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Reflecting an International Exchange about Qualitative Educational Research in Relation to the Globalisation of Qualitative Research - A Commentary

Abstracts

EN

While there is an increasing 'globalisation of qualitative research', there is frequently referred to an asymmetrical relationship between 'core' and 'periphery' in qualitative research discourses. Moreover, there is not always a common ground of argumentation and theory between different discourses. Under these circumstances, what and how much can be discussed about specific qualitative research methods to explore education and classrooms at international exchange occasions such as conferences? This paper addresses this question by tracing a virtual dialogue among the authors of the two papers in Section 5 and me as the author of this commentary, inspired by the methods of autoethnography. Through the study, I will point out that the elaboration and development of specific qualitative research methods and theories as instruments is only possible to a limited extent due to the lack of common theoretical foundations and discourses in international discussions. However, a potential for the differentiation of the structural-critical perspective inherent in qualitative research and the possibility of reflecting on normativities in educational and teaching theories becomes apparent.

DE

Während sich die 'Globalisierung der qualitativen Forschung' entwickelt, wird auch auf das asymmetrische Verhältnis zwischen dem 'Kern' und der 'Peripherie' der Diskussionen über qualitative Forschung hingewiesen. Außerdem teilen verschiedene Diskurse nicht immer eine gemeinsame Basis der Theorien und Argumentationen. Was bzw. wie viel kann unter diesen Umständen auf internationalen Konferenzen und anderen Foren des di-

rekten Austausches über spezifische qualitative Forschungsmethoden und -praktiken in Bildung und Lehre gesagt werden? Der vorliegende Beitrag geht dieser Frage nach, indem er einen virtuellen Dialog zwischen den beiden Beiträgen in Teil 5 und meinen eigenen Erfahrungen als Autorin dieses Kommentars nachzeichnet, der sich an den Methoden der Autoethnographie orientiert. Durch die Untersuchung habe ich aufgezeigt, dass die Ausarbeitung und Entwicklung spezifischer qualitativer Forschungsmethoden und -theorien als Instrumente aufgrund des Fehlens gemeinsamer theoretischer Grundlagen und diskursiver Trends in internationalen Debatten nur begrenzt möglich ist. Zugleich zeigt sich ein Potenzial für die Ausdifferenzierung der der qualitativen Forschung innewohnenden strukturkritischen Perspektive und die Möglichkeit zur Reflexion über Normativitäten in Bildungs- und Unterrichtstheorien.

PT

À medida que a 'globalização da investigação qualitativa' se desenvolve, é também assinalada a relação assimétrica entre o 'centro' e a 'periferia' dos debates sobre investigação qualitativa. Além disso, os diferentes discursos nem sempre partilham uma base comum de teorias e argumentos. Nestas circunstâncias, o que ou quanto se pode dizer em conferências internacionais e noutros fóruns de intercâmbio direto sobre métodos e práticas específicas de investigação qualitativa na educação e no ensino? Este artigo explora esta questão, traçando um trílogo virtual entre os dois artigos da Secção 5 e as minhas próprias experiências como autora deste comentário, informadas pelos métodos da autoetnografia. Através da investigação, mostra-se que a elaboração e o desenvolvimento de métodos e teorias específicos de investigação qualitativa como ferramentas são limitados devido à falta de fundamentos teóricos comuns e de tendências discursivas nos debates internacionais. Ao mesmo tempo, torna-se evidente um potencial para a diferenciação da perspectiva estrutural-crítica inerente à investigação qualitativa e a possibilidade de refletir sobre as normatividades nas teorias da educação e do ensino.

