse expansion	254	40,1%
Alcohol abuse	254	40,1%
Society propagates superficial life models	82	13,0%
Society does not appreciate effort	47	7,4%
Other deficiencies social context	104	16,4%
Total answers	1248	197,1%

In relation to this anti-educative social context, it is particularly relevant the high percentage of answers that marked the "negative influence of mass-media" (80,1% of filled in questionnaires). As we can frequently see on television, movies, magazines and other mass-media, they frequently offer scenes and information that incite to violence or to moral degradation. It is also appropriate to mention here the pernicious influence of some web pages that propagate noxious very negative information, sometimes especially directed to teenagers. Politics directed to rectify these malicious influence are particularly necessary these days.

"Drug abuse expansion" and "alcohol abuse" received both the same high number of answers (40,1%). Freedom given to teenagers and also to

criminal organizations trying to infiltrate into this fragile population are factors determining the expansion of drug abuse. It is also quite obvious that drug and alcohol abuse are quite related. And, although alcohol abuse does not create so strong dependency as does drug abuse, teenagers starting to drink alcohol go on consuming drugs in many cases, after a while if not immediately.

Although not many people answered the deficiency that "society propagates superficial life models" (13,0%), this is another social feature that, mainly in the long run, will produce a superficiality in the whole approach of life, inducing people enjoy as much as possible to present pleasures without thinking of the necessary effort to build up a valuable personality and to accumulate non material assets that will guarantee personal true satisfaction, social acknowledge and transcendent projection.

The deficiency following by number of elections states that "society does not appreciate effort" (7,4%). Although the number of answers is not very high, it is a feature highly related to the previous one, because a society that proposes superficial models cannot postulate effort, as this is contrary to such models. But the necessary use of effort represent a moral asset that our society should re-establish to guarantee its future as civilized human community.

#### 4.4.5 Deficiencies proceeding from the family

Family is the first cell where a person comes to when he/she comes to this world. Without a family, a child would nor physically survive. But, in order to survive and to develop him/herself as a rational and spiritual being, a child needs a family that will promote this rational and spiritual values. But, quite frequently, we see those days that some families act in a quite contrary way to what is supposed to be a true valuable education. But, what are the main deficiencies we can find out in a nowadays family? Answers to this question are collected in table 16.

The first important family deficiency chosen was the fact that "parents are not interested in their children's education." This is probably a very absolute statement that would need clarification, possibly meaning that parents just delegate education to professional teachers and do not consider that their active involvement is a very important factor for a good educational and academic performance. This is quite probably one opinion mostly spread among teachers and educators, because the representation of parents in the sample of people answering the questionnaire is only 2,7% (as can be seen in tab. 10).

Tab. 16: *Deficiencies proceeding from the family*

Deficiencies proceeding from the family	N° of answers	%
Parents are not interested in their children's education	305	48,2
Parents do not have the necessary training	268	42,3
Parents do not concede importance to their children's education	242	38,2
Parents do not communicate with their children's school	135	21,3
Parents do not dedicate time enough to their children	92	14,5
Parents do not have authority over their children	47	7,4
Family is broken or unstructured	37	5,8
Other deficiencies from the family	118	18,6
Total answers	1244	n.a.

The first just mentioned family deficiency is very much related to the one with the third post by decreasing number of answers, which is that "parents do not concede importance to their children's education" (38,2% of elections). Because of the similarity of both deficiencies, in further questionnaire editions we have put them together as just one. But a reasonable interpretation of answers we are commenting here implies that this lack of importance parents give to education is a clear manifestation of parents' lack of interest in their children's education.

That "parents do not have the necessary training," chosen as second deficiency (with 42,3%), is also a statement quite frequently heard, particularly from professional educators, psychologists and advisors. On the other hand, many training programmes for parents (in Spain usually called "parents' schools" or "escuelas de padres") are generally quite successful, not precisely because there are many parents attending them, but because they intensely modify the relationship between parents and teachers and they intensify parents' commitment and involvement in education.

It is also relevant the deficiency that "parents do not communicate with their children's school" (chosen by 21,3% of people answering the

questionnaire). Although this percentage is not extremely high, it refers to a feature that is worth attention and, possibly, actions directed to rectify it. It is progressively more and more clear the evidence that the relationship between parents and teachers is extremely important to coordinate their educational role and to involve both sectors in practical tasks of promoting education.

The fact that "parents do not dedicate time enough to their children" (deficiency chosen by 14,5% of participants) could be, partly, due to the way of life in our societies. Fathers are frequently too dedicated to their work and do not have time to be with their children. And also mothers most frequently work outside home, and their working day is usually too long to give them time for being with their children. Anyway, the importance of being some time with their children is an imperative need for children to have a good personal development.

The transformed role of each family member and, particularly, the extension of more horizontal relationship among family members is, progressively, transforming children in the very authoritarian members, who impose their will even on their parents. Although the percentage of answers is not very high in this deficiency, it is worth mentioning the family deficiency that "parents do not have authority over their children" (chosen by 7,4% of the participants). It does not seem suitable to wake up the role of and imperious parent or mother; however, parents need to have the necessary "autoritas" to lovingly but firmly bring up their offspring.

Finally, some of the participants answering the questionnaire (5,8%) chose the deficiency that "the family is broken or unstructured." The transformation of society is changing the traditional composition and stability of the family niche. More and more frequently, children are members of a family formed by a separate wife or husband, live with a stepmother or stepfather, or with other children, who are not the natural siblings, etc. This radical change of the traditional family structure affects children's psychological and even physical development. Some strategies to compensate problems produced by those mentioned and other similar situations are needed.

#### 4.4.6 Deficiencies proceeding from the teacher

Quite frequently, we can see problems appearing at school whose cause is the teacher's way of acting or his/her attitude or feelings. In most cases, problems of discipline and learning who are caused by the teacher's activity and his/her emotional attitude are not the teacher's responsibility; but the

way they are seen and felt by children or youngsters can cause real problems. Some features of teachers' behavior and attitude were chosen by the people answering the questionnaire as deficiencies causing problems of discipline and learning. We include next (tab. 17) the ones collected with this instrument.

