The word methodology refers to the way in which we face problems and seek for answers. It involves a reflection on how to obtain knowledge, what to do and how to do it. The methodology to be followed in a research is determined by purposes, assumptions and interest. Until a few years ago there have prevailed two major theoretical perspectives in Social Sciences (Bruyn, 1966; Deutcher, 1973). The first one, Positivism (Comte, 1896 and Durkheim, 1938), whose purpose is to find the facts and causes of social phenomena with no regard to subjective individual situations. And the second one, Constructivism, whose purpose is to understand social phenomena from the actor own perspective. Quantitative methodology is usually linked to the positivism underlying in Durkheim’s conception of Social Sciences, according to which (a) the facts are considered things and they should study the way Natural Sciences do; (b) the results have to be formulated with laws or generalizations, as done in Natural Sciences; (c) normative or evaluative neutrality. Moreover, the weberian comprehensive orientation of Social Sciences substantially differs in some respects. The weberian proposal said that the Social Science’s aim should be social action and that any action must contain a sense or meaning to be social, underlining the importance of the comprehensive phase of the actor’s subjectivity. Weber does not waive this explanatory guidance, but presents an analysis framework that substantially differs from Durkheim’s proposal. According to Weber, it is wrong to think that the social phenomena study can be performed using the same procedures as for research in the physical world research. The scientific method proposed by Weber passes through the development of ideal types, which although they do not necessarily really exist, have a heuristic and explanatory value; they are hypothetical constructions created by putting emphasis on certain aspects of behaviour and empirically observable institutions. Therefore, the ideal type is theoretically possible, but not necessarily empirically observable. The research task is to determine in each particular case the proximity or distance between reality and the ideal image (Weber, 1977:61). According to Durkheim the explanation is defined by its cause. To explain a social phenomenon is to seek for its efficient cause, to set the antecedent phenomenon that inevitably produces it. Subsidiary once a cause of a phenomenon is established, it is also possible to search the performed function, its displayed utility. However, according to Weber, to understand is to apprehend (grab, catch and intellectually grasp an object) the inner meaning of social phenomena. Understanding for Weber is to apprehend the sense that each actor transmit to his own behaviour (subjective senses).

This need for interpretation, which may not be performed without the mediation of the language and without consideration of the internal states of the subject, has lead to a qualitative perspective qualification. In the background lies a rejection to apply an identical methodology to the natural and social world. The natural world is explained and the social world is understood.

The qualitative methodology is related to subjectivity and the unconscious (Psychoanalysis), the signifies and the meanings of the words and the signs (Linguistics, Semiology), their sense (Semantics), the symbols’ interpretation (Hermeneutics), culture (Anthropology), the perception of reality (Phenomenology) and society (Sociology). "*The qualitative methodology is therefore a multidisciplinary way of approaching to social reality knowledge*" (Andrés, 2002:374). From this interdisciplinary approach we consider a qualitative methodology "*a research strategy based on a refined and rigorous contextual description of the event, conduct or situation that ensures the maximum objectivity in the catchment of reality, always complex, and preserve the inherent spontaneous temporary continuity, so that the corresponding collected systematic data, always categorical, and regardless of their orientation preferably ideographic and procedural enables an analysis to obtaining a valid knowledge with sufficient explanatory power, according in any case, with the stated objective and the descriptors and indicators to which they had access*" (1986:24 Anguera).

This dispute, schematically represented by the explanatory and sympathetic poles of social reality, has never disappeared and appears and reappears in historical waves presenting various aspects and debate’s states, as well as various hegemonies between positions. Focussing on the second, the term qualitative research began to be used as a synonym for naturalistic inquiry, gradually gaining followers in the scientific community. In fact, in the mid-1980s, naturalistic research reached the rank of "paradigm" in the kuhnian sense of the term and emerged opposed to the assumptions of the Rationalist paradigm (Guba, 1989). Some works, like those of Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Glesne and Peshkin, Mason (1996), Maxwell (1996), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Taylor and Bogdan (1987), are an example of this. Guba and Lincoln, as pointed out by Latorre, Rincón and Arnal (1996) use the term constructivist as an equivalent to interpretive, naturalistic, hermeneutic, in order to refer to beliefs, assumptions, purposes, perspectives and concepts, on the qualitative methodology.

