Is Qualitative Research in Education Being Lost in Spain? Analysis and Reflections on the Problems Arising from Generating Knowledge Hegemonically

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Abstract

In this paper we reflect on how qualitative research in education in Spain has become invisible, by asking a series of questions. What are the effects of this? What are the keys to understand this marginalisation of qualitative research? What are the implications for researchers and students? What challenges does qualitative research face in order to overcome this lack of visibility? To discuss these issues, we present a series of structured reflections in the form of an essay based on the preliminary impressions that have emerged in the course of a broader investigation that we are conducting and that focuses on the state of qualitative research in education in Spain. Our intention is, on the one hand, to offer a vision of the Spanish panorama to the international community, and on the other hand, to transfer the ideas that have emerged during the course of the research that we are developing to serve as a reflection and resource to other qualitative researchers.

Keywords

Qualitative Research, Policies, Paradigm Wars, Research Training, Publications

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Introduction

In this paper we present reflections in the form of an essay in which we share our first impressions from a broader investigation that we are carrying out about the state of qualitative research in education in Spain. The first data we are encountering lead us to think that the situation of qualitative research in education in our country is worrying. That brings the need for this work which is to share with the international community the situation of our country in the educational area and to offer other researchers the possibility to reflect on the same impressions that we are offering.

To do this, we have structured this article with different parts to help the reader understand our reflections. First, we think it is necessary to expose contextual issues surrounding the evolution of qualitative research to this day and the process of becoming a university professor in our country. Secondly, we will offer our reflections made from within the framework of the research, which we are carrying out and that is not yet concluded, on the state of qualitative research in education in our country. To illustrate these reflections and impressions and help the reader to know how they arise, we will present preliminary research data sorted by subheadings in which the different data that illustrates them are presented: the analyses of the articles published in the journals considered to have a high impact in education in our country, excerpts from interviews with different key informants, and some of the letters of rejection of articles received by different qualitative researchers that illustrate some of the concerns we address in this work.

How Knowledge is Generated in Education: Epistemological Coherence and Contradictions with the Hegemonic Thinking

The ways of approaching and generating knowledge are understood differently depending upon one's paradigm. The development of these paradigms over time has led to the creation of research methodologies in keeping with one's way of understanding the world. Thus, qualitative methodology has been promoted as the way of generating knowledge from interpretative and critical paradigms (Gage, 1989). The most turbulent period for this way of understanding the world was the so-called "paradigm war" during the 1970s, when the different ways of understanding and studying the world faced off at an academic level.

After the war, a certain status quo existed in which there was respect for the different ways of understanding how each paradigm prevailed. The current reality in education research in Spain is that hegemonic knowledge continues to exist, perhaps in a more devious way, based on the positivist paradigm, driven by the rise of what has become known as evidence-based research, as well as mixed methods. In Spain, this hegemonic perspective in education is making much less visible certain research fields and the generation of context-knowledge, for which the qualitative methodology is a privileged tool (Fernández Navas & Postigo Fuentes, 2020; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Pérez Ferra, Rivas, Quijano & Leite, 2018; Rivas, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2020). The virtues of qualitative research and its contributions in the generation of context-knowledge, in particular to the field of education, are clearly stated by many authors from different qualitative design traditions such as Tilley (2019) from critical ethnography, Charmaz (2017) from grounded theory, or Flyvbjerg (2006) referring to case study research:

> The case study produces the type of context-dependent knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts. Second, in the study of human affairs, there appears to exist only context- dependent knowledge, which, thus, presently rules out the possibility of epistemic theoretical construction […] In a teaching situation, well-chosen case studies can help the student achieve competence, whereas context-independent facts and rules will bring the student just to the beginner's level. (pp. 221-222)

However, this hegemonic thinking (which is established as a result of a complex network of ideologies such as accountability culture, neoliberalism, (post) positivism, capitalism, ontological realism) not only has implications for the generation of specific knowledge. This view that there is only one valid, rigorous knowledge, established through hegemonic thinking, has been extrapolated to society and the academic world (Biesta, 2007; Wrigley, 2018), meaning the problem it has generated brings a series of ramifications that go far beyond how knowledge is understood and its quality according to the research methods behind it.

About the Authors: A Necessary Context to Understand this Work

The authors of this work are university professors in the field of education with different positions. Noelia and Manuel have a certain stability with a 5-year contract. We are assistant professors accredited as permanent lecturers with recognized prestige in our field but without a permanent position yet, while Laura is a Substitute Teaching Tutor and her contract is renewed every year although she is accredited as an assistant doctor without a position (further information about these accreditations is discussed in the Access of University Teachers to Public Service Posts in Spain: The Rules of the Game section). Ana Yara is still a PhD student and she is spending her training years focused on getting merits as she will enter the

accreditation "process" as soon as she gets her PhD. Although we have obtained accreditations for these positions, none of us have yet obtained the accreditation that would allow us to apply for a completely stable position, that of associate professor, the one with the most demanding requirements in terms of publications. It could be said that we have coincided with the academic moment in which these accreditations have changed dramatically and have focused on academic publications as the fundamental criteria to achieve them. The authors are in the process of publishing necessarily to earn that stabilization in their workplace. Also, within that process of publishing we have been contrasting our work and experience with colleagues in similar circumstances, from which we have raised worrisome questions about the assessment of qualitative proposals both for the publication of academic articles and for the achievement of research projects. It is this first impression that leads us to design and carry out the research in which we are involved and on which we propose some reflections, based on initial impressions, in the form of an essay in this article.

Our Starting Point

Therefore, in this work we are going to defend our opinion that this dominant ideology is influencing the way university teaching positions in Education in Spain are accessed and promotion is achieved, always prioritising and offering more opportunities to those researches and publications that conform to established thinking. The effect of this prioritisation of certain knowledge in the academic world and in access to the teaching profession also has secondary effects on the qualitative methodology training received by young researchers and new teachers. It leads ultimately to the extinction of qualitative research in education in our country, and consequently, to a cycle of reproduction of the dominant ideology, in this case related to the positivist paradigm and quantitative methods. We are tremendously concerned about this situation and we believe it is important that qualitative researchers are aware of this situation to reflect on and analyse the possible long-term implications and to establish proposals for improvement and to act accordingly.

Access of University Teachers to Public Service Posts in Spain: The Rules of the Game

To focus on the problem covered in this essay, it is necessary to explain how university teachers take up their posts in Spain to show the magnitude of the problem caused by the disappearance of the qualitative methodology from the Spanish scientific dissemination landscape. Indeed, as we will show throughout this work, this lack of visibility has consequences for the university careers of many qualitative professional researchers, who are forced to renounce naturalist paradigm principles in order to have a place in the academic setting.

