

**METODOLOGIA BADAŃ JAKOŚCIOWYCH NAD DZIEĆMI I ICH EDUKACJĄ****A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY CONCERNING CHILDREN  
AND THEIR EDUCATION****Od Redakcji**

Bieżący numer „Problemów Wczesnej Edukacji” ma nieco inny charakter od dotychczasowych. Nie tyle zależało nam na prezentacji wyników badań nad dzieckiem, jego dzieciństwem i edukacją, ile na przedstawieniu sposobów badania tej problematyki. Do pewnego stopnia jest on jednak kontynuacją poprzedniego numeru, który był poświęcony analizom nauczycielskiego rozpoznawania rzeczywistości edukacyjnej. Teraz natomiast koncentrujemy się na strategiach naukowego jej badania. Badania nad dziećmi i szkołą mogą być prowadzone przy wykorzystaniu dwóch odmiennych paradygmatów metodologicznych – obiektywistycznego (opartego na pomiarze o scjencyjnej proveniencji) i konstruktywistycznego (zorientowanego na interpretację hermeneutyczną i emancypacyjną krytyczność). Decyzja o tym, by skupić się na metodologii badań jakościowych wynika z faktu, że tego rodzaju opracowań i badań jest wciąż w Polsce relatywnie niewiele.

Zgromadzone teksty dzielą się na dwie grupy. Do pierwszej należą te, których autorzy wprowadzają Czytelnika w ogólne założenia metodologii interpretatywnej, uwrażliwiają na ryzyko powierzchownego rozumienia badań jakościowych jako tych, które po prostu pozbawione są pomiaru. Takie myślenie rodzi niebezpieczeństwo popełniania zasadniczych błędów, o których mowa w kilku proponowanych Państwu artykułach. W tej grupie tekstów znajdują się również węższe opracowania dotyczące założeń i zasad stosowania wybranych strategii jakościowych, jak na przykład badania etnograficzne czy action research.

Drużyna artykułów to rozmaite egzemplifikacje zastosowanych strategii jakościowych. Pozwolą one, mamy nadzieję, lepiej zrozumieć rolę teorii w tego rodzaju analizach, procedury ich prowadzenia, reguły gromadzenia danych i ich opracowywania.

Zbiór tych artykułów nie jest w żadnej mierze mikro-podręcznikiem badań jakościowych. Stanowi wybór materiałów otwierających pewne pole namysłu nad sposobem badania, interpretowania i rozumienia dziecka, edukacji, szkoły i pracujących w niej nauczycieli.

**From the Editor**

The current issue of "Problems of Early Education" has a character slightly different from the previous ones. We wanted not so much to present the results of research in the child, its childhood and education, as to describe the ways to investigate this issue. It is, to a certain extent, a continuation of the previous issue which was devoted to the analysis of teachers' recognition of the educational reality. We now focus on the strategies of scientific research. Research in children and the school can be conducted with the use of two different methodological paradigms - objectivistic (based on the measurement of scientist provenance) and constructivist (orientated to the hermeneutic interpretation and emancipatory criticism). Our decision to focus on the qualitative research methodology stems from the fact that such studies and research are still relatively rare in Poland.

The collected texts are divided into two groups. The first group contains those whose authors introduce the reader into the general objectives of the interpretative methodology, sensitise to the risk of a superficial understanding of qualitative research as those simply devoid of measurement. Such thinking poses a danger of committing major errors, referred to in several articles offered to you. This group of texts includes also narrower analyses of the principles and rules for the use of selected qualitative strategies, such as ethnographic studies and action research.

The second group of articles constitutes an exemplification of the various qualitative strategies used. We hope they will help to understand better the role of theory in this type of analyses, procedures for their conduct, rules of data collection and elaboration.

This collection of articles is by no means a micro-handbook of qualitative research. It is a choice of materials opening an area for reflection on the ways of researching, interpreting and understanding the child's education, the school and the teachers who work in it.

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2. **Kędzierska Hanna**, *Dokumentarna interpretacja nauczycielskiego bycia - w - świecie edukacji*. Recenzja książki Beaty Zamorskiej: *Nauczyciele. (Re)Konstrukcje bycia - w - świecie edukacji*. Wrocław 2008, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej
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2. **Kędzierska Hanna**, *Documentary interpretation of being a teacher in the world of education. A review of a book by Beata Zamorska: Teachers. (Re) Constructions of Being in the World of Education*. Wrocław 2008, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej.
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## Abstracts

### *Andrzej Szklarski*

#### **Qualitative research - a viable methodological alternative in education**

This article describes the foundations, establishment and development of qualitative research, which has grown into a considerable methodological option in educational science. Qualitative research is anchored in the hermeneutic tradition and its most prominent features are an interpretative approach, inductive research strategy and idiographic results. More particularly, the article focuses upon the variation that can be found in qualitative research regarding interpretation, structuring of empirical data and theory generation. Three distinctive types of interpretation named *within interpretation*, *outside-in interpretation* and *inside-out interpretation* are described and discussed. The processes of coding and different forms of taxonomic and non-taxonomic structuring of empirical data are also presented. Theory-generating strategies and the ability of some research approaches to provide tools for theory generation are examined in connection to three levels of theory generation. Finally, the necessity of evaluation of qualitative research results is clarified and discussed.