The deficiency chosen by the maximum number of people answering the questionnaire is that "the teacher does not motivate pupils/students" (38,7%). Certainly, motivation is a very difficult task for a teacher, particularly when "students do not show interest for studying" (see tab. 14), when "mass media have a negative influence on education" (see Fig. 15) and when "parents are not interested in their children's education" (see tab. 16). Nevertheless, a true professional teacher with a very good pedagogical and didactic training must look for strategies to promote in his/her students the interest for acquiring knowledge and for promoting their education.

Tab. 17: *Deficiencies proceeding from teachers*

Deficiencies proceeding from teachers	Nº of answers	%
The teacher does not motivate pupils/students	245	38,7
The teacher adopts an authoritarian attitude	196	31,0
The teacher adopts an unempathetic attitude (of emotional contact)	161	25,4
Legislation has produced the teacher's lack of authority	74	11,7
The teacher feels him/herself isolated	72	11,4
The teacher adopts a too tolerant attitude	50	7,9
The teacher cannot punish pupils/students	20	3,2
Other deficiencies from teachers	75	11,8
Total answers	793	n.a.

Although schools have been transformed into institutions where students enjoy high levels of freedom and where organization usually adopts a democratic approach, a considerable number of participants considered that an important deficiency of teachers is that "the teacher adopts an

authoritarian attitude" (31,0%). By contrary, some participants (7,9%) considered that "the teacher adopts a too tolerant attitude." Although both extreme attitudes are not considered right for a good education of quality, by considering the number of answers in one and the other deficiency we must conclude that most people considered that the predominant attitude is the authoritarian one.

Important for a good emotional relationship between teacher and students is the existence of an empathetic attitude, particularly on the part of teachers. Nevertheless, a number of participants considered that a deficiency proceeding from teachers is that "the teacher adopts an un-empathetic attitude" (25,4%). Undoubtedly, this lack of empathetic attitude can cause problems of discipline and learning, because students could feel that the teacher does not consider him/herself a true friend of students/pupils.

Although other deficiencies proceeding from teachers were chosen by a lower number of participants, all of them are worth thinking about, in order to look for ways of inverting the negative tendency they seem to indicate. One of the expressed deficiencies is that "legislation has produced the teacher's lack of authority" (chosen by 11,7%). Another one is that "the teacher feels him/herself isolated" (chosen by 11,4%). And the last one is that "the teacher cannot punish pupils/students" (chosen by 3,2%).

#### 4.5 Proposals to improve discipline and learning in our schools

The questionnaire used in our study includes a section dedicated to collect proposals that could be put into action to improve discipline and learning in our schools. The answers to questions of this section and the corresponding percentage of answerers are inserted in the following table (tab. 18).

According to the offered data, the highest percentage of answers put forward is that "communication between teachers and parents is increased" (59,6%). It is, certainly, a very relevant index that, on the one hand, expresses the intense wish of reinforcing the impending relationship between parents and teachers to promote a good education; on the other hand, it is an indirect expression that such relationship was not good at the moment the questionnaire was answered.

The second proposal by decreasing number of answers corresponds to two of them. One is that "teachers commit themselves to students'/pupils' problems" (55,8%); the other is that "more effort should be demanded from students/pupils" (also 55,8%).

Tab. 18: *Proposals to improve discipline and learning*

Proposal to improve discipline and learning	N° of answers	%
Communication between teachers and parents is increased	377	59,6
Teachers commit themselves to problems of students/pupils	353	55,8
More effort is demanded from students/pupils	353	55,8
Themes as drogues, alcohol, sex, etc. are discussed with parents	276	43,6
Sanctions to students are accomplished at school, not at home	163	25,8
Education authorities support teachers more intensely	137	21,6
Total answers on proposals	1659	n.a.

Reality quite frequently shows that teachers, particularly those of Secondary Education (from 11/12 years), consider themselves as specialists of a specific subject or knowledge area; but they do not easily accept that they need to consider the emotional and personal circumstances of their pupils. This frequently creates problems, because teenagers – particularly at the beginning of Secondary Education – not only need to be taught, but mainly to be personally oriented and emotionally cared.

The other proposal with the same percentage of answers represents a permanent demand, particularly stressed these days, when there are too many attractive offers outside the school causing that teenager students do not care very much about formal learning. On the other hand, it was mentioned (fig. 12) that our system of education does not seem to stimulate very much the efforts of students as they are promoted without a strict assessment of their academic performance. National and international reports claim that our educational system academic performance must be improved. And that cannot be done without effort.

The fourth proposal states "that themes as drugs, alcohol, sex, etc." should be discussed with parents" (43,6%). This seems a very useful initiative, because in present day too tolerant societies, where parents and even schools allow teenagers to go alone and to enjoy plenty of time with friends but without parents' presence, alcohol consumption and drug abuse

are too extended: partly due to this exaggerated freedom given to teenagers, and partly because there is a very active black market trying to spread drugs, particularly among teenagers. As a consequence of too tolerant societies and of too much freedom given to teenagers, early practice of sex activity is also extended, sometimes with great risks for boys and girls. Discussions with parents and sometimes with parents and teachers seem a good strategy to eliminate or – at least – reduce risks proceeding from those aspects.

The fifth proposal is a surprising one, probably typical of teachers' approaches in relation to accomplishing sanctions. The answerers put forward "that sanctions to students should be accomplished at school, not at home" (25,8%). Although, perhaps, behind that proposal is a certain lack of trust in parents' responsibility, it seems that it would be worth while studying it with more intensity in order to clarify, whether the accomplishment of sanctions is more effective at school than at home.

Finally, the last mentioned proposal is that "educational authorities should support teachers more intensely" (21,6%). This is evidently a quite repeated demand: very frequently teachers feel that educational authorities (who, in the end, are political authorities) are more interested in satisfying superficial massive demands than in promoting an education of authentic quality. But, apart from teachers' feelings, recent important reports (national and international) show that an effective and improving reform of education cannot be realized without active intervention of well trained teachers with an enthusiastic attitude.

## 5. The Cause and Effect Diagram

The cause and effect diagram is also known as "fishbone diagram" or "Ishikawa's diagram," after its inventor's name, the Japanese Kouru Ishikawa, who elaborated it in 1953 (Ishikawa, K., 1985). The use of this technique has been widely extended in institutional quality management and it can effectively be used to make a diagnosis of an institution and its problems, and to promote its members' team working. This technique facilitates the vision of a problem as a whole and to see all possible options; it also allows the definition of tasks or fields on which to obtain information; although for such purpose, other techniques can also be used.