JA

「質的研究のグローバル化」の一方、質的研究の言説には「中心」と「周辺」という非対称な関係が認められる。くわえて、異なる言説空間のあいだには共通の議論・理論の基盤があるわけでもない。このような状況のなか、国際会議など直接の交流の場において、教育や授業を対象とした具体的な質的研究方法とその実践について、いったいなにをどのくらい語ることができるのか。本稿では、この問いに対し、第5部に所収さ

れた二つの論文とこのコメント論文の著者であるわたしの経験を仮想的な対話として構成しながら、オートエスノグラフィの方法に着想を得て考察をすすめる。検討を経て、国際的な議論の場では共通の理論的基盤・言説動向を欠くために、ツールとして個別具体的な質的研究方法とその理論を精緻に検討したり、開発することに限界があることを指摘する。しかしそれ以上に、質的研究にそなわった構造批判的な視角の洗練や、規範的な研究論・教育論・授業論を省察する機会を持てる可能性が広がっているという意義を指摘し、本稿をしめくくる。

1 Introduction: (im-)possibility of commenting in an international research setting

This anthology is based on results gained from an international conference on qualitative research methods in educational and classroom research in Maputo, Mozambique. I partook as a researcher from a German institution who has an academic background in Japan. I was asked to offer a wrap-up reflection on qualitative educational research in the international setting. During the conference, participants came to realise that despite common interests and similar terminology, we did not necessarily share the same concepts as we were familiar with different discourses. This applied both at the level of discussion about classroom activities, and the level of methodological and theoretical concepts.

In regards to research objects, there is no doubt that structures and situations around (institutionalised) education differ from one to another (see also Section 1 of this anthology), even though there have been tendencies to standardise (formal) education throughout the globe since the modernisation. This fact led us to work carefully on local-specific notions, concepts and perspectives on education. But what about research methods? Insofar can we talk about research methods as universal tools to explore local educational and classroom situations to present results to a 'foreign' audience? Do we share a common language that conveys the same derived meaning in discussions about specific qualitative methods in educational research? In other words, questions about the (im-)possibility of an exchange regarding qualitative research methods in an international setting arose.

These questions gained more pertinence after I started to read the two articles in this Section (Nicaquela and Assane in this volume; Alipio in this volume): I realised that the authors and I share few literatures in the reference lists, especially regarding qualitative research methods. When commenting, this can lead to the risk of doing so from an irrelevant viewpoint. This reminded me of a similar (and painful) experience in a former international conference:

Although I had shared certain topics with other participants, I was not listened to, because I could not present them in the terminology of the discourses shared among most participants, as the terms were unknown to me. Furthermore, my contribution was labelled as almost underdeveloped or outdated. It frustrated me that my work and input at the conference was 'judged' according to this criterion alone.

To avoid emulating that kind of commenting, I have crafted this comment article as a virtual trialogue among Nicaquela and Assane, Alipio and me. I assume the role of an explorer into the discussion by the authors, and at the same time the role of the protagonist of my article. Thus, the method of interpretive autoethnography (Denzin 2014)¹ is effectuated. I convey my standpoint and experiences whilst reading and 'talking' with the other authors.

Reading the articles by Nicaquela and Assane as well as Alipio, these articles address the aforementioned questions concerning the (im-)possibility of an exchange on qualitative educational and classroom research in times of globalisation of education and its research. To begin with the trialogue, I'll outline the scientific relevance of my questions by leaning on global discourses about qualitative and educational researches. On this basis, I will identify aspects to be compared, on which the articles are set into a relationship. The conclusion will suggest potentials and challenges of international discourses on qualitative educational research.

2 Qualitative research methods and educational research in times of globalisation

Qualitative research has spread out internationally and we observe the "globalization [sic] of qualitative research" (Hsiung 2012). This 'globalisation' is characterised by an asymmetric structure between the "core", where theories and methodologies are developed, and the "periphery", where the theories are received (ibid.). The "periphery" of qualitative research can be discovered as such only through the awareness and critical reflection of the aforementioned asymmetry. Overcoming of the asymmetry takes place asymmetrically as well, e.g., because the "periphery" works to share its discourse to the "core" (ibid.) and local and localised methodology in the "periphery" may contribute to widen the theory in the "core" (an example of the Grounded Theory Approach, see Charmaz 2014; Flick 2014).

1 Interpretive autoethnography has a connection to autobiography (Denzin 2014). In leading international journals and conferences of comparative education, there have been autobiographical reflections to different research practices in the globalisation of educational research (e.g., see Kim 2020; Takayama 2020; Phùng 2020). These articles successfully contributed to reflect and consider hegemonic and colonial structures of research activities..