### *Danuta Urbaniak-Zajac*

#### **Problems accompanying qualitative research**

The author states that in the classical model of empirical research, based upon positivist philosophy, so called “soft data” (data that can be gathered with the help of non-standardised research methods) are allowed. Such data can be *a source* or *inspiration* to build

hypotheses, which are afterwards verified in the main (standardized) research. Qualitative data can also be used as an illustration of the accuracy identified in the standardized research. It should be noted that “soft” empirical data in the classical model is only *supplementary*.

New qualitative research includes many different methods. However, its believers accept a number of common assumptions (the historical character of a social reality equipped with sense, the openness of research procedures, and a methodical approach in its processes), which are covered in the article. The role of theory in qualitative research is also mentioned, both in the opening stages while preparing the research, as well as during the preparation of the results. In addition to this, contemporary qualitative research is not restricted to the description of a part of reality from the perspective of the participant’s social life, but also in trying to formulate theories that explain it.

*William F. Pinar*

### **Qualitative research and the problem with ethnography**

W. Pinar defines qualitative understanding, situates it historically, and discusses its internal tensions (between the particular and the general), focusing on ethnography as his primary illustration. Focused on the particular but drawn to the general, ethnography (as practiced by educational researchers in North America) often dwells on the observable, and in so doing reiterates the obvious. Qualitative understanding is thereby eclipsed.

*Pedro Silva*

### **Ethnography: a method on the razor’s edge**

In this paper I offer my main ideas about ethnography, which I mostly see as a research method, being aware, however, that the word itself might both mean a process and a product. As a method, it can include central techniques, like participant-observation and fieldnotes, and peripheral ones, that can be anyone. In the paper I argue for the need of a reflexive ethnography, i.e., one that takes into account the social relation of investigation and, thus, the possible effects of the researcher’s presence in the complex web of social relations of which s/he becomes a part and parcel when s/he “enters the field”. I also a) try to illuminate the plurality of tensions that integrate any ethnographic research process; b) refer to the hard task of translating cultures; and, c) finish with a reflection on the concept of self-ethnography.

*Ireneusz Kawecki*

### **Educational ethnography in schools**

The author presents the principles of the qualitative approach and characterizes ethnography as a research tool used in social sciences to explore human behavior. Generally, the article deals with educational ethnography, with the author presenting its main aspects and relations with anthropology and sociology of education. He also includes a brief outline of the history of educational anthropology by listing its main representatives.

*Teresa Sadoń-Osowiecka*

### **Bricolage as a Constructivistic Research Approach. A Patchwork about Bricolage**

The author presents bricolage as a multimethodological, multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to social and educational research. Constructivism is the epistemological base of this approach. The question is not “what the world is?” but “how do people construct their vision of the world in their minds?” and “what is this construction like?”. The author uses the term of bricolage from Levi-Strauss’s “The Savage Mind” as a metaphor for this contemporary research approach. Bricolage connects many interpretative research strategies and individual researcher’s preknowledge for the investigation of numerous relationships and connections that link various forms of knowledge together and is particularly well suited to educational research, as education consists of the interplay of a wide variety of entities and needs multiple ways of seeing.

*Martin Blaszk*

### **Ethnodrama, action research and adaptation – some considerations in choosing a research method**

The article looks at part of the author’s journey in considering a suitable research method for the research question: how participants and audience involved in happening interpret the experience and how, if in any way, their interpretations place happening within an educational discourse. In recounting this journey the author briefly outlines his interest in the research area, as well as some general considerations concerning choice of method, including epistemology. The article shall also include a description of a method the author has rejected, ethnodrama, and the reasons for its rejection. The description of an adapted form of action research, a method the author is currently considering, shall also be given. The author concludes by stating some of the issues arising from his adaptation of the action research, including choices between objective and reflexive video making practices and how data should be recorded during focused interview.