In Spain there is a wide range of type of university teachers. Accessing different university teaching posts requires meeting a series of requirements, which are evaluated in what has become known as the "accreditation" process. In this process, the National Agency for the Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation (ANECA) receives the candidates' curriculum vita, and based on an evaluation scale, assesses their compliance with these requirements (as established by the Agency itself), before deciding whether to award or reject accreditation. Access to university involves a public competition among all candidates, consisting either of a competition based solely on academic merits or a competition plus defence of a teaching and research project before an examining board, depending on the position to be accessed. In the case of receiving a negative response in this accreditation process, the candidate cannot opt for a university place and also cannot reapply for the accreditation until a certain time has passed. This period ranges from 6 to 18 months. The higher the tenured post is, the longer the waiting

period is. University teaching positions in Spain are currently as follows: Substitute Teaching Tutor, Part Time Instructor, Assistant Professor, Permanent Lecturer, Associate Professor, and University Professor. Only the first two posts do not require a PhD or taking part in the accreditation process, while the last three posts are part of the university career itself and are our focus in this work. The university career in Spain is an obstacle course in which the person who gets on the first rung (Assistant Professor) must expand his or her curriculum vitae (in particular with high impact articles and research, as these are weighted more heavily in the evaluation scales) in order to move up the ladder via accreditations, finally achieving an indefinite contract or civil servant position. The problem lies in the fact that the evaluation scales are profoundly imbalanced in this process of hiring university teaching staff. Thus, when competing for an Assistant Professor teaching post, merits relating to teaching can reach up to 15 points, while research merits can be worth up to 40 points (more than double).

The same applies to the accreditation processes we mentioned at the beginning. Recent changes in ANECA's policy establish different mandatory merits for candidates according to their area of knowledge. In the case of Education, the minimum required to obtain grade A for Associate Professor is 12 quality publications, 6 of which must be articles in journals in Q1(first Quartile) or Q2 (Second Quartile) in Journal Citations Report (JCR) or Scientific Journal ranking (SJR) (ANECA, 2019). There are three grades (A, B, C) of accreditation in different aspects, such as teaching or research. Grade A, in any of these areas, almost allows direct accreditation. Teachers accessing their first positions in this university career therefore put all their efforts into achieving these merits, knowing that they will be key to successfully opting for successive posts, making the university career something like an obstacle course (Saura & Bolivar, 2019; Yoo, 2019), especially, as we will see below, in the case of those interested in qualitative research. This situation does not occur only in Spain. In general, we are hearing from our international colleagues that they are familiar with this movement and that some places and colleagues seem to be retreating and others have held true to the paradigm superiority (Ceglowski, Bacigalupa, & Peck, 2011; Denzin, 2009; Given, 2017).

The Research We Are Working On

In the investigation that we are carrying out and that is not yet completed, the research group has analyzed two types of documents: research projects granted by the Spanish Ministry in the last 5 years (the period between 2015 and 2019) and articles published in the journals with the highest impact index of our area of knowledge in the same period. This has meant an enormous amount of work for the research team that has analyzed each and every one of them according to the methodology used.

Regarding the granted research projects, we intended with this task to make two different analyses: on the one hand, to see how many research projects were granted in the area of Education, compared to other areas of knowledge, and on the other hand, to analyze which methodology (qualitative or quantitative) was the one used in these projects. Whereas, the first of these analyses could be performed, the second one has proved impossible. In the first place, we tried to locate information on each of the educational research projects, but we found that, despite being projects financed by the Ministry and being a public call, there are no public data on their reports. The only information available of these research projects is the title, the principal investigator, and the university to which it belongs. There is no public information about the research design of these projects. Our next step was to contact the Ministry to request this information, which, in our opinion, must be publicly accessible. But as to date of this work, we have not received an answer.

Given the situation, we proceeded to search for articles and communications in congresses as a result of the research projects granted. Although it was possible to clearly

achieve that in some cases, in many others it was impossible to locate a clear link between published works and granted research projects. This has prevented us from performing the analysis of the methodology used in the projects. However, we have been able to make the comparison between projects awarded in the different areas of knowledge that, although it is a more superficial analysis, highlights some interesting questions. Likewise, since articles published in high impact journals are necessary merits for the granting of research projects and the results of these are usually published in this type of journals, it allows us to get an idea, indirectly, of the methodology of the research projects.

If we delve into the Humanities and Social Sciences area where Education is located, we can see that few Education projects are granted, especially if we compare it with similar sub-areas in terms of weight and tradition such as Psychology, Law, or Economics. Although we have not been able, as we said at the beginning, to make an analysis of the projects granted in Education and the type of methodology used (qualitative or quantitative) to triangulate it with the opinion of the researchers, it seems clear that their perception is that quantitative methodologies are prioritized over qualitative ones in the calls for research projects.

With respect to the articles, the purpose was knowing in depth what kind of articles are published in these journals and what methodologies are used in their research. We have chosen journals indexed in the Journal Citation Report (JCR) in the Education area (and which are also a very limited number of journals). The reason for choosing this index is that it is one of the most valued for obtaining the accreditations and, therefore, for the access to university positions. In addition, this analysis of high impact articles is crucial because it is one of the fundamental merits that researchers must present to get research projects and positions in the university.

Criteria for Categorizing Research Articles

In the process of categorizing publications, we initially formed four categories: theoretical review, innovation experiences, research with qualitative methods, and research with quantitative methods. However, during the analysis, we found that many of research articles operated under a quantitative logic, even though they were declared explicitly qualitative. This led us to create another category called "projected as qualitative, when in fact it is quantitative."

A total of 462 articles were analyzed by the research team: 170 articles of Q1 journals, 138 of Q2 journals and 154 of Q3 journals. Of this total of articles analyzed, in this work we focused on the analysis of the research articles, of which 76 used a qualitative methodology, 298 quantitative, and 17 are part of the emerging category "projected as qualitative, when in fact it is quantitative." The rest of the articles belong to theoretical reviews or innovation experiences and bear little relation to this research work. Additionally, an analysis of the focus and scope of policies of each of the journals has also been carried out to establish what type of articles, and with what methodologies, they claim to publish. To maintain confidentiality, we have identified each of them by their quartile in the JCR index.