Hsiung (2012) also characterises “core” and “periphery” of qualitative research as typically related to language: the “core” belongs to the Anglo-American, i.e., English-speaking discourse, while the vast “periphery” consists of a variety of discourses in languages from other parts of the globe. Yet, this language-bound relation can be varied, in cases where a specific method has its roots in a discourse held in another language (see some examples in this anthology: the Documentary Method from Germany (Martens and Kinoshita in this anthology) and Lesson Study from Japan (Yoshida and Miyamoto in this anthology)). Therefore, the singular focus on language-related cracks between English and other languages can veil the view on diverse discourse relations.

In this volume, we actually do not find the very “core” of qualitative research in the sense of Hsiung. However, it is obvious that the empirical methods referred to in the articles stem from the ‘West’ or ‘North’ of the earth.² Yet, I observe some characteristic citations on which the authors lean: Going through the reference lists in the articles by Nicaquela and Assane as well as Alipio, I noticed that they discuss qualitative research methods based on different combinations of literature from the English and Portuguese discourses – in contrast, my reference list consists of Japanese-, German-, and English-speaking literature. This kind of multi-language reference list is not common, e.g., German-speaking literature on qualitative methods construct their methodology mostly on the basis of their own language, sometimes additionally using English literature. The common reliance on English references highlights the ‘core-periphery’ asymmetry of qualitative researches. The authors in this section, me included, are floating between the poles, but in relation to different ‘peripheral’ areas. We are inevitably bound to rely on the ‘core’ methodology, both to explore local educational phenomena in the ‘periphery’, as well as to communicate in between us.

This is ironical for educational research in an international setting: Comparative and intercultural education research has paid great attention to possible inequalities and ethnocentrisms in education and research practice (e.g., Le Than Koi 1980) and still tries to overcome them (e.g., Takayama, Sriprakash & Connell 2016). Such perspectives on possible inequalities between the West and the rest of the globe let us rewrite research questions, goals, objectives as well as understandings of specific notions, which stem from a Western research and discourse context – ironically often by using a methodical tool which is invented and developed in some powerful, internationally more recognised ‘cores’ or with certain ignorance of the ‘peripheries’. In this context,

2 In the case of Lesson Study, also referred to in this book, the ‘core’ or home is located in Japan, which is not automatically categorised into the ‘West’. However, the international reception takes place through an introduction by English-speaking authors (see also the article by Yoshida and Miyamoto in this anthology).

research methods uniquely developed in each explored field are omitted. The research method and its academic hegemony in education have not been examined yet and stay as a blind spot of the critical reflection.

These structural challenges are fatal to educational research in two ways.

Firstly, their central notions always carry specific normative concepts of education, framing how and to which goal human development should be oriented. At the same time, these normative concepts are never free from specific global and local hegemonies (e.g., about a Japanese discourse see Seki (2012); about descriptive and normative dimensions of the German notion of *Bildung* see Zirfas (2011)). This normative character of educational research directs qualitative studies and limits the possible research questions (Herfter et al. 2019). Therefore, especially in an international exchange, it is inevitable to reflect which norms certain concepts entail and how research methods are chosen to meet the concepts and research questions. It is also necessary to consider how far an internationally developed research method fits to a specific, local research question on education and which reasons play a role in the choice of the method.

Secondly, although global (common) trends in education have been repeatedly observed, such as the new education movement in the 1920s and reforms driven by the PISA of the OECD in the 21st century, educational research has followed specific research interests, bringing forth specific discourses. Comparative research clearly illustrates different structures and traditions of educational research (e.g., Biesta 2020; Keiner & Schriewer 1990). These specific traditions guide the ways of questioning and researching so that the international audience must consciously pay attention to different relevance settings in research.

Hence, qualitative educational research faces two challenges in an international discussion setting: It needs to explain not only specific 'local' norms and traditions of the own education context, but also specific research method(ology) to an international audience. In turn, readiness to deal with specific concepts and methods is required of the international audience.