*Anna Wasilewska*

### **Child narrations – a methodological depiction**

Depending on the research project, narration can be interpreted as a linguistic accomplishment, a manner of ordering meaning, or as a cultural mark. There are two methodological options for using elements of narrative research – those referring to linguistic-and-ethnologic structuralism or hermeneutics. Within pedagogical research referring to children’s narrations, the linguistic representation of the world is of special interest and can be considered from various perspectives - as the world verbalised by children, or more objectively - as a manifestation of their interpersonal understanding of the world. Cognitive analysis in studies concerning language try to correlate the subjective point of view and the objective, cognitive perspective. Conceptual variants isolated in cognitive analysis reveal ways to express experiences of the states “I towards the world” and “I in the world”. Cognitive methodology descends from current structuralist research, but establishing the subjective point of view and conforming to the principle of contextualism also indicates a basis in hermeneutics. Therefore it is a methodology bringing together the advantages of both currents of narrative research.

*Joanna Maria Garbula*

### **Action research on children and their education as a strategy in qualitative research**

Research on children and their education can be undertaken in different types of scientific research, both quantitative and qualitative. The author of the paper looks at a particular qualitative approach to investigating educational reality, while the itself article contains a description of various qualitative research strategies. According to N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, the author presents the following strategies: participatory observation and performance ethnography, phenomenological and ethnometodological interpretative practices, case study, grounded theory, life history, *testimonio* and the historical method, participatory action research, as well as clinical models. Having made the assumption that an action research strategy can be useful in improving educational reality (practice), the author then presents the basic theoretical premises of this strategy.

*Jolanta Zwiernik*

### **Play as a medium in children's everyday lives – ethnography in the kindergarten**

The main thesis of this article is that the teacher is the most competent person to carry out ethnographic research in the kindergarten. After all, it is the teacher who plays a natural part in the children's everyday lives, where the role of play is predominant. By creating, performing and transforming the social elements of play in a collective manner, children work out procedures which give meaning to various social situations and thereby construct an individual vision of the world. This all happens in the presence of the teacher who observes children's behaviour and by listening to what they say, and can view reflexively the social practices involved in the creation of children's reality. A significant element in this is play, which one can describe as a medium between the child's inner world – his knowledge, emotions, fears, fascinations – and the outer world, in which every child is an active participant and a careful observer. The second part of the article consists of an extension of this thesis, supported by excerpts of ethnographic observations recorded in a kindergarten. The observations made refer to play as a medium and state that it is 1) a mirror of ordinary children's concerns, 2) training preparing them to participate in their future, everyday adult lives, 3) their authentic everyday life, where they succeed, fail and confront each other, 4) prediction of the types of future social interactions they will be involved in, and 5) a source of self knowledge, preferences and biases.

*Teresa Bauman*

### **Errors and slips (minor mistakes) in master theses**

The article introduces methodological errors made by students in bachelor degree theses. Particular attention is paid to coherence, which is considered from two points of view. The first concerns the coherence between the theoretical, methodological and empirical parts of the dissertation. The second, meanwhile, relates to the internal coherence of the methodological assumptions adopted; that is coherence between the objective of study, the research problem, the selection of test and the choice of data collection methods.

*Pam L. Secklin*

### **Out of the mouths of babes: narrative, children, and pedagogical pursuits**

In this article, I offer a brief review of several primary works on narrative as a method of inquiry and discuss more specifically, the use of narrative in working with children. My focus includes the importance of establishing equality between researcher and participant in the exploration of children's stories of lived experiences. In addition, I offer some practical advice for researchers/educators on how to conduct narrative and auto-ethnographic inquiry with children, while simultaneously positioned as researcher/participant. I write in auto-ethnographic form as well, out of personal preference and in the attempt to offer a model that may be deemed heuristically useful for the researcher/educator.

*Alicja Jurgiel*

### **Experiencing school by early learners. Phenomenographic reconstruction**

The purpose of the text is to reveal the ways school is experienced by students of early education in the context of phenomenographic research. The author analyses and interprets self-collected data which, from the perspective of phenomenography as a qualitative research, indicate that pupils experience school as a place from which active involvement are missing.

*Teresa G. Wojcik*

### **The promise and challenge of curriculum hybridization in a Civic Education Course in Poland**

First published in 1994 by the Centre for Citizenship Education in Warsaw, the KOSS curriculum represents a striking divergence from traditional approaches to civic education in Poland in two ways. First, it seeks to replace the "transmission" approach to teaching with student-centered instructional methods. Second, KOSS encourages teachers to be "co-authors" of the curriculum instead of "implementers," thus inviting curriculum hybridization. Yet the curriculum's call for hybridization is problematic. It raises the issue of how far teachers may alter a curriculum so that their adaptations are authentic hybrids and neither something totally new (nonimplementation) nor merely a cooptation of the proposed reform (Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Case studies of two teachers' use of the KOSS curriculum in their classrooms shed light on both the promise of expanding teachers' decision-making freedom concerning curriculum construction as well as the challenges contained therein.

