

Collaborative praxis in the process of networked research: the methodological debate on the qualitative approach¹

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ABSTRACT

The praxis of collaborative research of the Center-West Researchers Network enables the assessment of data collection in doctoral and master theses and the elaboration of different clippings, analyses, debates, and communications on professors related to the academic production of postgraduate programs in education in this region. In one of these outlines, it is questioned: what do the quantitative and qualitative data on the research approach in theses and dissertations on professors in the center-west reveal? How do they contribute to thinking and differentiating qualitative approach in the phenomenological and historical-dialectical materialist method? The purpose is to analyze these approaches to improve the construction of theoretical-methodological frameworks. The meta-analysis will be used to know, understand, and construct possible methodological paths to meet certain needs of those who seek collaboration as a means of formation, in order to cancel the deviations from the chosen investigative path. It is inferred that awareness and the critical-reflective attitude impose themselves as conditions to build systematized knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Qualitative approach. Collaborative research. Teacher formation. Phenomenological method. Historical-dialectical materialist method.

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Práxis colaborativa no processo de investigação em rede: o debate metodológico sobre a abordagem qualitativa

RESUMO

A práxis de pesquisas colaborativas da Rede de Pesquisadores do Centro-Oeste possibilitam a apreciação de coleta de dados em teses e dissertações e a elaboração de diferentes recortes, análises, debates e comunicações sobre professor relacionadas com a produção acadêmica dos programas de pós-graduação em educação dessa região. Em um desses contornos, questiona-se: o que revelam os dados quantitativos e qualitativos sobre abordagem de pesquisa em teses e dissertações sobre professor no Centro-Oeste? Como eles contribuem para pensar e diferenciar abordagem qualitativa no método fenomenológico e materialista histórico-dialético? O propósito é analisar essas abordagens para aperfeiçoar a construção de referenciais teórico-metodológicos, sobretudo, ampliar a interlocução de meta-análises suprimindo carências de quem busca a pesquisa colaborativa como meio de formação. Infere-se que a pesquisa colaborativa amplia processos de formação e conscientização, o que torna presente uma atitude crítico-reflexiva entre pesquisadores na construção de conhecimentos sistematizados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Abordagem qualitativa. Pesquisa colaborativa. Formação docente. Método fenomenológico. Método materialista histórico Dialético.

*Praxis colaborativa en el proceso de investigación en red: el debate metodológico sobre el enfoque cualitativo*⁵

RESUMEN

La práctica de investigaciones colaborativas de la Red de Investigadores del Centro-Oeste posibilita la apreciación de recolección de datos en tesis y disertaciones y la elaboración de diferentes recortes, análisis, debates y comunicaciones sobre profesor relacionadas con la producción académica de los programas de posgrado en educación de esa región. En uno de esos contornos, se pregunta: ¿qué revelan los datos cuantitativos y cualitativos sobre abordaje de investigación en tesis y disertaciones sobre profesor en el Centro-Oeste? ¿Cómo contribuyen a pensar y diferenciar enfoque

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qualitativo en el método fenomenológico y materialista histórico-dialéctico? El propósito es analizar estos enfoques para perfeccionar la construcción de referenciales teórico-metodológicos, sobre todo, para ampliar la interlocución de los metaanálisis, satisfaciendo las necesidades de quien buscan la investigación colaborativa como medio de formación. Se infiere que la investigación colaborativa amplía los procesos de formación y concientización, lo que genera una actitud crítico-reflexiva entre los investigadores en la construcción del conocimiento sistematizado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Abordaje cualitativo. Investigación colaborativa. Formación docente. Método fenomenológico. Método materialista histórico dialéctico.

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Introduction

The Center-West Research Network - REDECENTRO⁶ - is characterized as a cooperative activity of research and strategies for the formation of researchers and professors, at different educational levels, in order to meet the challenges of knowledge production, especially in the construction of plausible and coherent theoretical-methodological paths.

It was conceived from an inter-institutional project and is composed of supervising professors, researchers, doctoral students, master students, and undergraduate students with scientific initiation projects funded by research scholarships. REDECENTRO was articulated for the composition of a collaborative research network. Conceptually, as described by Magalhães (2021, our translation), it should be associated with the idea of cooperation, such as

[...] essential practice among researchers facing the collective work that is proposed in the construction of knowledge [...] the collaborative research has shown itself

⁶ REDECENTRO (from the Portuguese *Rede de pesquisadores do Centro-Oeste*) brings together researchers interested in professors from the Center-West region. It was articulated by the University of Brasília (UNB), Federal University of Goiás (UFG), Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) and University of Uberaba (UNIUBE), in the research *A produção acadêmica sobre professores(as): estudo interinstitucional da região Centro-Oeste* (Academic production on professors: interinstitutional study of the Center-West region.).

as a powerful experience in the field of research in education, of which we highlight some aspects: [...] because it invests in an inseparable double responsibility - create the best working conditions and expand the capacity to develop actions to promote to researchers support in professional development; it supports possibilities of conjunction of researchers and groups of researchers in a multi/inter/transdisciplinary perspective, [...] it expands the space for debate and the possibilities of learning.