In the following, I'll explore research practices from Mozambique in a virtual dialogue by using autoethnography. First, I'll take a closer look into the (institutional) research setting of each article to illustrate the frameworks in which the authors and I conduct qualitative research (Aspect 1). Subsequently, the question regarding which qualitative methods are chosen to which purposes will be discussed (Aspect 2). Through these considerations, norms of each research practice will appear and different attitudes are reflexively presented (Aspect 3). In conclusion, (im-)possibilities of qualitative educational research will be outlined, based on the three aspects to show different manners of confrontation to the 'core' of qualitative research.

3 A trialogue about qualitative educational research

Aspect 1: Challenges in using and around reasoning to use qualitative methods

Alipio, Nicaquela and Assane and I conduct research in different institutional, and thematic settings. In this aspect, I read the articles from the viewpoint concerning which challenges we see in using qualitative research methods and how we argue for the application of qualitative research methods.

Alipio's article clearly describes institutional challenges as to the quality of qualitative research projects, especially concerning the validity of data analysis in final theses in teacher colleges and master courses. These challenges stem from "a lack of agreement among researchers about what terms could really describe the quality of qualitative research in a clear way" (Alipio in this volume: 317). This still unsolved core problem directly causes "a challenge for junior researchers" (ibid.) in Mozambique. Alipio observes difficulties with validity "in many dissertations and thesis research projects" (ibid.: 318) as to "the construction of the [research] instrument itself" (ibid.), as well as to the lack of examining of the validity in adapting instruments from former research. Thus, "few students describe how the validation process was conducted and how this process can lead to obtain valid data for the research in question", while "students mostly address only the technique of data analysis" (ibid.). Alipio sees such research procedures as unsatisfying or poor, because the mere naming of certain techniques is not a description of the research process itself. Novice researchers would therefore fail to provide validity.

I observe that Alipio assumes the validity as fundamental for qualitative research to make projects scientifically meaningful by "reduc[ing] biases [...] and [...] ensur[ing] research quality" (ibid.). Hereby it seems that Alipio embraces a firm idea or even a norm of how the science should look like. For him, the challenges among young researchers are connected to an institutional framework of academic training. Reading syllabuses of some modules or courses at the college and university, it remains unclear for him "to what extent the issue of validity is addressed or even if it even gets addressed at all" (ibid.: 319). I would like to summarise that Alipio emphasises the meaning of method training at universities, promoting that the topic of validity has to be addressed, despite of the unsolved discussions on the validity concept. This suggests to me, that Alipio regards it as a mission to train young researchers into an expected standard research practice. This norm is given consideration in Aspect 3.

Alipio criticises the lack of the validity in data analysis and training thereof in tertiary teacher education in Mozambique. Hereby, the characteristics of (locally driven) educational research projects play only a small role and the

(unsolved) international standard of validity is set as a norm of researching. In contrast, Nicaquela and Assane are deeply involved in the local field of institutionalised schools and illustrate challenges from their practice.

The article by Nicaquela and Assane describes their research practice and includes some examples. They are researching in “everyday school life” (Nicaquela and Assane in this volume: 300), in which they are “teacher-researchers, individuals who teach while researching their own practices” (ibid.: 301). The authors, therefore, do not possess “an exclusive place that separates [them] from those who participate in [their] research” (ibid.). They acknowledge their challenges relating to a specific double or simultaneous position in their research field, i.e., everyday school life. This position is termed as “teacher-researcher” (ibid.), which stands apart from the “normal science”, “imposed by the rules of positivist methods” (ibid.: 302, in leaning on Couto 2009), a position in which “no linear boundaries” (ibid.) exist between the subject and the object of research. This simultaneous position leads the authors to research and write their own narrative on their explorations of everyday school life, therefore making themselves a “part of the object of [their own] research” (ibid.). It is solely through their own involvement as teacher-researchers in the field that the authors come to question the fundamental norm of “Western model” (ibid.). Their insight into the different positions of researchers in relation to the field leads them to argue for widening the variation of sources to be researched as well as of presentation forms (ibid.). In the centre of their research, they actively use narratives of practitioners and researchers as a method besides other sources. This critically requires questioning of the fundamental epistemology of the modern, ‘normal’ or ‘Western’ science (see Aspect 3 in this article).

