

Qualitative research: where do we stand now?

Minayo highlights the complexity of human experience by stating, based on Kant (1724-1804), that “all phenomena have proportions of magnitude (quantitative) and profundity (qualitative) and that their understanding occurs when the synthesis of these two dimensions is made” (Minayo, 2016, p.19). The scientific community increasingly recognizes the importance of integrating the qualitative perspective into research processes in order to produce holistic and useful knowledge about the complexity of human experience. In a pragmatic way, one can see this in the evaluations of research projects that provide access to the experience of the social actors that constitute or are associated with any object of study. Access is valued, as well as the validation and return of data interpretation. The existence of journals that publish qualitative papers, of international congresses that prioritize qualitative approaches, as well as the proliferation of online communities where qualitative research is discussed and reflected, reveal the recognition of the qualitative paradigm as a fundamental way to know, perceive and intervene in any phenomenon. Qualitative research has social concerns and highlights the interests of social actors. It gives a voice to people, to society, often to minority groups, explaining how processes are experienced and the meanings attributed to them. This central premise is increasingly understood as an added benefit, thus advancing beyond the hegemony of the quantitative paradigm in research.

In their seminal proposal on how to evaluate qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1989) point to the involvement, information devolution and empowerment as key premises to be considered, notably with the criteria of ontological, educational, catalytic and tactical authenticity. One of the main added benefits of this paradigm lies precisely in its potential for change – giving power and competencies to act, through its reflective power over action, feelings and representations. As society demands greater power to intervene in the spaces it occupies and builds, and the exercise of citizenship is claimed, qualitative research emerges as the way to acquire in-depth knowledge of the human experience, as well as to intervene, articulate and enhance the exercise of this citizenship.

This issue of *Revista Ciência & Saúde Coletiva* includes six articles presented at the 5th Ibero-American Congress on Qualitative Research (www.ciaiq.org), subject to reformulation and peer evaluation. The selection aimed at methodological diversity and sought to give voice to various groups of professionals and future professionals in the field of public health, with the international discussion of the objects of study, seeking to contribute to the (still fragile) balance between a world that is globalized and the need to prioritize what is singular and unique. We have selected articles that present several phenomenological and methodological approaches and focus on social actors in the field of health. The intention is to contribute to the knowledge of the reality of the professionals working in the health area, notably on their practices of training, intervention and health, among other aspects. By doing so, we give them a voice and hope to contribute to shared reflection on ways of acting and thinking about relationships and contexts.

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