The cause and effect diagram or chart technique implementation is somehow similar to "brainstorming;" but the cause and effect diagram is a more structured technique and more centred in the contents; furthermore,

the graphic representation adds a plastic attraction to the obtained results. It can be used to *identify causes of a problem* (to show them, to structure them and to show their mutual relationship), to *study a particular process* (by considering factors that are problematic for such process), to *examine effects* produced by some aspects, or to offer solutions to a specific situation or deficiency (in this case, the theme is such situation or deficiency).

Anyway, the cause and effect diagram is a technique useful to represent inputs that affect quality (Greenwood, M.S. & Gaunt, H.J., 1994, p. 96-97), which means, to set up in a plastic and structured way the elements that determine some aspect we want to improve or a difficulty we try to overcome. Its use seems recommendable in cases where we look for solutions to a problem, and for such reason we want to know its basic causes. The basic tasks that this technique requires are the following ones (Ishikawa, K., 1985):

- Identification of all problem causes
- Distinction of causes from symptoms
- Analysis of causes relative importance
- Offer of data for other techniques.

Some of the advantages of this technique are:

- It shows the relationship between one outcome and its possible causes in an organized clear, precise and global way
- It offers possible cause-effect interrelations, by allowing a better understanding of the studied phenomenon, even in complex situations
- It concentrates the participants' attention in a particular problem that is treated in a structured and systematic way.

The technique can be particularly useful to an educational institution, in the following cases:

- The institution tries to have problem diagnosis, by looking to more than one cause
- This institution wishes to change some processes and wants to know profoundly them before beginning the corresponding activities
- Members of a particular institution team, group or sector are trying to know inter-connexions between their work and the one others do.

## 5.1 Implementation phases

This technique is more effective when used with a stable group that already has a coordinator. But, in any case, its implementation phases could be the following ones:

- Theme presentation
- Identification of causes and factors
- Ratification
- Adjustment of cause proposals
- Suppression of irrelevant factors
- Drawing the diagram

Next, we comment on these phases.

### 5.1.1 Theme presentation

After a brief exposition of what is this technique, the problem or theme is presented with a brief but significant enunciation. Afterwards, we can initiate the diagram representation on a blackboard, poster or transparency: to such purpose, we can draw the axis that will form the central fishbone of the problem or theme to be considered. This axis or fishbone will be represented by an arrow directed towards the right side. At the end of this arrow right side we will draw a rectangle, where we will put into the words expressing the problem or thing.

### 5.1.2 Identification of causes and factors

In order to identify causes and factors, the big group can probably be divided into small groups, where all its members suggest causes or factors determining the effect or problem. In each one of these small groups, a coordinator or other member acting as secretary can write down all the members' suggestions, that will -afterwards-be presented to the big group.

After the necessary discussion in small groups, the big one will try to chose the basic causes, that will form the fishbone ribs: it seems convenient that he number of basic causes will be from four to six, no less no more. If there were too many causes, it would be necessary to synthesize and structure them: this task should be done with all members' intervention and the final selection should be accepted by consensus. Each one of the main causes will be included into a square, drawn at the end of each rib.

Once the fishbone ribs have been drawn up, the factors corresponding to each cause can be chosen: also this time, it may be necessary to select

the most suitable factors and to include them in the corresponding cause. These factors can be drawn up as transversal short ribs departing from the larger ones.

### 5.1.3 Ratification

During this phase, the big group moderator or coordinator checks that all the group members have understood the process and the causes and factors put forward and represented on the fishbone. For such purpose, he/she presents and comments the collected proposals and ask the group for possible rectifications, suppressions, changes, etc. At this moment, the group members need to consider that what we are looking for are the true causes and factors determining a problem or theme; it would be, then, necessary them to avoid simple superficial symptoms or just theories about the considered theme or problem. The group must, in the end, ratify the collective proposal and its systematic structure.

### 5.1.4 Adjustment of cause proposals

With the moderator's or coordinator's leadership and with all members' intervention, the draft diagram representation must be submitted to analysis and critical discussion. At this moment, it would be useful to check if there are repetitions, ambiguities, or mistaken locations of causes of the considered problem or theme. Where it may be necessary, the suitable rectifications will be made with all members' intervention. Once the consensual acceptance is assumed by the group, causes can be definitely represented in their place.

### 5.1.5 Suppression of irrelevant factors

Once the causes have been completely accepted, the person coordinating or moderating the session will ask the group members for them to identify the most relevant or determinant factors and to suppress those factors less important or less significant to the effect. It would be appropriate that each cause, represented at its rib, will have approximately the same number of factors, in order to have a balanced fishbone representation: four to six factors per cause would be a reasonable number.

### 5.1.6 Final drawing of the diagram

Once the group has reached the suitable consensus about the most determinant causes and the most relevant factors, the diagram may be finally drawn up. In order to obtain a clear representation with a proportionate plastic sight, the fishbone diagram need to have the appropriate number of causes and factors we have mentioned above. With all the expressed requirements, once the representation is complete the group will contemplate the plastic picture of the collective thinking in relation to the real causes and factors that determine or produce a particular problem or theme.

Obviously, the represented fishbone will not completely exhaust the whole composition of the problem or theme. But, in other subsequent applications of this technique, each one of the causes (and, successively, even factors) can be considered and a new fishbone elaborated on them.

### 5.2 Graphic representation of problems of discipline and learning

As an example of a "cause and effect diagram" representation of problems of discipline, we insert a graphic produced by a group of teachers participating in an in-service training program (fig. 19). We also insert a diagram representing causes and factors of problems of learning (fig. 20). Both of them refer to a general sight of the problems. For a more specific analysis of particular components, other more explicit representations will be needed.