Thus, collaborative and networked research supports a collaborative project that is likely to "motivate researchers to deepen studies, and it helps to consolidate a conceptual-methodological and epistemological character within the scope of education research" (MAGALHÃES, 2021, our translation). This conception supports the mapping and analysis of theses and dissertations (T/D) on the theme of professors of postgraduate programs in education of the Center-West region, and it has maintained the focus of the group and improvement of collaborative praxis. As stated by Magalhães, Souza and Argüello (2021, our translation)

The importance of collaborative and networked research stands out for its immediate collective demands: empowering with regard to *theoretical, epistemological, gnoseological, ontological, methodological, political and ideological, and relational* principles which influence subjectivities, languages, knowledge, professional relations, but also, and above all, in the metacognitive capacity, and in the epistemological surveillance of each researcher in the research process itself.

Therefore, REDECENTRO was created from this investigative and collaborative structure that is thought to be part of the training of its researchers. Thus, the defense of theoretical-methodological bases, essential for the development of research, is prioritized as what involves: i) national and international partnerships, negotiation, and interaction; ii) responsibility and engagement; iii) co-participation and autonomy; iv) active inclusion of its participants in the different stages of knowledge construction. The latter involves: a) technical and reflective meetings; b) collection and structuring of databases; c) studies, debates, analyses, and

socialization of results. Thus, forming an environment conducive to the exchange of experiences (FRANCO; MOROSINI, 2001).

From this point of view, the members of REDECENTRO have systematically dedicated themselves to the conduction of meta-analyses of academic works on professors, from 1999 to 2014, of the Postgraduate Programs in Education (PPE) constituent of this research network. So, a position that demands from the researcher a clear and reasoned definition as to the method emerges, which supports the logic of knowledge production, which in our case is, above all, the approach of historical-dialectical materialism (HDM).

The interest on professors and their field of working as objects of systematic investigation was projected in such a way that the volume of works resulting from postgraduate programs in education composed a useful data collection to collectively understand the process of this intellectual production (SOUZA; MAGALHAES, 2018), culminating in a collaborative praxis.

As a result of practices dialogued in the Research Network, this text is part of the reflective improvement of this investigative production. Likewise, as part of the construction of formative material, it starts from the following questions: what do the quantitative and qualitative data on the T/D approach to research on professors in the Center-West reveal? How do they contribute to thinking and differentiating the qualitative approach into two distinct methods: the phenomenological method and the historical-dialectical materialist? How the research supports and consolidates the collaborative and networked research developed by REDECENTRO? These questions guide the collection of documentary data and the analysis of this academic production, but especially supports the construction of theoretical-methodological references for the advancement of the research that the group proposes to carry out.

The meta-analysis will be used to know, understand, and construct possible methodological paths to meet certain needs of those who seek collaboration as a means of formation, in order to cancel the deviations from the chosen investigative path. A finding derived from reading works whose production process often proves to be methodologically fragile before the complexity of recording the construction

of knowledge. There seems to be a lack of a theoretical-methodological construction that substantiates and justifies the choice of the methodology adopted, which for the most part remains implicit.

A reality resulting from the lack of consensus regarding the need to clarify, in detail, the methodological paths followed in the development of T/D, but that, in REDECENTRO group, as a collective conception, it is believed that a postgraduate student conscious of the theoretical-methodological foundations of his or her academic activity is a *sine qua non* condition to produce more consistent knowledge. Even if the knowledge underlies the written materialization of the research.

As Bogdan and Biklen say (1994, p. 52, our translation), explicit or not, conscious or not, all systematic research reveals a theoretical tendency, a way of building knowledge, a paradigm that "consists of an open set of statements, concepts or propositions logically related and that guide thought to research". It is considered that this statement intends to explain that the process of transforming data into results through interpretative analyses in the elaboration of knowledge presupposes coherence, and this depends on a choice made with methodological, epistemological, and theoretical awareness, with the background of experiences associated with the act of researching, i.e., of a rational logic.

If so, such coherence cannot be secondary to the detriment of elements surrounding the object investigated. Necessarily, the scientific intellectual production demands of the postgraduate student an attitude-behavior consistency in problem situations; in the ways of positioning oneself before the object of study and the conception of knowledge construction; and in choosing the method - fundamental to define such forms in favor of a consistent scientific production. For this reason, the researcher should be encouraged to explore methods and to know how to choose them. The choice is an elementary step of sustaining an attempt to build and systematize knowledge, because the methodology goes beyond the idea of an instrumental technique related to "processes of collection, registration, organization, systematization and treatment of data and information" (GAMBOA, 2013, p. 69, our translation). It

refers to the theoretical bases, i.e., to the basic conceptual cores, the authors and classics in the mapping and debate on the subject, and epistemologies that refer "to the criteria of 'scientificity', such as conceptions of science, the requirements of proof or validity, causality etc." (GAMBOA, 2013, p. 69, our translation) and that a systematic research needs to have.

