Alternative Paradigms in Education

Brent Atkinson
Northern Illinois University, r20bja1@corn.cso.niu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Part of the Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons, and the Social Statistics Commons

Recommended APA Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.
Alternative Paradigms in Education

Creative Commons License

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License.

This article is available in The Qualitative Report: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol1/iss1/2

As interest in qualitative research has mushroomed in the field of education, it has become evident that qualitative researchers vary widely regarding basic assumptions they hold about the nature of "knowledge," and the role that researchers play in the development of knowledge. This has made for quite a bit of confusion and frustration in conversations between qualitative researchers. The "Alternative Paradigms" conference was designed to clarify differences and generate dialogue between representatives of three paradigms that have emerged as alternatives to the conventional positivist paradigm: post-positivist, critical science, and constructivism.

Following keynote addresses given by Denis Phillips (representing "post-positivism"), Thomas Popkewitz (representing "critical science"), and Yvonna Lincoln (representing "constructivism"), a series of papers were given clarifying how each paradigm addresses the following issues: accommodation between paradigms; the accumulation of knowledge; criteria for addressing quality of research; values in research; ethical considerations in research; methodological considerations; strategies for implementing research; and implications for training future researchers. Each of these papers were then critiqued by other prominent qualitative researchers in education. Finally, discussion was promoted regarding issues raised in each paper.

Participating in this conference was a fascinating experience for me. Like many family therapists, in recent years I have recognized how deep, paradigmatic assumptions about knowledge inform and influence my practice. After attending this conference I'd say its possible that on the average, practicing family therapists may be more familiar with paradigm alternatives than practicing educators. However, it also seemed clear to me that family therapy researchers have devoted considerably less energy to the task of exploring research applications of alternative paradigms than have their colleagues in education.

While some qualitative researchers in education have made deliberate, informed choices to ground their research in positivist assumptions, many have incorporated qualitative methods into a positivist framework by default, because they have not had the opportunity to explore paradigmatic alternatives that have arisen in recent decades. *The Paradigm Dialog* will contribute much toward paradigmatic clarification and informed choices among qualitative researchers in education. This book may similarly aid family therapy researchers who are interested in qualitative inquiry.
Brent Atkinson, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in Northern Illinois University's Department of Human and Family Resources' Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy Program. His e-mail address is r20bja1@corn.cso.niu.edu