Here I observe two contrasting institutional settings of research practices which are also related to their understanding of the norms of modern science: Alipio critically points out the lack of training concerning the validity of qualitative research as a quality criterium of the modern science at higher education in Mozambique. In contrast, Nicaquela and Assane are aware of their double, simultaneous position as teacher-researcher in the field and declare an offensive confrontation to the modern science. Alipio recognises research practice in general as to be standardised along the international discourse and therefore as trainable. In turn, Nicaquela and Assane see such a rational position of an educational researcher as impossible, especially for their work in the field. Hence, they adopt a new inseparable role in the centre of their epistemology. It is conceivable that these contrasting positions reflect the authors’ different perspectives of responsibility at higher education or teacher education: priority on the international standard or the local field of education.

These contrastive positions remind me of the re-building of my research framework during my doctoral studies. In Japan in the 2000s, research ethics and personal encounters in the field were one of the central methodological issues in qualitative research, especially in life history research. These topics were also discussed in educational research. Data collection and analysis were conducted and explained in a highly integrated process – similarly to how it is shown by Nicaquela and Assane. During my research stay in Germany, it surprised me that ethical questions in the field were hardly dealt with at all, as if there would not be such interpersonal and ethical challenges. Instead, data collection and analysis were discussed separately, referring to almost standardised methodical procedures, extensively elaborating on their theoretical and philosophical reasoning. My standpoint in using qualitative methods learned in Japan was not compatible with discussion. Different from Alipio's argument, the validity or criteria of research quality were (and still are), in the German discourse, specified to qualitative research itself. Thereby, I experienced more standardisation and the notion of trainability of qualitative research methods than I had experienced in Japan. To tackle this experience of incommensurable discourses and practices in qualitative research, I introduced a concrete research method (narrative interview and narration analysis following Schütze 1983) in a 'German' way (e.g., connecting the reasoning for using the procedures to the research question) into the framework of qualitative educational research developed in Japan (e.g., Nakauchi 1992). In doing so, I wanted to contribute to identifying suitable methods for the Japanese approach on educational research, as well as to developing appropriate ways of methodological discussion in Japanese discourse. The German interview method was 'just' a tool to achieve that goal. I'll go further into this process in the next aspect.

Aspect 2: Potentials of narratives as qualitative method

It is a nice coincidence that all of us – Alipio, Nicaquela and Assane, and I – conduct(ed) qualitative research with narratives, which is focused in the following. I'd like to start my second aspect by delving deeper into my experiences on narrative methods and their foundational methodology (cf. Otani 2019) between familiar and (still) unfamiliar discourses.

Originally, I started my dissertation project with the methodical concept of life history, based on the discussion in Japan. The leading work at that time was by Nakano and Sakurai (1995). However, the discourse also often referred to Anglo-American literature. Life history focuses on micro history and enabled me to approach the historical story telling of so-called ordinary people and their educational thoughts. Its interview method was presented as holistic and

simultaneous in data collection and analysis (see Sakurai 2002). Therefore, one of the central German interview methods surprised me with its rigid separation of procedures of data collection and analysis in small steps, which is firmly tied to a theory of biography (see Schütze 1983).

The German epistemological-methodological discourse unfettered me from certain reasoning in dialogues with researchers in Japan, and from having to defend why I use a qualitative, narrative method instead of quantitative method. In the Japanese discourse at that time, the method of life history was often solely treated as an alternative, and use thereof had to be legitimated using the logic of positivistic reasoning. However, I noticed that I began to miss a core meaning of qualitative research or Japanese discourse: A (sometimes ethical) emphasis on listening to the ‘forgotten’ minorities, rewriting historical descriptions from their perspective or reflecting on the role as a researcher in an interview is rarely seen in the German discourse, although Schütze’s methodical concept of narrative interview seems to meet these requirements. After all, my dissertation has a unique framework and reasoning: The whole methodology is based on Japanese and Anglo-American discourse of educational life history (e.g., Goodson 2001; Nakano & Sakurai 1995; Nakauchi 1992), while the concrete methodical procedure is taken from the German discourse (see also Kinoshita 2020; 2022; 2023).