Trying to follow the ethical and transparency criteria that characterize quality qualitative research (Cannella, 2015b; Flick, 2015; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Tracy, 2010), we need to stop here to explain the criteria that have been followed for the categorization of the articles.

The first criterion we have followed has been the logic behind each of the research proposals: inductive or deductive. While in quantitative methods the research design is based on a deductive logic, in the qualitative designs the inductive prevails. In the words of Maxwell (2012), "The strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach" (p. 17).

Picking up what Maxwell (2010, 2012) affirms, the second criterion that we have used to categorize the works according to the methodology used has been checking whether the research design was focused on the relationship between the study variables or on understanding in depth the process according to Mohr (1982). We understand that, while quantitative methods base their research designs on a causal association of variables, in qualitative methods it is assumed that this relationship depends on human reactions and interpretations (Alcaraz Salarirche, 2014; Bruner, 1990; Erickson, 1986; Pérez Gómez, 2000), and therefore, the purpose of research designs should focus on understanding in depth the interpretation of all those involved, not on the relationship between variables. In the words of Maxwell (2012),

> Quantitative researchers tend to be interested in whether and to what extent variance in x cause variance in y. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, tend to ask how x plays a role in causing y, what the process is that connects x and y. (p. 20)

At this point, it is necessary to highlight that, if in the process of categorization of the analyzed articles we had been exhaustive and categorical with this criterion (variable relationship), the number of articles classified as qualitative would have decreased even more.

Derived from this way of understanding the research designs comes the third criterion that we have used in the categorization of research papers: the approach and the way in which each of the investigations guides the rigor of the research process. While quantitative methods focus their validity and reliability almost exclusively on sample sizes (Denzin, 2009; Maxwell, 2012), qualitative methods focus on the way in which realities and processes are analyzed, and for this, they emphasize, among other issues, the triangulation of information (Maxwell, 2012).

Another important criterion is to look at the purpose of the research proposed in each article. While quantitative research (due to that causal relationship between the variables) focuses on seeking generalization, qualitative research seeks transferability (Korstjens & Moser , 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2010, 2012; Tracy, 2010), that is, questions can be found susceptible of being implanted in different contexts by another researcher as a result of the understanding of complex processes and reality (Flick, 2018).

The last criterion used, and perhaps the most evident, is the exposure criteria and analysis of the results of research in the articles. When the presentation of these results does not go beyond statistical relations, we are facing a quantitative study.

At this point, some questions may have come to the reader's mind regarding mixed methods and why they have not been included as a category in the analysis. Indeed, numerous authors have raised doubts about the possibility of using them from a qualitative logic (Denzin, 2009, 2010a, 2012, 2019; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Maxwell, 2010; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012) fundamentally for two reasons: first, because the logic behind our approach to know a reality makes it very difficult to maintain a balance between two logics as different in origin as qualitative and quantitative (Smith & Hodkinson, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). That is what Denzin (2009) calls the "problem of incommensurability" (p. 141), the fact that the two paradigms are in contradiction.

Secondly, derived from this first problem that we indicated, in mixed methods the quantitative logic is usually placed above the qualitative one (Denzin, 2012; Hesse-Biber, 2010), relegating the latter to a merely auxiliary role. For these reasons, we decided not to include this possibility in the categorization of each of the articles of the different analyzed journals. This has clearly been successful, since one of the most commented issues by the group of researchers has been how in all the studies that explicitly declared to use a mixed methodology, the predominant logic was more than clearly the quantitative form. Normally

these articles were declared mixed because they used, apart from statistical data, qualitative research strategies for collecting information, such as interviews, observations or narrations, but not because of their research design.

Triangulation of the Information with other Sources of Information

Moreover, in order to triangulate the information and generate a thoughtful analysis of the issues addressed in this work, in-depth interviews with key informants have been conducted (all in the educational area): a qualitative researcher with a research granted project and listed as the principal investigator, a qualitative researcher, a qualitative researcher who is also a journal publisher, and an expert researcher in methodology. We have also interviewed students of different educational degrees since we found interesting to discern if this problem derived from publications and access to university has an influence on qualitative research training in education degrees, since, as we have seen, it is easier for professors to obtain a position at the university when they publish quantitative research. For that purpose, we interviewed a group of pedagogy undergraduate students and two postgraduate psychopedagogy students, separately, who were writing their qualitative-research final postgraduate thesis.

Likewise, all this information has been triangulated with our research experience and the experience of some colleagues in a situation similar to ours when publishing in high impact journals, compiling those responses of editorial committees of journals that we have marked as "critical incidents" (Monereo, 2010) in a way that allows us to understand, together with the rest of the information, this reality in its complexity.

The total sources of information we used are the following:

- Analysis of research projects (2015-2019)
- Analysis of journals with high impact index (2015-2019)
- Analysis of the publication policies of the journals with a high impact index in education
- Interview with key informants
- Critical incidents in our history when publishing

Outlining the Problem: A Lack of Visibility of Qualitative Research

When further analysing the type of articles published in high impact journals in our area that use qualitative methods, it is striking that, for example, while articles on narrative inquiry are common, there is a total absence of articles on case studies. This methodology is practically extinct in our country in academic high impact publications, which is worrying, given its usefulness for producing contextualised knowledge, especially necessary in education, as explained by Flyvbjerg (2006).

> The second main point in connection with the learning process is that there does not and probably cannot exist predictive theory in social science. Social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and, thus, has in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge. And the case study is especially well suited to produce this knowledge. (p. 223)

There are also several striking issues. The first one is related to the category "projected as qualitative, when in fact it is quantitative," which represents 17 articles (4%); although this may not seem a lot overall, it gains importance when we consider that the total number of

articles that use qualitative methods amounts to 76 (17% of the total). This means that our country's high impact journals (understanding high impact journals as those that are indexed in the main rankings considered by ANECA) are publishing articles in which the logic that underlies the qualitative methodology is confused with the strategies it usually uses, such as interviews, observations, focal groups, or narratives. In other words, there is, to a certain extent, a process of instrumentalization or technification of qualitative research which the high impact journals, supposedly guarantors of the quality of the contents, are contributing to. The second one is the expansion effect that can come from this confusion, for instance, when high impact journals publish works that they call qualitative when in fact they are not, the result will be that new researchers, when reading them as part of their training, understand that this instrumentalization of the qualitative is qualitative research.