In the construction of a useful theoretical-methodological framework to support a research coherently, the research approach constitutes one of the objects of study to be analyzed from data collected by multiple researchers of REDECENTRO with the use of the "analysis form" (SOUZA; MAGALHÃES; QUEIROZ, 2017, p. 217-31), "[...] that the researchers built, presented and perfected together; that is, through technical meetings, seminars, and theoretical-methodological studies" (SILVA; SANTOS, 2017, p. 77-8, our translation).

The forms, as secondary documentary sources of research, allowed the tabulation of quantitative data, which translated approaches and referential trends in T/D - according to the methodological choices of the authors. The qualitative data, here in analysis, refer to excerpts from conceptions and theoretical guides, which reveal coherence, contradictions, and challenges of production. This option required a review of the theoretical-methodological parameters to which the authors used⁷.

Thus, from the data collection of 77 papers, which represent 10% of all studies on professors defended and registered in the repository of six graduate programs from 1999 to 2014, only 46 were analyzed to develop this study. A selection justified by the inclusion of the research approach indicator in an update of the "form" used as a standard instrument by REDECENTRO, only for production from 2006 to 2014. The data collected are related to the type of approach (qualitative, quantitative, qualitative and quantitative, multi-referential) and theoretical reference, besides including extracts of T/D that show the choice of the approach and theoretical-conceptual citations by the authors.

⁷ A first analysis was developed and published by SILVA, E. C.; SANTOS, A. F. Desafios epistemológicos e metodológicos da abordagem qualitativa de pesquisa. In: SOUZA, R. C. C.; MAGALHÃES, S. O. (org.) Epistemologia da práxis e epistemologia da prática: repercussões na produção de conhecimento sobre professores. Campinas, SP: Mercado de Letras, 2018. p. 65-94

In the references two problems stand out: instrumental overcoming and theoretical-methodological coherence, which are directly related to the production of knowledge. These problems need to be addressed and debated in favor of the improvement of the research act. Even though the mapping and the discussion in this study has the research approach as object of investigation, this approach has intrinsic relations with the method, which points out other associations with the types of research and procedures.

The theoretical discussion of the research approach focuses on the epistemological and instrumental bases, with emphasis on a dichotomy, coexistence, or unity between the quantitative and the qualitative approach, which incorporate educational research. Such bases come from studies by Gamboa (2013), Lüdke and André (1986), Chizzotti (1991), Triviños (1987) and Bogdan and Biklen (1994). But the nuances and fundamentals of a specific approach must be considered. The quantitative mapping of the type of approach and references, in the bibliographic documentary sources considered here, allows to reveal trends of approach and ideas, while the excerpts are open to a qualitative analysis of the foundations and challenges.

Research approaches: theoretical types and references

The quantitative mapping regarding the type of research approach (quantitative, multi-referential, qualitative and mixed), as shown in Table 1, reveals that 87% of the productions use the explicit qualitative approach or not.

TABLE 1. Type of approach presented in T/D

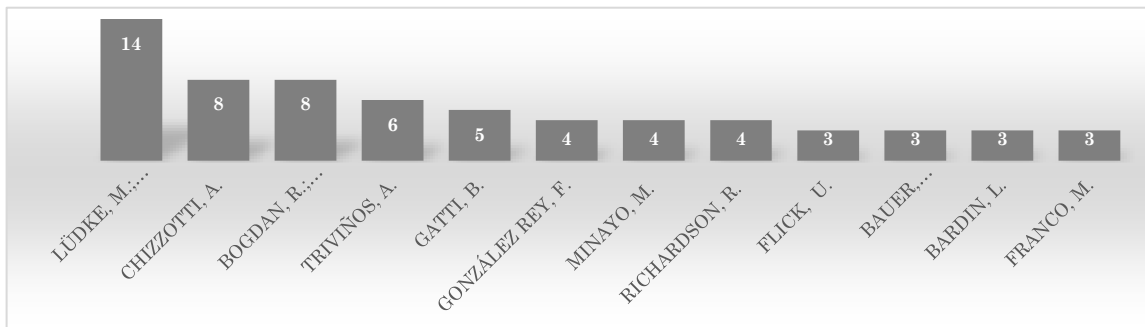
| INSTITUTION | SAMPLE 2006–14 | QUANTITATIVE APPROACH | QUALITATIVE APPROACH | MIXED APPROACH | MULTI-REFERENTIAL APPROACH |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| UFU; UFG, UNIUBE; UNB;UFMS, UFMT | 46 100% | 0 0% | 40 87% | 6 13% | 0 0% |

Source: research data from REDECENTRO (SANTOS; SILVA, 2018).

Historically announced in the 19th century, the qualitative approach was included in educational research in the 1960s, in Europe and the United States (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994) and in Brazil in the 1980s (GATTI and ANDRÉ, 2010; GAMBOA; SANTOS FILHO, 2013). As the predominant approach in T/D on professors, in some cases the author is only concerned with announcing it; in other cases, there are efforts to characterize it.

The following graphic shows twelve authors most cited in studies, without distinction of the type of approach, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed.

GRAPHIC 1. References on approach in T/D



Source: research data from REDECENTRO (SANTOS; SILVA, 2018).