My experience shows that specific concepts and methods of narrative research were differently discussed and realised in the respective research communities and therefore cannot be transferred into another discourse without adaptation. A research method is never neutral or universal.

In Alipio’s article, he does not deal with a specific method, but he considers narrative studies or interviews as a central way to collect data in qualitative research (Alipio in this volume, 319-322). He discusses the validity and credibility especially concerning narratives collected in field work. Alipio illustrates narratives as problematic data because of “potential bias and subjectivity” (ibid.: 319) in achieving a so-called “truth value” (ibid.). He underlines that validity can be methodologically controlled. Explaining “the process of obtaining the data” (ibid.: 320) is one of the possible ways of ensuring validity, in addition to “methodological steps (population, sample, instruments, etc.)” (ibid.), which are often described. This explanation is, for Alipio, necessary because the researchers’ position in the researched field is not independent from their sociocultural characteristics.

Alipio points out sociocultural influences in collecting and analysing narrative data – this separation between data collection and analysis is reminding me of a ‘German’ discourse. He stresses language- and region-related challenges within Mozambique, especially pointing out that novice researchers from urban areas express themselves in Portuguese which is not always spoken in

the researched field. This gap seems to result from the social structures such as instruction and academic language at the higher and school education as well as from academic norms of language. In this gap, Alipio sees validity at risk: "The validity and reliability of the study can be affected by a lack of *understanding* of the sociocultural aspects" (ibid., stressed by E.K.). Besides the understanding, the subjectivity of the researchers plays a critical role hereby. "Therefore, it is important for the researcher to *know* the cultural specificities in order to obtain valid, meaningful, diverse and in-depth data" (ibid.: 321, in leaning on Pelzang & Hutchinson 2018, stressed by E.K.).

At this point, I contemplate what 'understanding' and 'knowing' mean. Isn't 'understanding' rather a goal than a condition as Alipio opines, because we conduct narrative research to grasp the life world of the researched? Alipio argues as if there would be completely valid and objective data and researchers would be responsible to obtain it. As I am familiar with German and Japanese qualitative research, where knowledge is thought to be constructed and not free from perspectives, to me, Alipio seems to follow the classical positivistic logic of the science. In reading his article, I have to recognise that I belong to the recent 'Western' discourse of qualitative research on one hand, and the Japanese focus on the primacy of the field and minorities on the other hand: Biases can be dealt with in the research process and have their own meaning. But for Alipio, "understanding" is a required condition to enter the field, because it includes a sensibility "to the cultural specificities of the context in which the research will take place" (ibid.). The lack of understanding or knowledge about the field is, for him, a structural, colonial problem in conducting qualitative, narrative research. To show the problem, he argues within the framework of the positivistic logic, which is questioned by 'Western', as well as Japanese qualitative research. In this context, Alipio also takes the global scientific structure into account, which I'll discuss in the third aspect.

As outlined above, Nicaquela and Assane work with narratives due to their double position as teacher-researcher in the field, and narratives allow them to research and write from their position. In their introduction, they position themselves as deviants, and challenging the research norms from the 'West'. The notion of narrative is not explicitly defined but stands for oral expressions with stories in a broad sense. For the authors, the narrative is very central, as an epistemology on the one hand, and as a research method on the other hand.

Nicaquela and Assane collect narratives in the field to seek "solutions in a continuous and rational manner" (Nicaquela and Assane in this volume: 302). For the authors, "there is no way to research and write about everyday school life other than to research and write about one's own practice and life" (ibid.)

- This refers not only to collecting teachers' narratives but also to researchers'

autobiographically oriented narrative (ibid.: 301-304), which is tied to the research question. This stance is welcome to me in two ways.