These concerns are clearly referred to by one of the qualitative researchers (and publisher of a qualitative journal) we have interviewed:

> But above all, the feeling that the default response to all qualitative articles is rejection, unless the qualitative aspects are converted into a certain form of instrumentalization as a technique which goes beyond a simple paradigm or a broader approach [...] When you check the qualitative articles published in the journal you see what I mentioned before: a technification, an instrumentation of the qualitative as if it were a mere technique for collecting information. New generations of researchers are being measured with instrumentalised qualitative articles, or are accompanied in their belief (causing a rupture in the traditions of qualitative research) that it is fine, that this is qualitative research: set up a discussion group, do an interview at a given moment… this is all qualitative research. (extract of interview with a qualitative researcher-publisher, May 7, 2019).

The testimony of the principal researcher of one of the research projects awarded in the last 5 years is particularly illustrative. She explains how she had to "make over" her (initially qualitative) project with quantitative aspects in order to make sure it would be awarded.

> What we proposed was to carry out action research in initial training and document it with case studies. We presented it this way back in the year [omitted] and the answer was that it was not research... they said it was more of an educational innovation project than a research project.
>
> In the following call for articles, I thought it would be better to remove or amend the experimentation part (i.e. the action research), and transform the research question into a hypothesis on how to transform practical knowledge, simply leaving the eight case studies […] There is therefore a pre- and post-online questionnaire to be filled out before and after the experience, which we follow up by relating the experience through the case study to the analysis of the pre- and post-study of students' practical thinking.
>
> You therefore feel obliged to include something you had not initially envisaged in order to make sure the project is approved. It is not enough to simply submit research based on solid, founded qualitative criteria, as it would appear that such research is more difficult to sell due to a lack of understanding among evaluators. This is what led us to give our work a "make-over," in order to ensure it was more scientific in character […] In this case the "make-over" worked and we were awarded the project. We could have taken the case studies and not done a questionnaire. When you choose to do a questionnaire, it is

because you want, in some way, to validate your research, and to validate my research I had to speak the language of the evaluators (extract from an interview with a Principal Project Researcher, April 2, 2019).

The qualitative researcher-publisher also recognises this situation when asked about the trend towards giving work a "make-over" to increase the likelihood of it being accepted in journals.

This leads you to cheat a little, by directly converting reports or narrative accounts into an adaptation, a transfer in which the information is presented in a different way, meaning something is always lost. You are cheating because the type of research and the way you put the reports together do not match: you build understanding and then share the findings that you have built (extract of interview with a qualitative researcher-publisher, May 7, 2019).

Similarly, the journals with the highest impact index (and therefore those with the highest scores in the evaluation scales, both for the awarding of research projects and for access to university teaching places) prioritise publications which are positivist, post-positivist or neo-positivist in nature, often using experimental or quasi-experimental methodology. For example, some explicitly specify that they only accept articles that are generalisable, objective and with broad samples, as dictated by the positivist laws of reliability and validity in research. An example of this can be seen below:

General information:

In general, save for exceptional cases considered by the journal's editors, the Journal [Scopus Q2 / JCR Q2 Education] **will not publish**:

- […]
- **Work based on small or incidental samples, such as pupils at a school or students in a faculty, with little possibility of generalisation**

[Information on types of articles that are not accepted in Journal Q2 Scopus / Q2 JCR Education in Spain and published by the Ministry of Education itself][1]

This phenomenon of prioritising quantitative publications over qualitative ones is related to a perception, more or less widespread in the field of education, that qualitative research is less rigorous, less scientific**.** And this is clearly stated by the interviewees.

Well, apparently qualitative research is not so rigorous. You always have the feeling that the qualitative research, however rich it may be, is not being assessed correctly. Not only at the project level, but also when you send an article to a journal. I can tell you of specific cases from the journal [JCR Q1 Education] with qualitative research from a doctoral thesis that includes a case study, all perfectly organised and with a well-founded methodology. The immediate response, just two days after sending the article, was: This journal does not publish this type of articles; we do not publish articles dealing with this methodological approach, but rather large, quantitative samples. I don't know

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[1] It should be noted that this journal is part of the Ministry of Education in Spain, which is responsible for awarding research projects.

exactly how they put it… It's a case study. Why isn't it enough? Two days ago I looked at another Latin American journal, which stated that they published both research articles and educational experiences. We wrote them saying that we wanted to submit an article that is a case study on an educational innovation experience, asking if they envisage any problems. Immediately the answer: No, we do not publish this type of work (despite what is stated on the journal's website). Please feel free to send it, but we are sure that the evaluators will reject it, as we are not currently publishing research articles. It makes you wonder what they understand by research article (extract from research with a Principal Project Researcher, April 2, 2019).

Rejection Letters: Sharing Our Experience Sending Qualitative Papers to Journals

We can see examples of the principal researcher's affirmation in our own experience as qualitative researchers, since the response from journals is immediate when we send articles based on a case study methodology, indeed they seldom even reach the peer review process. The publisher answers:

> We regret to inform you that your proposal has not been accepted for publication. This decision is motivated primarily by the high number of proposals received, which forces us into a very restrictive editorial policy. **Moreover, the proposal is descriptive and local in character** (letter of rejection from the publisher Journal JCR Q3 Education).

This letter of rejection is extremely worrying for us, not only as it shows the lack of knowledge of quality criteria in qualitative research, but also the fact that the publisher of a scientific education is so willing to set out this ignorance in writing, since the article that we sent and was rejected was a case study, justifying its local character (Maxwell, 2010, 2012, in press; Tracy, 2010).

In other rejection letters we see directly how there is an underlying association between quantitative research criteria and research quality or potential.

> After an initial review of "[omitted]. A case study," we regret to inform you that we had to dismiss this manuscript in the journal [JCR Q1 Education] since we do not currently prioritise the proposed methodological approach. Despite the undoubted importance of your work, in calls for articles our publication currently prioritises research results with samples of greater scope (national and international) and original, innovative conclusions of greater impact.
>
> The exceedingly high number of papers received and the need to concentrate the manuscripts make it impossible for us to accept your proposal for consideration at this time. Please be aware that our publication, being a JCR journal with rigorous international controls, is very demanding in terms of both the formal requirements of the work and also the thematic and methodological approach of the manuscripts (letter of rejection from the publisher Journal JCR Q1 Education).

Qualitative research is therefore discarded because it is "unscientific," as there is a misunderstanding with the terms "science" and "generalization," explained by Flyvbjerg (2006) as, "Misunderstanding 1: General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge" (p. 221)

For the academic and scientific world, it seems that evidence-based research has more solid and rigorous criteria than qualitative research. Indeed, this name alone, "evidence-based" research, is pure marketing. Qualitative researchers will therefore always lose out in this comparison (Hammersley, 2005).This conclusion is also reached by Ceglowski, Bacigalupa, and Peck (2011), who state that "the difficulties associated with the review process for qualitative research contribute to the perception that qualitative contributions to the education knowledge base may be inferior to those of quantitative research" (p. 680).