Among the most cited authors, Lüdke and André (1986) appear first in 30% of the analyzed production; Bogdan and Biklen (1994), alongside Chizzotti (1991; 2003), appear second, with 17%. Triviños (1987) is in third place, with 13%. The fact that phenomenological authors are at the top of the most cited, while the majority of T/D are of HDM method, leads to question the theoretical-methodological coherence in these productions (see table 2).

TABLE 2. Explicit identification or not in relation to the method

| | HDM METHOD | | PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD | | POSITIVIST METHOD | | UNIDENTIFIED METHOD | OTHER ANSWER |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | Explicit | Not explicit, but identified | Explicit | Not explicit, but identified | Explicit | Not explicit, but identified | | |
| | 14 | 19 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| | 33 | | 5 | | 1 | | 3 | 4 |
| Total 46 | | | | | | | | |

Source: research data from REDECENTRO (SANTOS; SILVA, 2018).

This table shows that 33 of the 46 works analyzed refer to HDM, which represents 71.74%; in this set, 14 clearly explain and 19 do not. But, in this case, it could be identified through reading. The phenomenological method is mentioned in 5 works that represent 10.87% of the works; of this amount, 1 expressed it visibly, 4 did not - however, it can be distinguished. From all studies analyzed, only 1 was identified with positivist analysis, 3 were not possible to distinguish the method used; and in the case of 4, there were different responses referring to other types of methods.

The data presented here reveal: i) little acuity on the research approach; ii) lack of theoretical-methodological studies as part of the knowledge production; iii) lack of coherence between the referentials used of phenomenological-based qualitative approach in researches that are characterized as historical-dialectical materialist. In the face of data like these, whose mapping became possible through collaborative research, REDECENTRO has been providing a formative praxis of supervising professors and advised students, professors and researchers increasingly demanding about the choices, the foundations and theoretical-methodological consistency in the construction of knowledge. The following analyses can be found in this context.

Theoretical foundations of the qualitative research approach

By mapping theorists on the qualitative approach in T/D and analyzing excerpts from the development of these researches, we have proposed an in-depth reading of the same authors so that future researchers could select readings and focus on foundations consistent with their methodological choices. A basis of methodological foundation is essential to instrumentalization in the process of constructing investigative paths, whose awareness of those who investigate favors assuming a way of perceiving, understanding, and analyzing reality.

The most mentioned work - *Pesquisa em educação: abordagem qualitativa*⁸ -, Lüdke and André (1986, p. XI, our translation) propose "to contribute to the development of the methodological resources of research in education". The authors pioneered the approach to the subject in Brazil in the 1980s. At that time, there was a transition of paradigms in education research: from experimental positivist research in the area of psychology to interpretive research in the field of social sciences. The language and procedural guidelines make the book a useful work for beginners in education research which seems to justify the predominance of their work, which brings the debate and methodological guidelines.

From the qualitative point of view, the work points out the emergence of types of research in the exploration for more efficient results to solve problems of what we now call basic education, i.e., primary and secondary education. The authors list the types of research as participant, emancipatory, research-action, ethnographic and case study. However, they focus more on the characteristics of the latter two. They also present guidelines on instruments for data collection and analysis in procedures of participant observation, interview, and document analysis as systematized practices in dealing with criticisms of adequacy and problems of scientific rigor.

Despite the importance of Lüdke and André's book as an introduction to the idea of qualitative research, it is important to be aware that it is a phenomenological conception. Although the authors do not explain this relationship, it is evidenced when they link "qualitative research" to the five characteristics presented by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), whose definitions are phenomenological.

So, in the almost totality of the collection analyzed, Lüdke and André form a key reference. Some cite Bogdan and Biklen (1994), alongside Triviños (1987) and Chizzotti (1991), among others. The following excerpt illustrates such theoretical links.

⁸ Research in education: qualitative approach.

In the formulation of my research project, I opted for a qualitative approach whose reference are Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen (1998) and Ludke and André (1986). I consider that my work meets the description of these authors of a qualitative investigation. (Institution 2, form 11, our translation).

Even so, there is a superficiality of the insertion of the subject that favors the lack of coherence between the references of the approach and the method; mistaken assumption of approach as synonyms of type of ethnographic research; lack of understanding of the characteristics of the qualitative approach as potentiality applied to research, corroborating the construction of investigative paths.

The characteristics of this approach are defined a priori by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), who appear in second place among the most cited authors, without referring to a conception from the perspective of the phenomenological method. It should be noted that despite being in the second position, only *one* work, from the data collection under the present analysis, was explicit an articulated approach to the phenomenological method.

In the case of a reference consistent with phenomenology (Institution 4, form 35), the author characterizes it as an interpretative approach, in which researchers are more interested in the investigative process than in the results. They may even work with quantitative data, but they are expressed in qualitative analyses. But Bogdan and Biklen's work is used incoherently as a reference in several HDM-based dissertations, as can be highlighted.

I opted for a qualitative approach, whose references are Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen (1998) and Ludke and André (1986) [...]. In this approach, researchers attend the study sites because they are concerned about the context, and the data are descriptive and collected by the researcher himself or herself, who is more interested in the process than in the results or products; qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. (Institution 2, form 11, our translation).