Firstly, it reminds me of a way of reasoning for using a teacher's life history which was often cited in Japan and is therefore familiar to me (e.g., Goodson 2001). The British educational researcher Ivor Goodson works with life histories to explore teachers' challenges in educational reform in a holistic way (ibid.). This is a critical perspective on school and educational research, which sees everyday school life exclusively in functional terms of the institutional dimension: Teachers should also be considered as a whole person.

Secondly, the idea to widen the application of narratives by researcher's "autobiographically oriented narrative" gives me the opportunity to write my own personal perspective in this anthology. Nicaquela and Assane proactively drive this research style forward, leaning on Mortari and Wittman: "researching in narrative form is not a mere 'denunciation, which is enclosed in itself, but one of overflowing pre-existence in the construction and viability of plural knowledge and equity projects. That is, it is strength in the midst of chaos'" (Nicaquela and Assane in this volume: 304). This leads Nicaquela and Assane to criticise the existing structure of science, which will be discussed in the third aspect.

In regards to methodical processes, Nicaquela and Assane emphasise that data collection of narrative research takes place "in a complex and not linear or definite way" (ibid.: 305) because of their simultaneous "teacher-researcher" position in classroom research. In their fourth chapter (ibid.: 305-310), they do not show how concrete narratives are collected or interviewed. Due to my research stay in Germany, the omission of concrete presentation and description of the process of data collection and analysis is to me noteworthy. However, had I studied life history research only in Japan, I would have accepted their presentation of different narratives: In this discourse as well as in Nicaquela's and Assane's text, the focus is on why an alternative methodical approach is used – often in fundamental critique of the usual 'Western' approach, in contrast to the German discourse, where it is expected to focus on the description of the methodical procedure, relating it to its methodological reasoning. Therefore, I can only understand their presentation style and consider that this is for now the possible way to allocate the core critique and explain their position.

Aspect 3: Positions to the 'Western modern' science

The previous two aspects revealed that all three articles refer in different ways to a critical attitude to the 'Western' or 'modern' science. Especially Nicaquela and Assane, as well as Alipio, term this as colonial. Going beyond mapping

localised variations of qualitative methods (e.g., Charmaz 2014), they (Alipio, Nicaquela and Assane) or we (including myself) emphasise power balances among the different research frameworks.

Alipio critically points out the lack of knowledge about the research field in "African countries" (Alipio in this volume: 322). He attributes this shortcoming to a colonial structure of research in Mozambique. Although Alipio accepts the validity discourse developed in a specific 'Western' community and sees it as a standard to be followed by young researchers, he points out problematic practices in collecting qualitative data in the local field. As observed in the second aspect, the lack of knowledge about local languages and the sociocultural structure of informants (see also Mulhanga in this volume for an example) is critically seen as a problem of post-colonial structures. As to the validity in data collection, Alipio argues as if he would be a positivist, different from a qualitative researcher: There is objective reality to be discovered, following the standards of validity. However, in the context of 'African countries', he seems to deplore a kind of ignorance of the pre-knowledge on the field: Narrative research can start with data collection and analysis, only after researchers are imbued with local knowledge.

This rouses ethical questions and concerns on the responsibility of qualitative research for social/societal problems. Nicaquela and Assane also mention this point in a different way.

Nicaquela and Assane show a cautious, but at the same time, offensive stance in conducting qualitative researches. For them, it's central to see narratives of the researched teachers and researchers themselves not only as a method(ology), but also as an epistemology. Narratives allow informants as well as researchers themselves to express their own viewpoints and actively produce knowledge. This is, for both authors, a fight against the "colonial-capitalist" science (Nicaquela and Assane in this volume: 304-305). Contrary to Alipio, they don't emphasise this as an 'African' issue, but focus on the field contact. In intense field contact, they see an emancipation or "resistance" (ibid.: 304) of "indigenous knowledge" (ibid.). This suggests that both authors see the risk of colonial influence, if they do not accept their simultaneous role in the field. Their critical epistemology of narrative therefore takes distanced stance from "formalist research [...] (ibid.: 310). In doing so, data collection is not "clean" and structured (like a German narrative method), but much more indiscriminate, "drinking from all the sources" (ibid.: 307).