As Pedagogy suggested, this form of social reality research takes and integrates other similar fields, such as Sociology, Philosophy and Psychology, different perspectives such as the ethnomethodology, ethnography, discourse analysis, symbolic interactionism, holistic ethnography, cognitive anthropology, content analysis and life history, hermeneutics or phenomenology. In the field of education, the first publication refers to naturalistic research (Guba and Lincoln), qualitative assessment (Patton), ethnography (Goetz & LeCompte), critical theory (Carr and Kemmis), research action (Elliot), and participatory research (Hall). The incorporation of qualitative educational research methodology thus reinforces the idea that teachers and educators will become agents of research; understanding that the phenomena are studied in their context, trying to find their meaning or interpretation from the meanings the people gave to them. The focus is directed, therefore to the social multidimensional reality, assuming its dynamic and historical character, as well as the non-neutral intervention of values and motivations, for both individuals and phenomena under study and the own researcher (Calderon, 2002).

These connotations have occasionally led, and in a simplistic manner, to match the qualitative research methodologies aimed at the understanding of educational phenomena, and even to exclusively identify it with ethnography or participant observation. Bartholomew in the work *qualitative research in education: to understand or transform?* (1992), performs a synthesis on issues that tries to "understand" with the qualitative research: (a) natural behaviours to describe laws; (b) social situations identified by the place, actors and activities; (c) meanings of texts or actions; (d) social processes (relations between society and person) or cognitive processes (construction of semantic systems in individuals and groups which are expression of their cultural knowledge); and (e) cultural patterns of a group (by identifying beliefs and concrete practices such as social organization, economics, family structure, rituals, religion, education, etc.) and social interaction’s patterns between members of the cultural group.

The nature of research are obviously the proposed objectives, assumptions made (in the case), the number of participants, in short, the object and subjects of the research’s nature what define the selection of methods and specific techniques of data collection and the research process itself. Based on that, qualitative methods are particularly appropriate: 1) For the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon investigated or evaluated, from the own subjects involved point of view; 2) when there is a large load of meanings, stereotypes and prejudices associated with the subject of study; 3) qualitative techniques enabling participants to speak and express themselves freely and spontaneously; 4) their results may be a prelude to the construction of a questionnaire, and vice versa, used after the completion of a survey, to delve into the whys of some of the results found; 5) the qualitative techniques can be used in the initial stage of a project, to assess needs, evaluate the feasibility of new programs or find out what subjects have in mind when making decisions; 6) during the development of a project or after its beginning to assess the program; to study the interactions among people with relevant roles to any need; 7) to explain a certain behaviour, fears and rejection, accession to people, doubts and fears, satisfaction or dissatisfaction; 8) these techniques allow to contact with inaccessible spaces and people by other methods (Sánchez, 2011).

The considerable possibilities offered by qualitative methodology to education and social pedagogy research explains the increasingly publication of works with diverse contents as: critical education and social justice, critical examination of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender in education, democratic citizenship in education, leadership and social justice, critical pedagogy and emancipation, adolescence and youth development adulthood and ageing, constructivist theories, research and practice; critical perspectives in early stimulation, educational evaluation, inclusion and literacy of adults and minorities, ethnic studies, gender studies, multicultural education, sexual differentiation and education; education and family, education for consumer, family, school, and relationships with the community, urban learning, social and emotional learning, etc.

The 1988 edition of the first monographic journal of qualitative research in education has contributed to the diffusion of all these issues: *The International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education.* On the other hand, as some authors said (Colás and Sandín, etc.) the importance of the dissemination and implementation of the Handbooks of qualitative research, which appeared in recent years, should be highlighted. In particular, the work of Denzin and Lincoln (1994b; 2000b, 2011), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, or the one from LeCompte, Millroy and Preissle (1992) *The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education.* Eisner and Peshkin (1990), claimed that this type of work are of great importance, because they define terms, identify issues and clarify limits of a field of study, orient and founded investigations and structured the languages used.

However, despite this interesting interest on qualitative approach, research problems should be raised under the relevance, clarity, operability, accuracy and viability criteria. These criteria make the detected problem a searchable question, since they define the required terms by the scientific activity. As Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1982) said, the issue investigated should conform to the researcher and the convenience that the investigation of the problem can led, at the same time, to the detection of new problems. When that happens, the research is said to be *fertile*. Here, it is clear that not all observations are suitable neither for quantitative measurement (even more when working on issues of participants characteristics and interests and their stories), nor for quality measurement (when it is required to establish distinctions or precise comparisons). This explains that the number of situations in which a multidisciplinary team, from a plurality of techniques, is joining efforts in order to a more rigorously in the investigation, in short, seeks harmony between qualitative and quantitative orientations (Sánchez, 2015).