Fig. 19: Cause and effect diagram of problems of learning

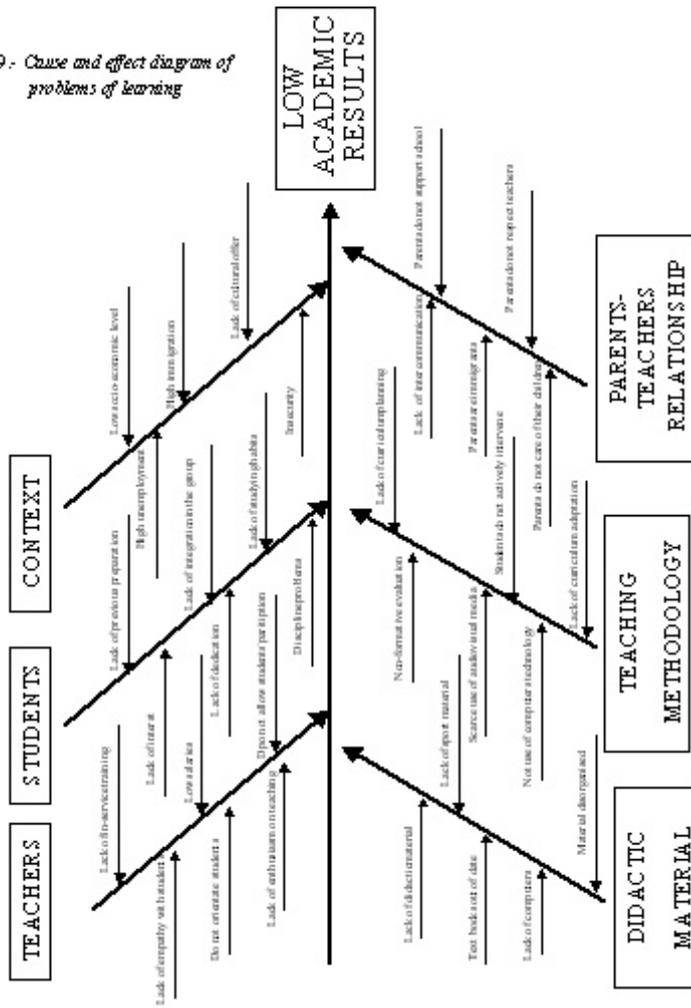
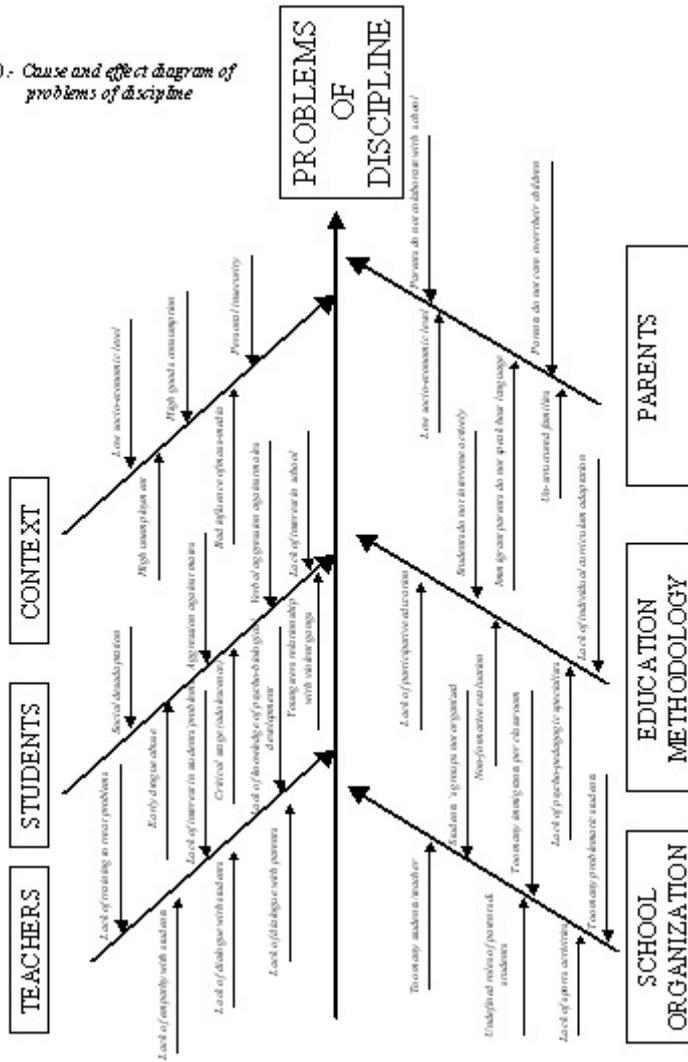


Fig. 20. Cause and effect diagram of problems of discipline



## 6. The Pareto Analysis

This technique receives its name from the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto who, in the beginning of the XX century, launched the hypothesis of "80/20." According to that, 80% of the world resources are accumulated by 20% of its population, while 80% of population only have the remaining 20% of resources. This theory has been used afterwards in studies of organization to show that 80% of problems are produced by 20% of causes determining a particular process; while the other 20% of problems are produced by 80% of causes.

By accepting this hypothesis, the Pareto analysis tries to identify the *important real causes* of a problem, in order to solve it and, particularly, it looks for the more important causes that influence on the studied effect or problem. But, in order to clarify the more important causes, *participation of all the involved people* is required. This technique can be used when a team or group of people wants to know causes that produce a problem and, particularly, to determine the most important causes to eliminate or to reduce the problem. It is also very useful to promote and use people's participation in decision-making.

### 6.1 Implementation phases

The implementation of the Pareto analysis technique requires some phases oriented to discover, by the participant members of a particular group of people, the most important ones producing a specific result. Such phases can be the following ones (Greenwood, M.S. & Gaunt, 1994: 94-96; West-Burnham, J., 1993: 62-64):

- Identification of causes
- Data collection and organization
- Statistical treatment of data
- Graphic representation

#### 6.1.1 Identification of causes

The session director or coordinator will present the theme or problem to be treated: this must be presented in a way that facilitates the analysis of elements or causes producing it. Afterwards, the group will work to identify causes that bring about a specific problem or process. For this purpose, the group can use another suitable technique, such as "brain-

storming," "cause and effect diagram" or any other one. In any case it has to be guaranteed that causes or elements be independent each other and that there is a clear difference among them. In order to facilitate a good graphic representation, it would be necessary to have a reasonable number of elections of causes or elements (at least, 80 to 100 of them in total).