The reading of these excerpts shows undeniable characteristics of a qualitative research, if it were not for the theoretical-methodological incoherence in the perspective of the method worked in the construction of

the knowledge. By identifying these inconsistencies, REDECENTRO promotes several debates, based on systematic readings and analyses, in the search for an awareness, firstly, of the members themselves in the improvement of their productions.

Our reflections lead us to understand the fact that the work of Lüdke and André is the most cited in research on professors; after all, it explores the qualitative approach in research in education with clarity and didacticism when exposing topics such as research types and procedures. But it is worth asking, in the context of the production until 2014: in thirty years there has been no progress in the epistemology of the qualitative approach? Why is a work written with introductory objectives, at an incipient moment on the theme in Brazil, still the most cited work in research on professor? What is the meaning of the work based on a phenomenological qualitative approach in a collection whose production is predominantly linked to HDM?

Alongside Bogdan and Biklen (1994), Chizzotti's work (1991) appears in second place. Instead of assuming a given epistemological and theoretical-methodological perspective, in his book the author makes a mapping that helps - although with incipience - the beginner to situate himself or herself in the dimension of the choices so that the researcher can make his or her own choices and look deeper into the literature. His work arises from the experiences and demands of basic and panoramic information to support postgraduate work in education. The content offers an overview of experimental and qualitative research; it points out a Brazilian and foreign theoretical-methodological bibliography from the mid-70s to the 90s; finally, it makes useful recommendations regarding the systematization and construction of its research.

Chizzotti characterized the state of affairs of the research and the trends considered conflicting until then. In his words,

A paradigm characterized by the adoption of a research strategy modeled by the natural sciences and based on empirical observation to explain the facts and make

predictions, and another that advocates a logic proper to the studies of human and social phenomena, looking for meanings of the facts in the concrete context in which they occur (CHIZZOTTI, 1991, p. 12, our translation).

The first paradigm is based on positivism; the second, on two distinct strands: phenomenology and dialectical; of which Chizzotti presents characteristics and theoretical mapping of the qualitative research, through a presentation that includes topics such as: assumptions, philosophical orientations, qualitative data collection, participant observation, interview, life history, content analysis, action research and intervention research, case study, qualitative research stages and others. He still talks about documentation. The text introduces sources such as libraries, archives, the bibliographic documentation center, documentary products, bibliography.

By resorting to Chizzotti, postgraduate students already seek a greater understanding of the qualitative approach, its characteristics, and implications in the investigative process.

'[...] in qualitative research, all participants are recognized as subjects who develop knowledge and produce practices [...] they have a practical knowledge, of common sense and relatively elaborate representations that form a conception of life and guide their individual actions (CHIZZOTTI, 2005, p, 83). ' (institution 1, form 8, our translation).

According to Chizzotti (1995), the qualitative approach reveals a dynamic relationship between the investigator and the subject investigated. There is also a constant interdependence between subject and object, in which knowledge is not limited to isolated data. The subject researcher is not alien and neutral to what is being developed, he is an integral part of the process of knowledge and interprets the phenomena, assigning them a meaning. (Institution 3, form 28, our translation).

The examples, illustrated above, highlight the direct participation of the subjects investigated with their practical knowledge; the relationship of the researcher with the object investigated; the historical context and transformations of the qualitative approach in the research on the social phenomenon with the use of the five characteristics presented by Bogdan and

Biklen (1994). Therefore, the use of these characteristics, based on the phenomenological method, in research that follows the point of view of HDM raises questions about methodological coherence. This indicates an urgent need to deepen the distinctions of characteristics regarding the method, explored by Trivinões (1987) and Chizzotti (1991) in an incipient way.

In this regard, we sought to answer the following questions: what differentiates the qualitative approach in a phenomenological method research compared to the historical-dialectical materialist one? What are the theoretical references of the qualitative approach consistent with each of these two methods? It seems to us that the differences are in the method and the relationship it establishes between the subject and the object of study, that is, in the way of collecting and/or constructing data, analyzing and/or interpreting them and addressing the phenomenon investigated. This relationship impacts directly on the type of research and procedures for the search and systematization of data.

Qualitative approach, phenomenology, and dialectical-historical materialism: differences

The understanding of the difference between the phenomenological qualitative view and the dialectical-historical materialist still challenges the literature, which is mainly concerned with the process of differentiating the qualitative from the quantitative approach (CHIZZOTTI, 1991; ALVES-MAZZOTTI; GEWANDSZNAJDER 1998; SAMPIERI, 2013).

In its origins, the qualitative approach was conceived from the point of view of the phenomenological method applied in ethnographic-anthropological research (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994). Later, it was appropriated by research of very different currents, but contrary to the method and techniques of experimental positivist studies. It is therefore appropriate to limit this exposure to the basic characteristics of the construction of knowledge in the phenomenological perspective and in the

dialectic (CHIZZOTTI, 1991; TRIVIÑOS, 1987). Even with the varied forms of qualitative approach, we reiterate Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p. 54, our translation): "all share, to some extent, the goal of understanding the subjects based on their views". The warning is that a research construct requires the investigator to know the theoretical and methodological questions.

