SCIENTIFIC ETHICS AND COMPARISON ON QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY APPROACHES FOR RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES. EXAMPLES OF FRANCE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

ÉTHIQUE SCIENTIFIQUE ET APPROCHE COMPARATIVE EN METHODOLOGIE QUALITATIVE POUR LES RECHERCHES EN SCIENCES SOCIALES. L'EXEMPLE DE LA FRANCE ET DE ROYAUME UNI

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ABSTRACT

In our society, there has been a controversy concerning the "*research globalization*". It seems that the harmonization of educational policies is taking place at the level of higher education. Thus, at the European Union's level, the "*common academic market*" is already being invoked. This close collaboration generates a reciprocal inspiration of researchers both at the level of the topics addressed as well as at the level of the methodology. In this context, we can be questioned about the specificity of qualitative research in France and the United Kingdom. In this paper, we will present a model of scientific similarities arising from examples from the both countries to address the question. In order for this purpose, our analysis highlights the deontological arsenal, the scientific ethics and interview research methods applied to different contexts for academic research.

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RESUME

À l'ère de la globalisation, on parle de plus en plus de la « *mondialisation* » de la recherche. Il paraît que l'uniformisation des politiques éducatives est en train de se réaliser pleinement et en premier plan à l'échelle de l'enseignement supérieur. Ainsi, au niveau de l'Union européenne, on invoque d'ores et déjà le « *marché commun académique* ». Cette étroite collaboration émerge une mutuelle inspiration des chercheurs tant au niveau des thématiques abordées qu'au niveau de la méthodologie. Dans ce contexte, on peut se demander quelle est la spécificité de la recherche qualitative en France et au Royaume-Uni ? Afin d'y répondre, nous présenterons un modèle de similarités scientifiques surgies des exemples provenant des deux pays. De ce fait, notre analyse compare l'arsenal déontologique mais aussi l'éthique scientifique fortement encouragées à être respectées lors d'une recherche académique.

MOTS-CLE: Méthodologie qualitative, recherche doctorale, étude comparative, France, Royaume-Uni

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to share with the scientific community good practices about the comparative approaches to qualitative methodology on Humanities. Given that doctoral research has a common universal ground as well as a national specificity rooted in the historical and scientific background of each country, we considered that such comparative study will enrich the researchers' vision on the diversity of academic research. After the presentation we did at the University of Portsmouth in the United Kingdom during an informal seminar in 2014, we decided to enlarge our public and to publish this contribution as an article. Our research will be consequently divided into two main parts, that is to say, firstly, we will present an example of the qualitative methodology used for a doctoral research in France and secondly, we will expose an example of methodology research used for a PhD work in the United Kingdom. Our article will conclude with schematic comparison on academic research in the both countries.

Section 1: Example of a PhD research in Educational Sciences in France

Have you ever thought who is in charge of your children's education? Have you ever reflected how is promoted the adults training? Have you ever conceived in what manner French policymakers collaborate with European and international policymakers, especially today because of this context of globalisation? Have you ever doubted that in the future the European Union could be the "master" of the educational policies in France? For further information, I invite you to discovery together several answers due to my PhD work.

My doctoral research was done at the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Strasbourg and was entitled "*Lifelong learning policies and the integral development of the human being in the era of globalisation. At the crossroad of educational policies at international, European and national levels*". In order to explain my doctoral research, I will briefly introduce you to the following parts:
1. Context, research problem and working hypothesis;
2. Methodology, data analysis and results ;
3. Teachings, proposals and perspectives.

1.1. Context, research problem and working hypothesis

First of all, I will briefly explain to you the definition of the two key-concepts of my research.
As it is impossible to give all definitions, it should be noted that lifelong learning is defined as "*all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective*" (Cedefop, 2008, p. 123). Moreover, educational polices could be

conceived as "action-centred programmes launched by a public authority, influenced by values and ideas, addressed to students and implemented by administration and educational professionals" (Van Zanten & Rayou, 2011, p. 55). To define integral development, I began with the holistic approach to education developed by Jacques Delors. According to the politician, "*holistic education must take into account the multiple facets - physical, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and spiritual - of the human personality*" (Delors, 1996, p 266.).

My doctoral work aims to understand the construction and the application into practice of educational policies and to confront the political discourse to the official information. For that reason my research is situated in an interdisciplinary approach, that is to say, Educational Sciences meet Political Sciences.