#### 6.1.2 Data collection and organization

At this stage, the group, oriented by its moderator or coordinator, tries to obtain the frequency of elections, to collect data and to determine the frequency corresponding to proposed causes. For this purpose, we can make a statistical table: at its left side there will be a column with the name of the proposed causes; other column will include the frequency each cause has been chosen with.

#### 6.1.3 Statistical treatment of data

During this phase, we will make up a statistical table, by organizing all the proposed causes in a decreasing order of frequencies. To make up this table, we will insert at the left side a column with the name of each cause (the complete name or a code representing them), in a decreasing order by number of received elections. Then, we will include the percentage of each cause. Afterwards, we will insert the accumulated percentage of each cause (the last will be 100%). Next column, to the right side, will include the corresponding absolute frequencies of each cause. The next one will have the percentage in relation to the total elections of all the chosen causes. The next one will show the accumulated percentage of each cause, formed by adding up the percentage of the previous category to the following one (the one of the first category will correspond to its relative percentage; the last one will be 100%).

#### 6.1.4 Graphic representation

Once we have structured the statistical data, inserted into a table according to what we have expressed in the previous phase, we will make up the histogram or chart of the graphic representation. To this end, we will place at the horizontal axis the causes or elements of the considered problem or theme, all of them placed in a decreasing order from left to right side. At the left side of the vertical axis we will place the scale of absolute frequency corresponding to each cause. At the right side of the

vertical axis we will place the scale corresponding to the *accumulated percentage* of all the chosen causes or factors.

Afterwards, on this histogram we will draw a bar diagram or chart corresponding to the absolute frequency of each cause (according to the scale placed at the histogram left side), in a way that all of them will be in a decreasing order from left to right side. Afterwards, we will draw the line diagram or chart corresponding to the accumulated percentage, placed at the histogram right side, in a way that all causes will be placed in an increasing order from left to right.

The interpretation of this graphic representation will allow us to distinguish those causes that obtained higher absolute percentage – that may be considered as "vital" causes – , from those that obtained low absolute percentage – that may be considered as "trivial" or unimportant ones. The practical consequence of this technique and its graphic representation is that activities to improve results or processes corresponding to the studied problem or thing will start working with causes that received the highest percentage of elections.

## 6.2 Graphic representation of problems of discipline and learning

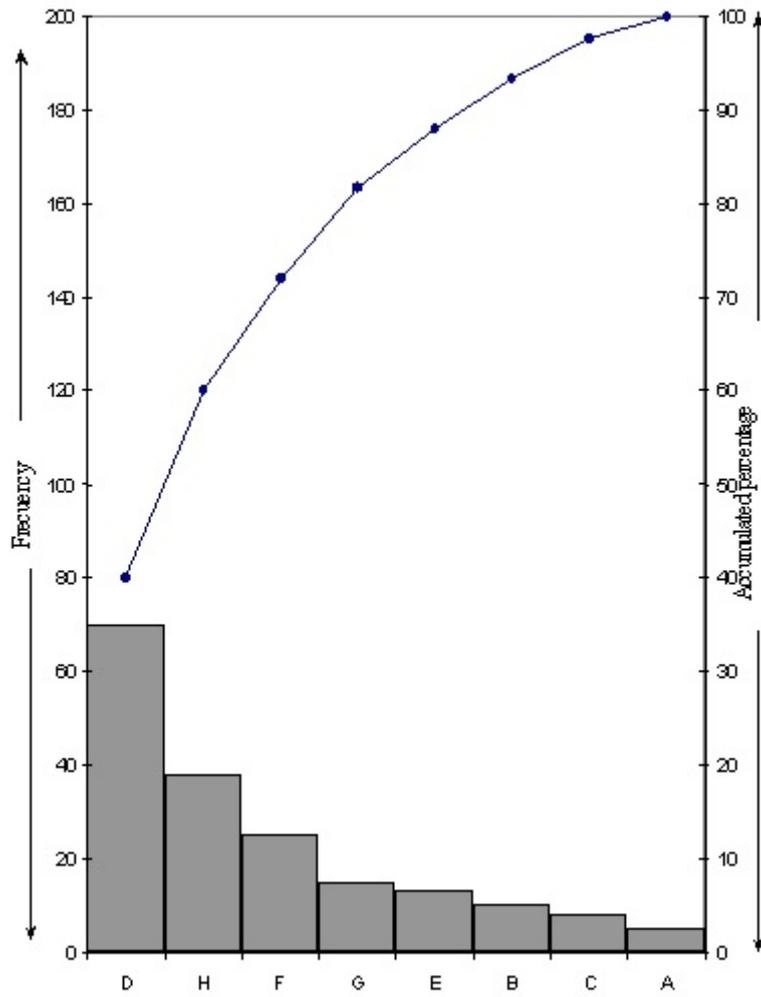
The graphic representation of problems of learning with the Pareto analysis histogram or chart corresponds to data obtained by teachers participating in in-service training courses offered by our university and working in Lower Secondary Education schools of a low socio-economic areas: this information about causes of low academic performance of such school students was obtained by asking other teachers working in the same school. The collected causes and the statistical data corresponding to this representation are the ones in the following table (tab. 21):

Tab. 21: *Statistical table of low learning (example)*

CAUSES OF LOW LEARNING (Lower Secondary Education)	Frequency	Percentage	Accumulated percentage
D: Students' low previous preparation	77	38,5	38,5
H: Students' lack of interest	39	19,5	58
F: No active methodology	24	12	70
G: Students' lack of studying habits	16	8	78
E: Family problems (drugs, alcohol)	15	7,5	85,5
B: No formative evaluation	12	6	91,5
C: Too many students per teacher	10	5	96,5
A: Divorced parents	7	3,5	100
Total of causes	200	100	100

Data included in this table and the corresponding representation of the Pareto Analysis show up that the "students' previous preparation" was chosen by the highest number of participants (38,5%) as cause of these students' low academic performance. This cause together with "students' lack of interest" would represent 58% of failure, according to obtained data. And these two main causes together with the third more important one, that is "no active methodology is used," add up to 70% of causes determining academic failure, according to empirical data (Fig. 22).