*Mixed models of research (mixed method approach)*

The quantitative-qualitative duality currently adopts new forms and gradually approach, by *the third way* (Serres, 1991) which aims at both positions as compatible and complementary. It is assumed that neither the qualitative and quantitative research is on top the other and both are equally scientific (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994:4-5), and both can provide useful information. Moreover, if their data are also integrated, a reinforcement on the results and conclusions occurs. Both methodological aspects can mutually benefit each other, and in many occasions they are used together. This option shows problems because of its time and money cost, or by the lack of qualified staff to do so, but in any case, as Anguera points (2008:151, 2010) "*the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methodology, given that it is very much interested in the process and the outcome, empowers the mutual invigoration of both procedures, and facilitates the triangulation through converging operations."* Delgado (2014) reinforces this idea by pointing out that when using them together the QUANTI formal rigidity and the QUALI creativity and flexibility it is combined; It is not a juxtaposition, but a mouldable combination in the QUANTI/QUALI components’ research phases; the collection and analysis of QUANTI/QUALI are intended to integrate results and make a joint discussion that allows inferences to better understand and have a broader vision of the phenomenon under study; and it concludes, Social Sciences need QUANTI studies enabling the causal correlation dimension and QUALI studies which allow to understand the types of meanings exchanges. According to Greene (2008). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008a; 2008b), Hernández Sampieri and Mendoza (2008), Bryman (2008), Hernández and others (2014), Delgado Álvarez (2014) and Sánchez (2015) describes advantages in the combined use of the two approaches: Triangulation: (supporting QUANTI\_QUALI); Complementation: clarification of the results of a method based on the other; Holistic vision: full and integral approach; Development: the results of a method to as support processes for another (sampling, data collection and analysis, new hypotheses, etc.); Initiation: discover contradictions, new references frames, modify original approaches with other method’s results; Expansion: a method can expand the knowledge gained on the other; Compensation: the weaknesses of a method can be remedied by another; Diversity: different views of the problem; Clarity: view undetected items by only one method, and Credibility and improvement: strengthen arguments, results and procedures from both methods.

From the methodological point of view, as Hernández and others (2014) said the 20th century began with a predominant approach, quantitative, and ended with two main approaches: qualitative and quantitative. During this time there were mono-methodological stages: (a) quantitative orientation with a single source of data QUANTI or several sources of data QUALI that could be sequential or in two phases (QUANTI/QUALI) or parallel/concurrent or simultaneous (QUANTI+QUANTI); (b) qualitative orientation with a single source of data QUALI, or several sources of data QUALI could be sequential or in two phases (QUALI/QUALI) or parallel/concurrent or simultaneous (QUALI+QUALI). The early years of the century were marked by the traditional methodological confrontation; the second half saw alternating dominant paradigm and dedication to criticize the opposite stance, but at the end of the 20th century there is a slow remission of the confrontation, with fleeting irruptions of complementarity (Anguera, 2010).

The 21st century began with a third orientation that emerged decades ago called pragmatic approach (Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttman and Hanson, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2006; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, 2008 a and b; Creswell 2005; Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004; Grinnell and Unrau, 2005, Morse & Niehaus, 2010; Delgado, 2014 and, Hernández and others, 2010, Mertens 2012, 2014, Sánchez, 2015). This approach supports methods and mixed or hybrid models (pluralism and compatibility), holds that relations between the researcher, phenomenon, and participants are determined by each particular study and context; It rejects a conventional dualisms dichotomy and focuses on the action rather than on the philosophical discussion. The "pragmatists" researches collect, analyse and integrate or connect QUANTI and QUALI data in a single study or multi-phases research program; and offer the same status to QUANTI, QUALI and mixed approaches. Mixed models also receive the name of multi-method studies, integrative research, or studies of triangulation.

The events that have favoured the increase of these designs include: publication of the *British Educational Research Journal* (2003) a monograph on educational research with 8 articles (4 mixed); the creation of the magazine J*ournal of Mixed Methods Research* (2007) where it is begin to be used qualitative methods to develop quantitative measures, quantitative methods to strengthen qualitative findings; qualitative methods to explain qualitative findings, quantitative methods and qualitative equivalent; considerable increase of work with and on mixed models (2008-2015) which include Jonh Patton, Jennifer Greene, Richard Grinnell, Charles Teddlie. Important works: Creswell and Plano Clark (2006); Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008 a and b, and, 2003); Charmaz (2013); Cámeron & Quinn (2001); Morse (2012); Hernández and others (2010 and 2014); Morse & Niehaus (2010), Sánchez (2015). The advance of mixed models were also possible by the abandonment of radical methodological positions, by the increase in scientific production, recognition to researchers who used both perspectives, increased communication between science and disciplines, variety by the evolution of new technologies and new instruments QUALI/QUANTI hardware and software (Anguera, 2010).