Triviños (1987) - third most cited author in the data collection under analysis - mapped the differences in the qualitative approach linked to the phenomenological method and HDM. His work shows to be an initial reference for those who seek coherence in their methodological choices in the construction of knowledge. In the light of the appropriation of the characteristics of the qualitative approach in Bogdan and Biklen, an introductory parallel will be drawn for clarification and distinctions.

1. "In qualitative research, the direct source of data is the natural environment, the researcher being the main instrument" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 47, our translation). From the study of subjects, the first characteristic pointed three agglutinate aspects. The direct study of the data source; the natural environment linked to the context in which the information emerges; the researcher as who is immersed in the field of information production.

Direct data source. Evidenced in a dissertation/thesis extract, this characteristic implies studying the subjects as a direct source of data (oral, documentary, and visual). It is assumed that they possess knowledge whose understanding becomes relevant to research. But it is only made clear that one works with the direct source, as in this fragment:

The research presented is qualitative in nature. Because of this [...], locus of this research, is considered natural environment and direct source for data collection, which, in turn, occurred through documentary and oral sources. (Institution 4, form 41, our translation).

Such explanation does not include the nuances and qualitative demands in the investigative process. It is necessary to understand, to learn to go out in the field; to explore the meaning of the direct source of data; to

enter this universe to bring information to light and to work on it. Linked to the method, the way the researcher conceives knowledge - apprehension and construction - will distinguish what and how to seek information and transform it into systematized texts. Without this definition, it is difficult to build a coherent research path.

In a phenomenological study, knowledge is linked to the life experience of the subjects (researcher and informant). A dialectical study presupposes that the subjects who make up the universe of research have a practical knowledge, of common sense, of everyday living; and necessarily do not reflect a critical knowledge, whose contradictions between information and reality constitute a challenge of apprehension to the researcher (KOSIK, 1976). In fact, the research object is found in social, cultural, historical, economic, technological, aesthetic, ethical, ethnic-racial relations, among others present in the communities of individuals. It needs to be refined a from a comprehensive state, common to all of them, to something closer, meaningful, which concerns and interrelates with the researcher's own aspirations to solve a certain problematized situation.

Chizzotti (1991) refers to these characteristics but does not explain a methodological affiliation. Rather, regarding to the philosophical orientation of a qualitative approach, he seeks to establish comparative points of characteristics between the phenomenological orientation, and the dialectal one; but, when considering its characteristics from the perspective of the delimitation and formulation of the problem, researcher, object of study, and techniques, this distinction dissipates by including coincidental traits.

Natural environment. The qualitative researchers attend the locus of the investigation because they understand that the actions can be understood more deeply, with more detail and more nuance when observed in their usual environment of occurrence. "The places have to be understood in the context of the history of the institutions to which they belong [...]. For the qualitative researcher to divorce the act, the word, or gesture of its context is to lose sight of the meaning" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 48, our translation).

If so - if the environment becomes important in the configuration of the subject -, then it is worth saying that for Triviños (1987) the conception of environment in phenomenology and dialectics is distinct. In the first, it is limited to the culture in each reality; in the second, it is understood as a more complex reality linked to infrastructure and superstructure, constituting society in general.

Researchers who support the symbolic interaction of the Chicago school - phenomenological based - understand that the "research cannot be the product of an observer posted outside the meanings that individuals attribute to their acts; it must, on the contrary, be the unveiling of the social sense that individuals build in their everyday interactions" (CHIZZOTTI, 1991, p. 80, our translation). For phenomenology, the understanding of the meanings of information implies the researcher's immersion in everyday life, in the context, in a more extensive time of direct observation; but familiarity with tangible things covers the phenomena, as it is warned by Chizzotti (1991, p. 80, our translation): it is "necessary to go beyond the immediate manifestations to capture them and to unveil the hidden meaning of immediate impressions. The subject needs to surpass appearances to reach the essence of phenomena". The context is conceived in the present time.

At the same time, researchers who rely on dialectics without disregarding the importance of the natural environment of the object of investigation often seeks to apprehend the context using other complementary sources, such as documents and images. The understanding of the context of the object investigated is not limited at the present time for them. They think historically and communicates with the social environment. Therefore, there is a need to understand the contradiction, the alienation, the class conflict, the entirety hidden in the analyzed phenomenon itself. The following passage illustrates this reflection; it is a quote that an author made in his work (Institution 5, form 52, our translation).

Conducting research in the qualitative approach tends to the study of delimited, local questions, in order to apprehend the subjects in the natural environment in which they live, in their

interpersonal and social interactions, in which they weave meanings and construct reality. Thus, the qualitative approach has allowed contextualized analyses of the phenomena of social reality, knowledge, and the human being in their entirety (SOUZA; MAGALHÃES; GUIMARÃES, 2011)⁹.

Investigator as main instrument. In phenomenological research, the investigator is the agent of comprehension and collection of information. He or she focuses on the lived experiences and subjective meanings of social actors. In dialectical research, the researcher "values the dynamic contradiction of the observed fact and the creative activity of the subject who observes the contradictory oppositions between the whole and the part and the links of knowledge and action with the social life of human beings"; in this case, "the researcher is an active discoverer of the meaning of the actions and relationships that are hidden in social structures" (CHIZZOTTI, 1991, p. 80, our translation).