As a consequence of the obtained data, setting up an intense programme of improving the basic preparation of these students should be a priority. Such program could be implemented in the same school or, if the students came from another primary school, it would be necessary to contact with this school in order to set up coordinated programs of students' basic education. The second cause, that the school should try to work on, would be its students' lack of interest. For this purpose, it would be very appropriate to study ways of waking up students' interest. Probably a more active methodology (third main showed cause) could contribute – with some other strategies – to improve students' interest.

*Fig. 22.- Pareto Analysis of problems of learning*

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**The relation of instructional quality to students' emotions in secondary schools - a qualitative-quantitative study**

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Abstract

In the course of international educational studies like TIMSS and PISA the quality of schools and instruction became an important topic in the discussion between educators, researchers, and policymakers. Most of the studies conducted in the last years focused on the effectiveness of instruction. To measure the effectiveness of instruction mainly students' achievement and knowledge as the cognitive "output" was proven. The second central output of instruction playing a crucial role for motivation to learn and for life long learning was widely neglected, namely students' emotions. One reason may be that for a long time a sharp distinction between emotional and cognitive dimensions of learning characterized research in this area. But nowadays, numerous studies point to the key-role of emotional factors as constituting elements of the learning process, next to and in close interaction with motivational and cognitive factors.

In this chapter a study is presented that focused on the relation of instructional quality to students' emotions. A research design was applied that combined qualitative and quantitative methods, such as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In total, 931 students from 36 classrooms participated in this study, 68 students from this sample were also interviewed. Main results of the study are presented and implications for a fruitful combination of qualitative and quantitative methods are discussed.

Instructional quality and emotions

Instructional quality has become an important topic since results from international educational studies, such as TIMSS and PISA, lead to an intensive discussion among educators, education scientists, and policymakers. In the last few years numerous publications were highlighting effects and conditions of instruction in schools (Helmke, 2004; Klieme & Baumert, 2002). Creemers (1996) already stressed out the relevance of "school effectiveness" for the educational system and for the next generations. But the effects of schools and of instruction as the main purpose of school depend on the structure of the school system as well as on the specific processes in instruction.

Helmke and Weinert (1997) described in a theoretical model the structure of instruction (e.g. teaching methods and teacher competencies – "input" respectively "offer of instruction") in relation to the processes (actively used learning time and self-regulation) and the "output" of instruction (the effects of instruction on students' achievement, competencies, and emotions). Most of the well known empirical studies applied this model and mainly focused on students' achievement as output factor.

Emotional output-factors of learning and achievement, such as well-being, interest, or anxiety, was more or less faded out in these studies. But Pekrun (1992) showed for instance that various negative and positive emotions were reported by students in different school situations, mainly in connection with instruction and achievement. For instance, enjoyment was experienced more often than anxiety or anger. Further studies investigated the relation of different emotions to students' learning and achievement, as well (Hascher, 2003; Laukenmann, Bleicher, Fuß, Gläser-Zikuda, Mayring & Rhöneck, 2003). Emotions are considered to have an evaluational relation to learning and achievement (Pekrun, Götz, Titz & Perry, 2002). For example, enjoyment in learning is experienced when the student recognizes that he / she has successfully finished a task because of his / her capability (Weiner, 1985). The effects of emotions on learning and achievement may be considered to be mediated by self-regulation in learning. Self-regulation of learning implies processes of planning, realizing, controlling, and evaluating one's own learning process depending on demands, context, individual capability and preferences (Boekarts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Schunk & Zimmermann, 1994). Because self-regulated learning requires flexible cognitive processes, it may be assumed that it is facilitated by positive emotions.

It is a main goal of education to develop and support students' willingness to learn and to perform. Therefore, it may be assumed to be an important issue for educational science and didactics to consider how emotions are influenced by instruction, especially with respect to specific instructional aspects. In research on quality of instruction teacher competencies are a central aspect (Brophy & Good, 1986; Creemers, 1994; Fraser et al., 1987). Numerous studies revealed that teachers' expert knowledge, didactic and diagnostic expertise, quality of motivation and classroom management were highly related to students' achievement.

Research on emotions in school context revealed that teachers' didactic competencies, students' academic achievement, and social interactions had an impact on emotions in school (Astleitner, 2000; Gläser-Zikuda & Fuß, 2004; Hascher, 2003). Research on negative emotions showed that different aspects of instruction may cause anxiety, for

example unstructured learning material, lack of feedback and lack of transparency of achievement expectations (Sarason, 1984; Strittmatter, 1993). Also the social climate in classroom plays an important role. A positive social climate was related to students' achievement and well-being (Fraser, 1986; Eder, 1996; Hascher, 2003). It may be assumed that affiliation, competition, or aggression between students have an influence on students' emotions.

But up to now, less is known about the relation of instructional quality and students' emotions. Therefore, the study presented in this chapter tried to analyze this relation.

Empirical studies focusing on instructional quality first of all applied quantitative instruments (Helmke, 2004). Furthermore, expert ratings based on specific criteria for instructional quality were conducted (Helmke & Weinert, 1997). But not only quantitative, also qualitative instruments are now more and more applied, such as diary logs (Gläser-Zikuda, 2001), and video based observation of instruction, mainly in Science (Aufschnaiter v. & Welzel, 2001; Mayring, Gläser-Zikuda & Ziegelbauer, 2005; Prenzel, Duit, Euler, Lehrke & Seidel, 2001). In our study we applied quantitative as well as qualitative methods in the sense of triangulation (Flick, 2004).

## Method

An explorative study was conducted which was part of a research project focusing on the impact of instruction on emotions and achievement on secondary school level (Gläser-Zikuda et al., in press). The following research questions were pursued in the presented study:

- How are students' positive and negative emotions related to specific characteristics of instruction?
- What is the specific contribution of both qualitative and quantitative methods?

The sample of our study consisted of 931 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from 36 classrooms of secondary school level in southern Germany. The students were taught Biology, German language and Physics in a specific instructional unit for a period 12 to 18 hours.

A part of the sample, 68 students differentiated with respect to gender, subject and performance, participated in the qualitative study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted focusing on students' emotional experiences with different aspects of instruction. Students were asked to report on emotionally positive, respectively negative instructional situations. Qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Mayring & Gläser-Zikuda, in press) was applied for the analysis of the interview-material.