Relying on the statistics offered by the SCOPUS database in 2014 we could say that the future of qualitative research, and mixed models, is very encouraging. You can check the increase that both approaches have had in recent years and the prestige gained. If we look at the trend of research in Social Sciences from 1990 until 2014 there are 32.890 researches, 19.422 used qualitative methodology, 8.408 qualitative and 5.060 mixed models, representing 59% qualitative, 26% quantitative and 15% mixed studies. 29 qualitative and 6 mixed studies were released in 1990. In the last year, from 4.172 published researches, 2504 used qualitative methodology, 985 quantitative and 683 mixed. In this period of time, the use of qualitative methods, differentiated by areas reflect the Social Sciences are the second, followed by studies on Medicine that top the list of qualitative work. By countries, Spain occupies the 8th place in the Social Sciences area in qualitative research in a list headed by United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canadá. Of these works 80.53% are scientific articles, 9% conferences, 6.8% reviews and the rest press articles, book chapters or books, editorials, reports, summaries, and others.

On the other hand, in the latest conferences of the American Society of research to promote the academic research related to education, and the use of research to improve education *Educational Research Association* (AERA) and the *European Association for Research on learning and instruction* (EARLI), which supports and promotes an active culture of research in education with European initiative, it can be performed a current scrutiny of the lines of research to which are assigned thousands of researchers around the world and which are using qualitative or mixed methodologies to understand their respective knowledge domains.

Within this general context, it can be argued that we live an excellent period for qualitative research with social profile. In fact, in most of the researches the use of qualitative research as a preferred methodological approach prevail. Many others, especially the latest ones, are mixed methodology.

In this monograph we have tried to illustrate and collect a small sample of works that analyse various aspects of the social and educational reality preferably based on qualitative or mixed approaches and techniques. Among the six studies, the first three are focused on different problems that mainly affect women in different age groups. On the one hand, the article submitted by Mª Carmen Delgado and Andrea Gutiérrez (Pontifical University of Salamanca), entitled "Qualitative approach to discursive positions on prostitution: socio-educational perspective" analyses, from the discursive productions obtained through discussion groups on social representations about prostitution in college students, to identify positions of power in gender relations. In the work of Mª Cruz Sánchez, Beatriz Palacios and Antonio V. Martín, (Universities of Salamanca and Pontificia of Salamanca) entitled "Violence against women indicators in relationships. Chilean adolescents case of study", addresses the issue of gender-based on a violence in a study involving 156 Chilean adolescents interviewed through group techniques. Its main objective is to provide evidence about the way in which these teenagers establish their relationships, trying to determine if there is evidence of gender violence against adolescent women in these relationships. The results shown that in among those teenagers there are a significant number of references to the negative behaviours of gender violence, especially psychological, in which a clear rigid gender roles appears, culturally assimilated, where the values of strength, power and domain emerge as eigenvalues of the masculine identity. In the third investigation, presented by Franciso José del Pozo (Universidad del Norte, Barranquilla (Colombia)), with the title "Prevention and treatment in the penitentiary field: imprisoned drug addicts women in Spain", analyse the risk factors and protection of the imprisoned drug addicts in relation to treatment programs and recovery processes, in order to make specific action proposals. From the methodological point of view it's a multi-method study in line with the idea of mixed research designs, were 538 questionnaires and 61 semi-structured interviews are collected and analysed, offering interesting results in order to identify these women’s reality as former addicts in relation to the factors of protection and prevention which finally are enable to define an *ad hoc* intervention educational programme proposal*.*

The fourth work, Jordi Díaz-Gibson (University Ramon Llull), presents the study entitled "Leadership and collaborative governance in community education projects" which analyses the leadership in community and inter-organizational environments based on the content analysis of 30 interviews to professionals responsible for community social and educational projects and respond to a structure of RS (socio-educational network) in different communities in Barcelona. The results help to better understand success models for this type of network governance. "In the fifth article of the monograph, entitled "Environmental homeless": integration of the Belarusian immigrants in Granada", Matias Bedmar and Alena Karpava (University of Granada), analyse the Belarusian immigration phenomenon in the province of Granada, delving into the causes that motivated the decision to migrate and the way how they have faced this the new life conditions using as data collection technique the biographical interview in the context of the stories and life histories.

The monographic is closed by the work José Antonio Caride and Raúl Fraguela (Universities of Santiago de Compostela and la Coruña respectively), with the title "When the project becomes method: new perspectives for network-based socio-educational research", which reflects at the same time on the interest of the mixed methods use and implications in social and educational research, offering an interesting research process articulation from these models’ perspective, exemplified from a particular project.

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