This situation makes it very hard for university teachers in Education to obtain funding for research projects based on qualitative methods, and it also makes it more difficult to publish them if such funding is awarded. In turn, this leads to problems in obtaining merits in the form of articles that will enable them to successfully compete for a teaching position at the university in the future. This is so despite the fact that, epistemologically, social science methods should be as far removed from experimental or quasi-experimental methods as possible. This question has been widely debated in the academic community since the paradigm wars, with many authors explaining the suitability of qualitative research in social sciences (De Cambra Bassols, 1982; Flyvbjerg, 2006). This is also expressed by Gage (1989) when affirming that "because causation in human affairs is determined by interpreted symbols, the kinds of prediction and control that can be achieved in the natural sciences are not possible in human affairs" (p. 5). We believe that national research policies, which are ultimately responsible for research in our country, are not only failing to promote qualitative research in education, but furthermore, do not even promote equal opportunities for both paradigms. They are complicit in the lack of visibility of a whole paradigm within the area of education, that is, interpretive research and its qualitative methodology. Their goal is to promote a much more technical neo-positivist paradigm and its quantitative methodologies, most notably evidence-based research and a lot of what has become known as mixed methods. This orientation leaves certain lines of research and topics of study orphaned, especially those not related to social justice and its transformation, something that is a priority issue for qualitative research (Cannella, 2015a, 2015b; Cannella & Lincoln, 2007; Charmaz, 2017; Denzin, 2012, 2015; Pasque & Pérez, 2015; Pérez Ferra et al, 2018).

Consequences of the Problem

Understanding the Problem: From the "Paradigm War" to the "Cold War"

Understanding the current situation requires us to cast our minds back. The so-called "paradigm war" in the 1970s gave way to a time in which the different approaches of the naturalist paradigm flourished. An interesting article by Gage (1989) on the paradigm war details how this war ended: "The critics triumphed. During the 1990s and thereafter, the kind of objectivist-quantitative, or scientific, research on teaching that had been done up through the 1980s ground to a halt" (p. 6). Similarly, Maxwell (2010) tells us how, even now, the effects of this "paradigm war" have consequences on the way qualitative research is approached: "The use of numbers in qualitative research is controversial. Particularly since the paradigm wars of the 1970s and 1980s, many qualitative researchers have rejected the use of numerical data in their studies and reports for philosophical reasons" (p. 1). The 1990s saw the start of an era in which these positions –confronted in the "paradigm war"– lowered their postulates and began to consider the possibility of existing harmoniously alongside one another (Denzin, 2017). In Gage's (1989) words, "Process-product research was also recognised to be compatible with interpretive, ethnographic studies of classroom phenomena" (p. 7).

Our impression is that we could say that the "paradigm war" did not end, it simply displaced this intellectual struggle to other areas. Our position is that we are facing a "cold

paradigm war," in which qualitative research is clearly losing out to neo-positivism. This situation of clear disadvantage is evinced by the proliferation of what has come to be called evidence-based research and mixed methods, underlined, for the most part, by a quantitative logic (Denzin, 2009, 2013, 2017; Maxwell, 2010), or if we prefer, a logic based on "variance theory" (Maxwell, 2010; Mohr, 1982). Gage sees it similarly (1989) in his analysis of the third vision of what happened in the "paradigm war": "What has happened in research on teaching since 1989? I have given you three versions of those events" (p. 10). In first Gage's version, quantitative and positivist teaching and researching approach died due to the wounds inflicted by its critics. In the second version, all educational and research approaches engaged in dialogue to get solutions of educational problems. But in Gage's third version, he suggests nothing really changed after the paradigm wars and it is still going on.

Although we are not now in a situation such as the one that occurred during the "paradigm war," we believe this is due to the fact that, from the point of view of qualitative research, we have given up our decision-making spaces so as to avoid a situation of all-out war (we expound this idea in Decision Areas: Taking the Decision to be Present section of this paper).

We can see this in ourselves in our daily attitudes. For instance, when we have a meeting with colleagues from other departments of the university or when we participate in evaluation or academic commissions and allow certain speeches that only take into account that hegemonic idea, we think it is not worth it to discuss. Another example is when we do not correct journal editors or reviewers when they ask us for corrections in our manuscripts with a quantitative approach. Or more a serious decision is when we, deliberately disguise our papers with a touch of quantitative methods to increase the possibilities to get them published (Given, 2017).

Given these conditions, we could say that we are in a kind of "cold war" which takes place against a backdrop of a war of disciplines, as with the "paradigm war." This is especially true given the role of Psychology, which is striving to position itself as an exact science, and its influence on the educational field (Gage, 1989).

The position we are going to defend is that, in this "paradigm cold war," qualitative research has lost out in the Spanish case in the education area. Social awareness of education, even among teachers, researchers, politicians, and citizens, is based on beliefs that are deep-rooted in positivist research with a focus on cause-effects and academic performance, leading, among other situations, to the rise of "evidence-based research." Human beings tend to have causal thoughts (attributing effects to specific causes) (Hume, 1988). In qualitative research we question whether these causes-effects are universal, and we affirm that they depend on the contexts, culture, and meanings we attribute to these causes-effects (Alcaraz, 2014; Bruner, 1990; Erickson, 1986; Pérez Gómez, 2000). As Gage says (1989), "The effects on people's actions of their interpretations of their world create the possibility that people may differ in their responses to the same or similar situations" (p. 5). However, this idea is more difficult for society and the scientific community to assume, since the reductionist logic of positivist paradigms is more in line with the generalised way people see the world. This difficulty, added to the inability of qualitative researchers to offer society a discourse and a united front that alters this consciousness (Morse, 2006), has created a desolate panorama in Spain in terms of developing qualitative research, which is now in a vicious cycle from which it is very difficult to escape, that Denzin (2009) explains as follows:

> Qualitative researchers are caught in the middle of a global conversation concerning the evidence-based research movement, and emerging standards and guidelines for conducting and evaluating qualitative inquiry (Pierre, 2006). This conversation turns on issues surrounding the politics and ethics of evidence, and

the value of qualitative work in addressing matters of equity and social justice (Lather, 2006, p. 789). In some senses this is like old wine in old bottles, 1980s battles in a new century. (p. 139)

This situation is not exclusive to Spain. Ceglowski, Bacigalupa, and Peck (2011) point to the fact that "the change of focus in funded research is not only specific to the United States but is also evident in the British system" (p. 680). Denzin himself (2009, 2017) echoes how, while there are differences from country to country, this engulfing of qualitative research by quantitative research is common in all of them.