For the measurement of instructional quality different questionnaires were applied before the teaching units started. First a questionnaire on teacher competencies (clearness of instruction, motivation of students, diagnosis of students' performance, individual performance feedback, and diagnosis of students' social relations) was applied (Gruehn, 2000). To measure teacher's competency to motivate students items like "Our teacher is able to make a boring topic really interesting" were used. Clearness of instruction was asked in the questionnaire with items like "Our teacher summarizes often the learning stuff to help us memorizing it." And the competency of diagnosis of students' social relations was represented by items like for example "Our teacher quickly recognizes if students had trouble with each other."

Table 1: *Reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaire on emotions in lessons* (Gläser-Zikuda et al., in press)

Emotions in lessons	Items	alpha in 3		
		Biology lessons	German lessons	Physics lessons
Interest	3	.83 / .82 / .84	.82 / .83 / .86	.84 / .87 / .86
Well-being	4	.90 / .90 / .91	.90 / .90 / .91	.89 / .93 / .92
Anxiety	4	.80 / .83 / .82	.81 / .83 / .84	.78 / .80 / .85
Boredom	4	.83 / .82 / .85	.79 / .79 / .84	.82 / .87 / .88
Self-regulated learning	2	.76 / .76 / .83	.75 / .72 / .87	.79 / .85 / .89

Furthermore, before the teaching unit started we used a questionnaire to measure social climate in classroom (aggression against classmates and discrimination of classmates; v. Saldern, 1992). To measure students' emotions, a short questionnaire including 17 items (interest, well-being, anxiety, and boredom) was applied after three selected lessons in the teaching units (Gläser-Zikuda et al., in press). Items to measure well-being were for example "The lesson made fun today" and "It was a good lesson for me today." Beyond, two items referred to students' possibility of self-regulated learning in instruction. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the 5 scales is described for three points of time in table 2.

## Results

First, the qualitative results from the interview-analysis are presented to describe important sources of positive and negative emotions in instruction. The second part is devoted to the quantitative results of this study.

### Qualitative results

The analysis of the interview material focused on students' reports on their affective experiences with respect to teacher behavior, instructional characteristics and classmates. The semi-structured interviews were analyzed with the technique of summarization, categories and main categories were developed with regard to the theoretical considerations. The analysis of the qualitative material was conducted by two researchers, the inter-coder-reliability was checked several times and revealed satisfying reliability - coefficients (.80) (Krippendorff, 1980). Table 2 illustrates the emotional relevant characteristics of instruction from students' perspective. The number of students who stressed out the developed category are given in parenthesis.

For positive emotions in instruction students emphasized with respect to teacher's competencies that an adequate extend of teacher's explanations, advice, support and time for individual feedback were important. With respect to instructional aspects and positive emotions the instructional tempo, clearly structured tasks and learning material, adaptation of tasks to students' abilities, transparency of achievement demands, the possibility of active and self-regulated learning, and cooperative ways of learning were reported. Concerning social climate, the time spent with friends and support by classmates were experienced emotionally positive.

Table 2: *Aspects of instruction and students' emotions (categories from 68 interviews ranged from high to low frequency; categories with nominations from at least 5 students)*

Aspect	Instructional characteristics	Students' emotions
Teacher	(21) - adequate extend of teacher's explanations (18) - advice and support by teacher (10) - time for individual feedback	interest enjoyment well-being
	(12) - to small extend of teacher's explanations (10) - teacher talks and explains too much (8) - teacher talks about irrelevant topics (6) - teacher expects one exact answer by students (5) - if the teacher wants the class to do an imposition although only a few students didn't keep good discipline	anxiety anger boredom
In-struction	(28) - adequate instructional tempo (22) - clearly structured tasks (19) - clear demands for test preparation (15) - good quality of learning-material (12) - possibility of being active (hands-on-activities) (10) - possibility of self-regulation in learning (choice of specific tasks, regulation of time etc.) (10) - possibility of working in groups (8) - adaptation of tasks to students' abilities	enjoyment well-being
	(18) - too high instructional tempo (17) - too difficult tasks (12) - repetition of well known topics (10) - too much to copy from the blackboard (7) - lack of students' activation	anger anxiety boredom
Class-mates	(43) - being together with friends (38) - helping each other while working in groups (18) - learning support by classmates	enjoyment well-being
	(19) - students laugh if a fault was made by a classmate (15) - if teacher has to reprimand some students and instruction does not continue (12) - if nothing is understood because some students always disturb instruction	anger anxiety boredom

In contrast, negative emotions were reported by students in connection with an insufficient quality and extend of teacher's explanations, with an orientation towards one expected exact answer and unfair disciplinary

methods of the teacher. Instructional aspects connected with negative emotions were: high instructional tempo, difficult tasks, repetition of well known topics, a high extend of copying from the blackboard, a lack of students' activation and unclear achievement demands. Concerning social climate, the disturb of instruction by other classmates and laughing at classmates in case of wrong answers were connected to negative emotions. Most of the students pointed out that aspects of the social climate were most important for their emotional experiences in instruction.

The qualitative results showed that students' positive and negative emotions were related to various instructional aspects which were theoretically emphasized as important for learning and achievement. Furthermore, these qualitative categories allowed a detailed insight in students' experiences with instruction, and their thoughts and emotions. It was interesting to see that most of the theoretically developed categories were related to teacher behavior and instructional aspects.

#### Quantitative results

A sample of 36 complete classes was chosen to get coherent information on instruction. To describe the strength of the relation between central instructional aspects and students' emotions Pearson correlations were calculated. As table 3 illustrates almost all relations were statistically significant, many even highly significant. All emotions correlated with teachers' competencies besides in one case (anxiety and diagnosis of students' social relations).

As most important in students' emotional estimation teacher's diagnosis of students' performance turned out. This was mainly true for well-being (.76\*\*\*), interest (.66\*\*\*), and boredom (-.68\*\*\*). For anxiety we found the strongest correlation with clearness of instruction (-.52\*).

The possibility of self-regulated learning correlated significantly with well-being, anxiety and boredom. The strongest correlation was indicated for anxiety (-.58\*\*\*). Social Climate (Aggression/Discrimination) showed negative correlations with well-being, and positive correlations for discrimination of students with anxiety and boredom.