*Małgorzata Cackowska, Mirosław Patalon*

### **Religious picturebooks for children in Poland. A critical discourse analysis**

Our paper focuses on the socio-cultural conditions affecting the present production of confession (religious) picturebooks for children in Poland. The picturebook is seen here as a *cultural medium*, within which the content and form of various (possible) ideologies and conceptions of the child and god co-occur, are concluded, manifested and have their representations. It could also be seen as the first "cultural framework" in the formation of the subject's identity. The "cultural qualities" provided for children in religious

picturebooks are analysed in the broad field of cultural production. We base our study of the mechanisms operating in the field (with its power mechanisms and relations) on the empirical material collected and chosen from the contemporary market of religious books for children. The methodology applied in this research consists of critical discourse analysis. The results show the knowledge/power relations, symptoms of symbolic violence in recognized discourses and explain to what practices of ideological, social and political control and power structures the subject is exposed (in Foucauldian terms). The research is a part of a larger collaborative project called “Discursive construction of subjectivity” financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland, grant no. N10702632/3637, and conducted at the University of Gdansk.

*Pedro Silva*

### **Ethnography and education in Portugal: a brief look**

In this paper I shortly consider the relationship between ethnography and education and the ethnographer and the teacher. Most of the paper, however, is dedicated to a description and analysis of what has been done in Portugal in what concerns ethnographic research on educational issues. I also point to some works on the ethnographic method made in Portugal.

*Beata Adrjan*

### **School culture research. Writing on the margin**

The article is a summary of school culture research based on Schein’s Model of organizational culture. This model allows observation of an organization – the studied school – as an organism in which only a superficial layer (of artefacts) is visible, whereas assumptions which constitute the spiritual movements of school life are hidden. These assumptions are not only the acting force of the organization but also the effect of its functioning. The article presents some conclusions with reference to the research’s methodology. The Schein model allowed the culture of the school to be described, but also acted as a “corset” in relation to school ethnography.

*Adam Jagiełło-Rusiłowski*

### **Children as „research centers” in inclusive schools: inspirations from Korczak and the promises of Appreciative Inquiry**

The purpose of this article is to present Appreciative Inquiry as a potential method for empowering teachers and their schools as organizations. My main argument is that any transformation in schools requires the ownership of teachers and other stakeholders, including the children. Their common engagement has to go beyond the dominating focus on deficiencies and reliance on problem solving methodologies. The idea of involving children in transformative action research can be traced back to Korczak’s pedagogy. Combined with principles of Appreciative Inquiry teachers may succeed in tapping the potential of children, their parents and key community members to give them more ownership and responsibility for the schools as their organizations. AI is grounded in social constructionism and the theory of direct involvement which links AI with the use of generative metaphors. I point to drama techniques as useful research tools allowing the inclusion

of children's voices. Although I cannot offer a proper academic research report but only incidental examples of my pilot uses of AI in educational contexts, I hope to incite the interest of those inspired by Korczak, like myself, to adapt the method to their needs for transforming early education in their local schools, particularly where social exclusion of children and their families creates extra barriers to their academic achievements.

*Kalinowska Alina*

### **Problem solving tasks as a chance for teachers to diagnose the quality of mathematical thinking in very young learners**

Students' mathematical knowledge is constantly being verified at school. However checking what students know usually means assessing the extent of the mathematical knowledge acquired, determined by the lesson's subject. The teacher is far less interested in a qualitative analysis of the students' reasoning. One indicator helpful in diagnosing this particular reasoning is the mathematical problem. Solving such problems individually activates students' personal strategies, and analysing ways of dealing with a new problem reveals the meanings given by the students to mathematical concepts. It helps recognition on the level of children's mathematical representations as well as students' strategies.

*Małgorzata Sławińska*

### **Qualitative approach in the analysis of the process of meaning making in pre-schools**

The following paper seeks to present the use of qualitative strategies in the analysis of the pre-school environment according to a constructivist analytical framework, which is not a commonly applied approach in such studies. The subject of this analysis were the conditions for constructing scientific and social knowledge during in-class activities. The aim of the analysis was to determine which natural and social connotations, occurring during in-class activities are teacher-motivated and which knowledge is considered valid for pre-schoolers in the process of teacher-monitored communication.

The results obtained were presented in the form of a diagnostic survey and interpreted according to the analytical requirements regarding a nonpositivist methodological paradigm. These results do not however show the educational curriculum that is covered during classes in pre-schools, rather it is yet another attempt at 'unveiling' the educational process that children are subject to.