Social conscience based on cause-effect research is also found within the institutions, meaning projects that offer this type of results are prioritised over others. This has made it much easier for representatives of positivist methods in education than for researchers with an interpretive or critical perspective. We found that, even when research projects are awarded (Ceglowski, Bacigalupa, & Peck, 2011; Weinstein, 2004), the fact that they are part of the contrary current means it is very difficult for high impact journals to publish them, meaning that the lack of visibility of qualitative research in education in Spain is even more pronounced.

Implications for Students' Education

This phenomenon also directly affects the education of students in this research paradigm since university teachers in Faculties of Education in Spain are fundamentally neo-positivist. As we have seen in the introduction of this work, the publication of high impact articles has particular relevance in the access to the university profession, and as high impact journals focus fundamentally on this paradigm, university teachers with these publications also share the same way of understanding research and the teaching profession. In this way, as most professors accessing universities are neo-positivist, the education of future professionals follows the same direction. This creates a cycle of reproduction of this paradigm that leaves qualitative research completely outside of the university institution (especially in undergraduate or postgraduate courses). In the words of Ceglowski, Bacigalupa, and Peck (2011),

> researchers who engage in master narrative research are more likely to obtain positions as editors of top-tiered journals and, in turn, serve as gatekeepers for researchers writing within and outside of the master research narrative […]. Thus, those novice researchers who choose to adopt qualitative research methods cannot be sure that their efforts will lead to the rewards associated with this cycle. (p. 681)

As mentioned, university education in research methods in Spain privilege quantitative methods. It is common for students in university courses in Spain to simply complete their studies and remain completely ignorant of the characteristics, quality criteria, and epistemological or axiological core areas that the different qualitative research methods are based on. Students are often even unaware of their names such as case studies, action research, or narrative research.

> The first subject was all numbers. [Interviewer asks if they have heard of case study methodology, narrative inquiry...] no, it doesn't sound familiar and I don't think it has been even mentioned to us [interviewer asks if they have heard of experimental methodology, quasi-experimental methodology...] Yes, we have seen those. [Interviewer asks: what have you been told about qualitative

research?] that it exists, but the focus, literally, is on the quantitative (extract taken from a group interview with Education undergraduates, May 14, 2019).

There is no qualitative research, either in undergraduate or postgraduate courses [in Education]. In the research methodologies subjects we deal with quantitative methodologies (extract from an interview with an Education post graduate student, May 30, 2019).

Distortion of Qualitative Research

In turn, this causes a dangerous rebound effect that distorts qualitative research in our country; as there is even less training in qualitative research, researchers devoted to this field have less and less rigorous knowledge about the ontological and epistemological pillars that this paradigm is based on. This creates the most varied practices and with this lack of rigour, an increasingly diffuse paradigm (we have already seen the statements in the qualitative publisher's interview in this regard). These practices with a lack of rigour reinforce the hegemonic view that qualitative research is an opinion or anecdote that generates low-level knowledge (Denzin, 2017; Lincoln & Tierney, 2004; Tracy, 2010).

At a teacher training congress, I once had the opportunity to listen live to a psychologist (who advocated evidence-based education) state that qualitative research is to education what homoeopathy is to medicine (extract of interview with Qualitative researcher 1, November 8, 2018).

Unfortunately, statements of this kind are very common. Erickson and Gutiérrez (2002) also echo similar issues, as well as Hammersley (2008): "And qualitative inquiry was at the eye of this storm. It was charged by some with being largely irrelevant, weak in validity" (p. 3). Maxwell (2004, 2010) goes even further and states that quantitative researchers and educational research institutions have also pushed to impose quantitative standards in educational research. Torrance (2006) tells us how unfair this perspective is.

This new orthodoxy seems perversely and wilfully ignorant of many decades of debate over whether, and if so in what ways we can conduct enquiry and build knowledge in the social sciences, pausing only to castigate educational research for not being more like ... medical research. (p. 127)

Other Consequences

Other implications that we will not analyze deeply in this work but that would be important to address in future works, is about the qualitative research commitment to social justice (Cannella, 2015a, 2015b; Cannella & Lincoln, 2007; Charmaz, 2017; Denzin, 2012, 2015; Pasque & Pérez, 2015). We could ask to what extent the knowledge we generate from qualitative research is likely to bring social transformation when we offer uncomfortable results for institutions or politicians, given the fact that this "lack of rigour" or "scientificity" is so deep-rooted in social conscience.

Maxwell (2010) echoes this concern and explains how easily these results are discarded: "When qualitative researchers do publish politically uncomfortable results, a common response is to argue that because these results are not numerical, they are, therefore, "anecdotal," and can be dismissed" (p. 475). For Denzin (2009), it is even clearer. There is now only one science from this perspective, and it must meet a series of clear characteristics. The rest is pure opinion.

> Quality research is scientific, empirical, linked to theory, uses methods for
> direct investigation, and produces coherent chains of causal reasoning based on
> experimental or quasi-experimental findings, offering generalizations that can
> be replicated, and used to test, and refine theory. If research has these features
> it has high quality, and it is scientific. (pp. 143-144)

Either there is a way to change this dynamic, or qualitative research is doomed to live forever on the margins of what is considered "scientific." We have the chance to transform this situation as long as we, as qualitative researchers, understand the reality we find ourselves in and commit to finding time to act in order to reappraise our way of understanding and generating knowledge.

Looking for Solutions to the Problem

Enhancing the Value of Qualitative Research

Throughout this work we have tried to capture the current situation of qualitative research, as well as what we believe are the problems and errors that we have committed, and which explain the current situation we find ourselves in. We make now some proposals on how we believe qualitative researchers must change in order to deal with the problems we have identified.

As qualitative researchers, we demand our community to make qualitative research visible and disseminate its logic to society and the scientific community. Denzin (2010a) in his famous "call to arms" claims that qualitative researchers should,

> Capture the stories of everyday persons as they tell about the pains, the agonies,
> the emotional experiences, the small and the large victories, the traumas, the
> fears, the anxieties, the dreams, the fantasies, and the hopes in their lives. We
> want to make those stories available to others. (p. 32)

What Denzin (2009) says is not enough: "We must create our own standards of quality, our own criteria" (p. 140). Our voice will always be silenced if we are not aware of the current situation (Denzin, 2009) and act to change the hegemonic narrative (Ceglowski, Bacigalupa, & Peck, 2011).