Table 3: *Students' emotions in instruction and instructional characteristics* (N = 36 classes / 898 students; Pearson Correlation;  $p < .05$  (\*),  $p < .01$  (\*\*),  $p < .001$  (\*\*\*)

Variable	Students' learning emotions			
	Interest	Well-being	Anxiety	Boredom
Teacher's competencies				
Clearness of instruction	.46*	.63***	-.52**	-.52**
Motivation of students	.59***	.71***	-.37*	-.61***
Diagnosis of students' performance	.66***	.76***	-.51*	-.68***
Individual performance feedback	.58***	.67***	-.47*	-.58***
Diagnosis of students' social relations	.60***	.72***	-.33 (n.s.)	-.59***
Care of students	.54**	.69***	-.45*	-.57***
<b>Instruction</b>				
Possibility of self-regulated learning	.24 (n.s.)	.49*	-.58***	-.43*
<b>Social Climate</b>				
Aggression against students	-.29 (n.s.)	-.36*	.31 (n.s.)	.31 (n.s.)
Discrimination of students	-.25 (n.s.)	-.33*	.32*	.38*

Summing up, for students' interest mainly teachers' competencies (diagnosis of students' performance and social relations, motivation of students and individual feedback) seemed to be relevant. For students' well-being all measured teachers' competencies showed highly significant correlations. Furthermore, self-regulated learning and social climate seemed to be important for students' well-being, although the correlations were weaker. For students' experienced anxiety self-regulated learning was the most relevant factor, followed by clearness of instruction and diagnosis of students' performance. Finally, students' boredom was related to all teachers' competencies, less so with self-regulated learning and social climate (discrimination of students).

## 6. Discussion

In our study we focused on the relation of instructional quality to students' emotions. The results illustrated that students' emotional experiences were related to numerous aspects of instruction.

From the quantitative results we received information how strong the different aspects of instruction were related to students' emotions. As we had data of 36 complete classes the results described students' view and estimation of their common teacher's competencies. First of all, well-being showed highly significant correlations with all teacher competencies. Beyond, for well-being weaker correlations were found with self-regulated learning and social climate. These results hint to the point that well-being seems to be a crucial emotion in school (Hascher, 2003). As instruction is mainly dominated by the teacher, it is not surprising that these aspects have an influence on students' well-being.

Interest as a more cognitive and value-oriented emotion (Krapp, 2002) showed first of all correlations with performance related aspects like teacher's diagnostic competencies and individual feedback. This may be interpreted as an indicator for students' awareness of their abilities and performance level (Deci & Ryan, 2000). From qualitative analyses we also know that students were not only interested in specific topics or domains, rather they reported being interested in observing whether they are making progress in learning (Gläser-Zikuda, 2001).

Anxiety as an emotion connected more to student's personality was mainly related to self-regulated learning and clearness of instruction. Research on anxiety revealed that transparency of achievement demands and a clearly structured instruction had an reassuring effect on students (Strittmatter, 1993). Furthermore, teacher's competence to diagnose students' abilities seemed to be important to give student an appropriate feedback to support their effort in learning. For example in one of our intervention studies we applied different instructional methods to inform students in advance of the units' structure and to make achievement demands more transparent to them. In German language instruction we succeeded in reducing anxiety with an  $\eta^2$  effect of .05\*\*\* ( $F = 13.09$ ) (cf. Gläser-Zikuda et al., in press).

Finally, boredom as a process oriented emotion was related to all teachers' competencies, less to self-regulated learning and social climate (discrimination of students). The teacher plays an important role in instructional settings and this may be recognized in the strong correlations of students' boredom with teacher's competence to motivate students and to diagnose students' performance. Furthermore, it seemed that less boredom

was experienced by students if they had the possibility of self-regulated in learning (Harris, 2000).

The qualitative results enabled us to get a closer and detailed look at the relation of students' emotions to instructional aspects. The analysis of the interviews showed that students' emotions were related to the following teacher competencies (quality and adequate extend of teacher's explanations, advice and support, disciplinary methods as well as individual feedback). These data confirmed that teachers' competencies in the diagnosis of students' performance, diagnosis of social relations, and teacher' care of students played a central role for students' emotions. Emotionally important characteristics of instruction were an adequate instructional tempo, clearly structured tasks and learning material, adaptation of tasks to students' abilities, transparency of achievement demands, the possibility of activity and self-regulated learning, and cooperative ways of learning. Furthermore, a positive relation to classmates was often emphasized by students, too. The theoretically described aspects of positive experiences in instruction may be clearly recognized: clearness of instruction, diagnosis of students' performance, self-regulation and social relatedness (Boekarts et al., 2000; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000).

The qualitative data supported the quantitative results and allowed a more detailed interpretation.

But qualitative data revealed not only deeper but also new information on students' emotional experiences in instruction. Teacher's tendency to talk too much, to expect one exact answer to their questions, a high instructional tempo, too difficult tasks, the repetition of well known topics, a high amount of copies from the blackboard, and finally the lack of students' activation were related to anxiety, anger, and boredom. These aspects may be seen as typical teaching strategies in direct instruction (Brophy & Good, 1986).

In contrast, students' reports on teacher's individual feedback, activation and self-regulation in learning (choice of specific tasks and cooperative learning) may be interpreted as characteristics of open instruction. Future studies should focus on emotional experiences in different instructional settings, such as direct vs. open instruction to test the hypothesis whether direct instruction promotes more negative emotions than open instruction. In a first small study we found that students' positive emotions were more often observed in open instruction (Gläser-Zikuda & Schuster, 2004).

As described, an approach focusing on a design that combines qualitative and quantitative methods is in many respects fruitful. Methodological limitations of one single method may be compensated by the other

method. For example, the quantitative results gave evidence of the average estimation of the emotional relevance of the instructional variables, but did not provide further information about specific aspects. The analysis of the interviews revealed specific information about the relation of instructional quality and students' emotions. The categories developed by qualitative content analysis of the interview material may be used for the interpretation of the quantitative results, as well as for further hypotheses. Additionally, a quantification of the qualitative data allowed an estimation of the relevance of these results.

As illustrated, the application of qualitative and quantitative methods turned out to be a fruitful approach for the description of the relation of instructional quality and students' emotions.

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