2. "Qualitative research is descriptive" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 48, our translation). Unlike the description of quantitative data, it is up to the researchers to collect data through verbal, written or imagery source; they must describe the information in detail and understand that "nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential to constitute a clue that allows us to establish a more enlightening understanding of our object of study" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 49, our translation). The description is information collection procedure. The researcher seeks to avoid escaping details and clues for new searches, but he or she is not occupied or concerned with quantifying and presenting numbers - as in positivist research.

In phenomenology, the description assumes a predominant characteristic in the collection of information that constitutes data and the final report of the research. The description is interpretative and dialogues with theoretical bases and the researcher's vision. It does not seek to explain or analyze, but to reflect, to interpret. The intentionality of the consciousness

⁹ SOUZA, R. C.C.; MAGALHÃES, S. O.; GUIMARÃES, W. S. Método e metodologia na pesquisa sobre professore(s). In: SOUZA, R. C.C.; MAGALHÃES, S. O. (org.) Pesquisa sobre professores(as): Métodos, tipos de pesquisas, temas, ideário pedagógico e referenciais. Goiânia: PUC/Goiás, 2011. p. 37-68

and the experience of the subject (TRIVINOS, 1987) is the basis of the interpretation of the phenomena. As for the HDM,

The qualitative research of dialectical historical-structural type also starts from the description that attempts to capture not only the appearance of the phenomenon, but also its essence. It seeks, however, the causes of the existence of law seeking to explain its origin, its relations, its changes and strives to intuit the consequences that will have for human life (TRIVIÑOS, 1987, p. 129, our translation).

Data production characterizes the dialectical perspective of description but seeks to develop a process of analysis based on indicators and the construction of categories.

3. "Researchers are more interested in the process than simply the results of products" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 48, our translation). The researchers stick to how the negotiations of meanings occur, to the construction of a conception that becomes common sense, to the history that precedes, influences, and becomes essential to understand a given phenomenon, to the studies that focus more on the way research participants construct meanings and give meaning to a phenomenon based on the perception of oneself, the other and the environment.

In fact, phenomenology and HDM propose to study the phenomena; however, phenomenological research follows a nonhistorical interpretation, limited to immediate circumstances involving the phenomenon, while the historical dialectical investigation seeks to apprehend the phenomenon in its apparent appearance - beginning of the analysis - and in its not apparent appearance: its relations with decisive forces responsible for the historical phenomenon.

4. "Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 50, our translation). Aspect only announced in T/D extracts, the collected data are not intended to confirm or refute hypotheses a priori, but they serve for an analysis whose abstraction starts

from a totality of information that narrows down – as a funnel - in specific and categorical indicators that arise from field research data.

Both types of qualitative research start from the social phenomenon on which the analysis is started directly. There are, however, fundamental differences. Qualitative phenomenological research has no hypotheses to be verified empirically; "this meant the presence of a theory, a whole conception delimited a priori. The meanings and the interpretation arise from the perception of the phenomenon seen in a context. Thus, we arrive at the level of abstraction, at the concept", in an inductive analysis (TRIVINOS, 1987, p. 129, our translation).

In qualitative research with roots in historical-dialectical materialism,

[...] the phenomenon has its own reality outside of consciousness. It is real, concrete and as such is studied. This means focusing it inductively. However, at the same time, when discovering its appearance and essence, one is evaluating a theoretical support, which acts deductively, which only reaches validity in the light of social practice (TRIVINOS, 1987, p. 129, our translation).

Therefore, according to this method, the analysis involves an inductive-deductive approach in an investigation of the concrete reality of the phenomenon.

This means establishing the essential aspects of the phenomenon, its foundation, its reality and possibilities, its content, and its form, what in it is unique and general, the necessary and the contingent etc. To achieve the concrete reality of the phenomenon, a study is done from information, observations, experiments etc. The description, classification, analysis, synthesis, search for the statistical regularity that precisely determines the concrete of the object, the inferences (inductive and deductive), the experimentation, the verification of hypotheses etc. are moments of the investigation that tend to establish the concrete reality of the phenomenon (TRIVINOS, 1987, p. 74, our translation).

5. "The meaning is of vital importance in the qualitative approach" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 50, our translation). It is the most recurrent feature in the data collection under analysis. It is even included in the titles of theses and dissertations - not explained in their entirety here for an ethical

reason, that is, to avoid identification of authorship. But it should be illustrated by the data collection forms of REDECENTRO under analysis (2018, our translation): "*The meaning of learning and of teaching...*", "*Senses and meanings of teaching...*", "*... senses and meanings of school routine...*", "*... the pedagogical meaning...*", "*New looks, new meanings...*". Here are some passages in the set of analyzed fragments:

The choice of this [qualitative] approach enabled greater interaction between the researcher and the object of research [...] both became mediating channels that made it possible to question the places of these agents in the process of describing and interpreting the components of a complex system of meanings for both the research subject and the researcher (BRANDÃO. 2003, p. 186)¹⁰. (Institution 2, form 13, our translation).