Breaking through this cycle of reproduction starts by being aware (and raising awareness) of its existence. With this purpose we consider imperative to focus on our immediate field of action, where we are most likely to make changes successfully. Thus, we should take care of apparently vain issues such as bringing our students closer to the principles of qualitative research and offering them readings of relevant authors. Following the same line of thought, we are committed to organise seminars, conferences, and congresses in our nearby environment to address and publicise qualitative research. Indeed, our doctoral official program already provides this training as a result of our efforts and insistence to approach more training and teach the inherent consistency and coherence to our research methodology. As a consequence, we are offering qualitative research lines to students for their bachelor or master thesis and doctoral dissertation. This makes aware students of what kind of questions qualitative research responds to and why it is necessary to answer them in a rigorous way. Likewise, a group of colleagues are creating a study group with students open to everyone to undertake training processes on qualitative research. In short, we have become activists in all our nearby fields of influence, and we invite other qualitative researchers to do the same. Quite often we find colleagues who do not drive this type of initiatives due to a lack of time or

excessive occupation of other tasks, but we must be aware that they are relevant if we want to interrupt this cycle of reproduction.

Journals: How We Conserve our Ideology in Exchange for That of Future Generations

Power spaces in the academic world are currently found in journals. This is due fundamentally to the fact that the evaluation scales used to award research projects and university places are the cornerstone which part of this reproduction cycle of the neo-positivist perspective is based on. We believe that qualitative researchers should intone a "mea culpa" in this regard. Remaining in our "ethnographic cave" over many years has led us to forget to occupy these spaces, leaving evidence-based research –neo-positivism– to occupy practically all of them. We stood by and watched as pressure grew around high impact publications in our environment, while we complained and did practically nothing about it. On the very few occasions that we have taken on the responsibility of creating and maintaining a scientific journal, we have failed to do it systematically, and when the rankings came in, we did not see the need to make efforts to ensure our journals occupied the top positions. We limited ourselves to complain about the arbitrariness of the rankings while maintaining coherence with our ideology (we never believed in the rankings), but along the way we sacrificed future generations of qualitative researchers, who will be left without any journals for publishing and for learning about qualitative research.

Many young qualitative researchers now find themselves forced to "make over" their research with quantitative methodology in order to ensure publication, and they do so because conserving our pure ideology and not submitting to the rankings came at the cost of the ideology of future generations looking to make their way in the university career.

In this regard, one of the interviewees speaks with absolute clarity:

> As an undergraduate and then a doctoral student, I experienced the unresolved struggle, or what was left over from the paradigm war. However, it quickly became insignificant (in Spain at least), and what remained was a mixture of approaches. I believe there has been a leadership vacuum, related to the need to head up projects in publishing and other areas (around qualitative research). In part it may also be due to slowness in the strategy, from being too slow when it came to realising where things were going and how we could have intervened to stop it, and now we are paying the price for this loss at a strategic level. But I cannot see any way to… there has been time to realise what was happening. I believe that we have now realised, just as generations of older researchers have realised... but I also do not see that anything has been done to make up the lost ground (extract from an interview with a qualitative researcher-publisher, May 7, 2019).

To address this problem, it is essential that journals dedicated to the field of qualitative research start to flourish. This requires not only that young qualitative researchers come forward with these kinds of initiatives, as we did, but also that consecrated qualitative researchers in this field take on responsibility: supporting, helping these new editorial actions to flourish with solidity and rigour, so they can truly contribute to the development of these methodologies. In our case, the authors of this work together with other colleagues have already created a new editorial project in the form of a qualitative journal in education in our country, with the intention of placing it as high as possible in the rankings but without giving up quality content on qualitative research.

As qualitative researchers, we fear to commit to our way of understanding research (and education). This commitment demands very practical actions such as not publishing in those journals that do not share a qualitative vision; discussing with editors and reviewers when they make corrections that do not respect qualitative principles (Given, 2017); acting rigorously and valuing our research perspective when we are reviewers; reporting those journals that use exclusively quantitative criteria when selecting articles despite stating explicitly in their policy that they admit qualitative studies; and most importantly, not disguising our qualitative works with quantitative dyes to increase the chances of being published in order to keep an accurate and coherent vision of the qualitative research. There are always publishing options that allow us to maintain consistency between what we say and what we do.

Another proposal that can be carried out easily and that we have implemented in our editorial project is to give voice to the practitioners. In education there are many schoolteachers who carry out research-action processes and who are not familiar with the formal demands of scientific journals. This is a clear impediment to take their voice to other spheres and it requires more friendly editorial processes with merely formal requirements (without losing rigour with respect to content).

Decision Areas: Taking the Decision to be Present

It seems clear that the evaluation commissions have pre-established criteria that regulate the way they work, as well as the members that are part of these commissions. Given the way state research policy is set up, we believe that these criteria do not help incorporate qualitative researchers into these commissions.

However, we also have the sensation that many of the most reputable qualitative researchers in our field in Spain have resigned from their posts on committees, bodies, or evaluation agencies, where these research standards are decided. While this may be perfectly reasonable in terms of mental health, as it implies being in a continuous war with the opposite paradigm in these spaces, it is also unforgivable in the sense that this resignation from decision-making spaces is what pushed the "paradigm war" to become a "cold war," in which opposing positions are still at odds and there is an ongoing struggle to impose one position over the other. The only difference is that qualitative research has given up its space and allowed its voice to go unheard, bringing the establishment of a hegemonic paradigm, neo-positivism, while putting qualitative research and qualitative researchers in a very delicate situation (as we have seen above). In the words of one of the interviewees,

> There is an exponential delay in terms of quality when it comes to generating new researchers and occupying teaching posts, deciding who takes part in teacher evaluation processes, etc., (extract from an interview with a qualitative researcher-publisher, May 7, 2019).

It is imperative that we regain these spaces and make efforts to counter the hegemonic logic that reigns in them (Denzin, 2010b). As mentioned, fleeing from the "paradigm war" has not led us to a better situation; indeed, we have to accept the fact that this war continues to exist in a more devious way, and needs to be dealt with from two fronts: firstly, we have to respect and train (particularly novel) researchers in qualitative own quality criteria, as mentioned above, in order to ensure rigorous qualitative research (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Denzin, 2009, 2017; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Lather, 2006;), but we also have to make it visible, which is achieved by setting out our position in decision-making contexts. In this regard, Morse (2006) recognizes that we have failed to communicate our understanding of research to the scientific community: "Our evidence is considered soft ... it is considered not

valid, not replicable, not acceptable! We have failed to communicate the nature of qualitative evidence to the larger scientific community ... we have failed to truly understand it ourselves" (pp. 415-416).