Nicaquela and Assane as well as Alipio see the potentials of qualitative, narrative research in education as critique of colonial structures. To achieve this, they seem to need radical argumentations. As aforementioned, since my academic migration from Japan to Germany, legitimating the use of qualitative methods has become easier. However, on reading recent Japanese discourses, I still

repeatedly experienced some positivistic questioning on qualitative methods (for one of the latest discussions, see Igashira 2023³).

We, as the authors in this part, are all still struggling in conducting qualitative research in the complex power imbalances of the global scientific discourses, yet, in different ways: Alipio seems to try to train students, so that they can act as well-informed qualitative researchers in the academic field which still seems positivistic, thus helping them to adapt to 'Western' standards in a culturally informed way. In contrast, Nicaquela and Assane enforce their critical epistemology of narratives in school everyday practice, thus trying to demonstrate a (radical) alternative to 'Western science'. In my own research, I use some eclecticism to question existing frameworks. We all experience difficulties in positioning our own work in research structures determined by the 'core', yet reflect and practice our critiques in different ways. The confrontation with 'Western science' leaves little space to show the concrete procedures of data collection with narrative methods. Instead, it leads us to show how we understand narrative data in the specific research structures. In the whole framework, I rarely remark on education: It is considered as local and specific in both concept and practice.

4 Conclusion

Reflecting on two contributions in this part, and conducting a virtual dialogue with the authors, this essay autoethnographically considered (im-)possibilities of discussing qualitative methods in international research settings where there are few common concrete discourses despite of the "globalization of qualitative researches" and where there is an unequal power relation between only a few "core(s)" and vast "peripheries" concerning specific methods (see again Hsiung (2012)). Nicaquela and Assane, Alipio, as well as I, adopt different, but equally uncomfortable positions in relation to dominant or 'Western' science when conducting qualitative research.

These positions are characterised by different motives: Nicaquela and Assane showed a limitation of 'methodical uniformity' to 'Western' science as epistemology and methodology; Alipio pointed out trained researchers' ignorance

3 In an anthology edited by Igashira (2023) in Japan, the so-called KKV debates (King et al. 1994) about criteria of qualitative researches, which are yet framed by quantitative epistemological reasoning, are critically examined by diverse authors who practice qualitative or comparable methods in different disciplines. The editor Igashira aligns to the requirement by KKV regarding the qualitative methods and lets the participating qualitative researchers explain, which meaning the KKV has to their research practices. Interestingly, many of the authors answer by consciously avoiding a direct answer to critiques by KKV because of its classical orientation to the quantitative or positivistic research norm (especially Komiya 2023).

about socio-cultural aspects concerning the fields of data collection besides the lacking validity of data analysis; I experienced methodologies and methods in narrative research which are totally differently developed and rationalised in Germany and Japan, struggling to find my position between them. In this part, it was quite difficult to exchange ideas and opinions about a specific method and its concrete procedures (besides, the contributions in this part are not planned to be focussed on these procedures). In the era of the globalisation of qualitative research, researchers share some experiences around diverse qualitative research concepts, but it still remains challenging to discuss and exchange views and perspectives concerning specific methods in between different discourses. Especially single methodical techniques and procedures were not even touched upon – instead, this part reveals the need for more fundamental considerations on motives to use qualitative methods, as well as on educational theories and phenomena in scientific communities. This means that although a shared understanding of particular methods cannot be assumed, especially in an international setting, it is possible to reflect on these methods in relation to their wider methodological and global-societal context. This led us to examine norms of the ‘modern’ or ‘Western’ science and to question power relations between the researchers and the researched as well as among scientific communities between the ‘core(s)’ and ‘peripheries’ in a plurality of ways. Ironically, the structural problem in qualitative research is again highlighted by the side of the ‘periphery’. However, the ‘periphery’ does not wait to be discovered anymore, as an international discussion setting such as conferences and workshops is a stage to promote voices from different sides.

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