Qualitative research from a socio-historical perspective, which has dialectical materialism as a reference, should express in its conceptual framework the marks of its dialectical affiliation. It is with these marks that we assume different methodological investigation procedures to find the meaning of the phenomena, as well as to interpret the meanings given to them by individuals [...] (SOUZA; MAGALHÃES; GUIMARÃES, 2009; 2010). (Institution 5, form 52, our translation).

Considering the passages above, the first one brings the understanding of the *meaning* in the phenomenological perspective; the other is contextualized in a production according to the HDM, but do not present differentiation, even when there was effort to describe the meaning in a qualitative approach linked to the method - see the identified case of institution 5, form 52.

In the production under analysis, the characterization of the qualitative approach seems to be, directly or indirectly, embedded in the ideas of Bogdan and Biklen (1994), either by references to Lüdke and André (1986) or by not exceeding the conception worked by them. As a characteristic presented by Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p. 50, our translation), the meaning is "vital in the qualitative approach".

¹⁰ BRANDÃO, Carlos R. A pergunta a várias mãos: a experiência da pesquisa no trabalho do educador. São Paulo: Cortez, 2003.

The fact that qualitative researchers establish "strategies and procedures", that allow them to consider "the experiences from the respondent's point of view" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 51, our translation), reflects a kind of dialogue between investigators and their subjects. The meaning is apprehended with emphasis on subjectivity. But it does not necessarily deny the "outer" reality in a phenomenological perspective. Reality is only known to humans in the way it is perceived and understood. "We live in imagination, a context much more symbolic than concrete" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 51, our translation).

This is one of the estrangements while working with meaning from the perspective of dialectical historical materialism, when one tries to apprehend it in a historical, material, and concrete context. In the phenomenological perspective, the apprehension of meaning still brings different nuances in its currents: symbolic interaction, culture, and ethnomethodology. The basis of the symbolic interaction approach contains the conception "that human experience is mediated by interpretation. Neither objects, nor persons, situations or events are endowed with their own meaning: instead, the meaning is attributed to them" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 56, our translation). Meaning is constructed through interactions, definitions and sharing of perspective, it is subject to negotiation. It is understood that "it is not rules, regulations, standards or whatever is crucial to the understanding of behavior, but rather how they are defined and used in specific situations" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 56, our translation).

In the studies on culture, in turn, its description - or aspects of it - is called ethnography, just as the studies of the signs of the language belong to semiotics. The ethnographers are concerned with representations. They use the "concept of culture, regardless of its specific definition" as "the main organizational and conceptual instrument of data interpretation that characterizes ethnography" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 59, our translation). Ethnomethodology refers to the study of how individuals build and understand their daily lives.

In a qualitative HDM approach, cultural studies differ from the phenomenological perspective because they "reject the notion that the world is 'susceptible' to be known directly"; rather, "social relations are influenced by power relations that must be understood through the analysis and interpretation of their own situations" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p. 61, our translation). All the characteristics and distinctions of the qualitative approach presented here are linked to the methods, so its use will always require theoretical deepening and better understanding of them in order to carry out an investigative practice.

Final considerations

Researchers such as Gatti and André (2010) have been working hard to analyze academic intellectual production in education in Brazil. The researchers of REDECENTRO have been joining them for more than a decade. The collaborative and networked research has helped maintain a formative process of its members, in addition to the collective and cooperative coexistence. Gradually, this perspective of collective work has consolidated a space of "socialization of doubts and experiences, besides influencing the collaborative-critical sense in conducting investigations with more security and autonomy" (MAGALHÃES, 2021, our translation).

In the specificity of the analysis presented here, we seek to support the advances in the quality of knowledge production in the area of education, and to this purpose, we reported the difficulties concerning methodology and foundations in the productions analyzed to guide studies that support the formation of new researchers.

Although it seems inexhaustible the demand for useful analyses and discussions to expand the formative processes, the modes of investigation and their foundations, it seems that collaborative work and the exchange of experience potentiate investigative praxis. To paraphrase Bogdan and Biklen (1994) in another context of discussion, we reiterate that to seek the theoretical-methodological foundation is not to develop it as if the object of

study were the methodology, in an attitude of almost inversion of values, i.e., of objects. Rather, it is to base the philosophical paths of knowledge construction and procedures necessary for the construction of systematized research (GATTI; ANDRÉ, 2010), which would be the same as affirming that collaborative research can illuminate investigative practices with greater epistemological rigor - it involves from the choice of method, methodologies, research approaches, to the analysis, and presentation of the results obtained.

Our results, with regard to qualitative approach research, show that although all researchers insert knowledge about this approach, they still require a permanent movement of adequate training for the construction and reconstruction of the study object; that is, consistent theoretical-methodological knowledge. After all, judging by the T/D data analyzed here, we can highlight and assume the importance of methodological knowledge in relation to the object of study defined by the postgraduate student, this domain still seems to be a shortcoming in the academic production of research on professor in the Center-West region. Knowing, understanding, and constructing methodological paths implies facing the training needs of those who seek research as a means of improvement, as well as taking advantage of the potentialities and nullifying the limits of the chosen investigative path. Awareness and the critical reflective attitude impose themselves as conditions to build systematized knowledge.

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