Stopping this situation implies taking very practical actions; firstly, being aware of the relevance of these academic spaces in the decision making and not fleeing from belonging to them, and secondly, we need to use any of these academic contexts where we participate, such as committees, meetings or expert commissions, to express and defend our vision of research and education. We can understand that in the short term it is more comfortable to let the situation be, but we have already seen the consequences if we do not start putting our perspective on record and avoid the conflict when it arises. Only in this way we can give visibility to our perspective against the hegemonic.

If we do not have the possibility of participating in these spaces due to formal requirements, we should look for others that can help us influence our closer contexts. Regular spaces in our daily routine such as meetings with other colleagues, thesis courts, or department meetings give us the opportunity make our perspective visible.

On the other hand, it would be advisable to have as clear as possible the quality criteria of qualitative research and to continue advancing in the development of these, particularly if we are going to commit to the above-exposed changes and use these discussion spaces. This implies that qualitative researchers (especially those of us from the most affected places) must strive to create wide networks of qualitative researchers (including researchers from places where the situation is better), search and participate in forums to discuss and develop these criteria, or closely follow prestigious publications and conferences related to qualitative research.

In addition, it is imperative to assume as an obligation what Denzin (2017) calls "The Advocacy Agenda;" we need to make contact with political figures, professionals, and the press in order to make an argued case for qualitative research, and report the dangers and biases of evidence-based research. The consensus difference between what is considered excellent for quantitative and qualitative research needs to be explained to the scientific and social community, or else we run the risk of abiding by the criteria and quantitative image of excellence: "Our cornucopia of distinct concepts stands in marked contrast to the relative consensus in the quantitative community that good research aims for validity, reliability, generalizability, and objectivity" (Tracy, 2010, p. 837). While researchers and the general public are familiar with those concepts related to quantitative research, we need to start "teaching" the concepts related to excellence in qualitative research, which brings dissemination to the forefront.

Dissemination: The Eternally Pending Issue

The explained matter, added to the human logic of causality-effect that we have commented on above, reinforces the idea that qualitative research is little more than an abstract discourse with nothing to contribute to the development of human knowledge. Focusing on this aspect within the educational field brings a problem of transferability. While quantitative research seeks generalisation through representative samples, qualitative research seeks transferability (Flick, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010).

This implies that qualitative researchers must do double work: on the one hand, writing rigorously quality educational research written in a professional and academic language, and on the other hand, the dissemination of that research. Dissemination involves using understandable language that allows our readers to understand our texts to maximize the likelihood of transferability and visibility. We are aware that society, and of course the scientific community, is familiar with quantitative-research concepts, as they facilitate causal

relationships between aims, methods, results, and conclusions. As these relationships are not those searched by qualitative research, we suggest making an effort to explain to readers why it is important to understand the more complicated relationships that occur in certain contexts. Indeed, that happens in other fields such as medicine, when they pursue clinical significance in their case studies instead of just statistical significance, which could mean nothing when bringing it into practice. As we are aware of the difficulties of understanding the complex relationships of human beings in a learning context, we shall take it into account when we write our case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and dedicate some time to highlight the importance of the processes we are explaining in the form of results in our papers This is particularly important if we consider that we do not want to generalize, but transfer our knowledge to our readers that, at least in education, tend to be practitioners worried about their work.

This, like all our proposals, has to do with an essential first step: being aware of the problem in order to make appropriate decisions. It is not about standard recipes to follow step-by-step (indeed, qualitative research has never been about that) but that qualitative researchers think autonomously and elaborate our own decisions. In order to do that, it is mandatory to improve training, so researchers (particularly novel ones) can actually empower themselves when answering editors or standing by their principles in decision-making spaces. Regarding dissemination, in our case, in the new investigations that we are designing, apart from the preparation of the corresponding case study reports, we propose the elaboration of visual materials that reflect and explain to a broader public the main issues detected in the case study. These visuals can be used as brief presentations or even distributed through social networks whose immediacy and language specificity do not allow a deep study of topics, but it is a way to take our voice to other spaces.

This has to do, again, with transferability. As mentioned, social opinion tends to understand the causality of quantitative research more easily than the precepts of qualitative research. We must therefore strive to adapt our language to make it as simple and direct as possible in all communications and productions aimed at the general public, in order to ensure our position reaches others as relevantly as possible. It is important to remember that if the audience for an experimental research work is the scientific community (i.e. experts, the recipients of the qualitative research reports, the people involved in the research itself, the human groups whose characteristics are studied, society in general given its vocation of democratisation of knowledge and the aspiration of transforming social structures (Flick, 2012; Taylor & Bogdan, 2000). In short, we need to take on the challenge of conquering public opinion with our arguments about research and generating knowledge, while maximising the transferability of our research. And this must be a priority issue on our agendas (Denzin, 2017).

Conclusions

Throughout this article, we have tried to capture not only an academic or research issue, but also an issue that is of deep, personal concern to the qualitative researchers who have taken part in this work. The way we have described proposals for improvement in the previous section leads us to an inevitable conclusion: prospective qualitative researchers must, given the panorama that we have described throughout this work, take on the inescapable obligation to seek out quality training on qualitative research that is so lacking in our initial and formal training.

It is essential that works like this are disseminated and reach the community of young qualitative researchers, in order to make them aware of the situation in their field of study. Only in this way can a personal commitment to search for quality training through other means be established.

Likewise, being aware of this situation means we must flee from the inertia produced by academic capitalism and although, as we have seen, publishing is essential in the labour market, it is necessary that we find spaces and formulas to fulfil this need without renouncing ethical criteria and the precepts of qualitative research. We must avoid the trap of "making over" our research, as referred to by some of the interviewees, in order to get our work published.

It is also essential to be meticulous and rigorous in our research approaches, without falling into the instrumentalization of qualitative research as referred to in this work. This question is closely related to quality training, which, as mentioned, must be sought out when not received as part of our formal training.

Our idea is that this text should not only serve to review what are already common positions in our paradigm, but also to try and be bold in our formulations and analysis with the firm intention of inciting debate, bringing us to reflect and think about where we are going, where we want to go, and how we are going to get there.

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