Several researchers have studied the educational policies and the relationship of the involved actors. There are mains theories about the educative governance like, for example:

- Governance multi-levels, governance in networking and open method of coordination developed by Moreau-Defargues (1997), Roche (2001), Saurugger (2009);
- Governance by implication, by delegation, by integration and by reputation proposed by Boussaguet and Jacquot (2009);

Beyond the incontestable importance of these researches in educational policies, most of the time, researchers did not do a field research and stop only at the theoretical level. Given that reality, I proposed to go ahead and to analyse the educational policies on the spot. For this reason, I conducted interviews with officials involved in education in international, European and national institutions. In this way, my research attempted to analyse educational policies at three levels:

1. International - educational policies developed by different international organisations such as: Council of Europe, UNESCO, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and International Labour Organisation;
2. European - educational policies deployed by the European Union;
3. National - the example of Romania, which joined the European Union recently, in 2007.

Based on these scientific studies, my research problem is formulated as follows:
How to explain the construction and the evolution of lifelong learning policies in the context of globalisation?

1.2. Methodology, data analysis and results

In connection with this issue, I elaborated three working hypotheses, covering the analysis of educational policies at international, European and national levels. Thus, I formulated the hypothesis that:

1. *At the international level, the concept of lifelong learning cannot cover a single meaning, but it depends on various factors, especially the international organisation in which it is promoted.*

2. *The lifelong learning policies in the European Union, rooted in an economic dimension, are currently slipping from a reinforced cooperation towards an approach of integration.*

3. *In Romania, the implementation of educational policies encounters difficulties due to the internal political instability, on the one hand, and to an attitude of European conformism, on the other hand.*

In order to verify my working hypothesis, I opted for a qualitative approach and conducted almost 100 semi-structured interviews with officials of the above-mentioned international organisations, the European Union and the national actors. My main method was the thematic analysis of the content (based on an interview guide) in a classical way. I analysed 63 interviews, this is to say 21 for each level. I also used other methods that seemed relevant in support of the qualitative method. These were observational internships to various international organisations or institutions of the European Union before my research. In the end, I used software in order to check the results of the qualitative method (based on analysis of frequencies).

The interview guide used eight thematic units analysed for each type of interview, as we can see in the table below, some thematic units, such as those on education and lifelong learning policies, the perspectives and the relationship between the international organisations, the European Union and Romania, are common and found at each level. Then, at the international level, I focused more on the coherent implementation of educational policies, legislation and globalisation. At European level, I relied on the relationship between education and social and economic development, but also on the stakeholders and the benchmarks set by the European Commission. Finally, at the national level, I embarked on the difficulties of accession at the European Union and the changes of educational policies in the national landscape.

Thematic units	IO	EU	ROM
Lifelong learning	x	x	x
Lifelong learning policies	x	x	x

European Union and international organisations *versus* Romania	x	x	x
Prospects for lifelong learning	x	x	x
European Union and the international organisations	x		
Implementation of coherent policies	x		
Lifelong learning and globalisation	x		
Legislative framework	x		
Indicators and European strategies		x	
European Union and stakeholders		x	
Education and economic development		x	x
Education and social development		x	x
Acquis communautaire and globalisation			x
Evolution of the educational policy			x

Table 1: Thematic units of the interview guide

Sampling was one of the hardest elements of my research because the international and European officials are difficult to access and bound by professional secrecy. I applied the "mock-up principle" and the "purposive sampling" defined by Van der Maren (1995) and consequently, I identified a sampling who, extended, can represent all population of officials. The predominate characteristics of the people I was looking for were:

1. Officials involved in the construction and implementation of educational policies and;

2. Officials willing to talk about their work as part of my doctoral research.

Once my sample was set mainly by sending emails, I visited each site for a prolonged period (Brussels, Geneva, Paris, Strasbourg, Thessaloniki, Luxembourg, and Hamburg), I conducted and recorded interviews in French, Italian, Romanian and English languages. Then I translated into French and retyped the contents of all the interviews. Finally, I proceeded to edit and to do anonymous the content. Under the models of Guittet (2002), Quivy and Van Campendhout (2006), Schemeil (2010) I developed a grid analysis of the political discourse. I selected a lot of quotations and then I crossed all information. The main results were presented in the manuscript using several diagrams called "*trees*". I

realised a "tree" for each level with the eight thematic units disposed as follows: the lifelong learning was the root of the tree, the lifelong learning policies were the trunk and the other thematic units were the branches of the tree. Afterwards, I conducted a mapping as divergences and convergences of the previous three trees. Moreover, in order to make sure that what emerges from a qualitative analysis could also be confirmed by a quantitative analysis, I used the software Antconc, specialised to measure the frequency of words. At the very end, I demonstrated that the three working hypotheses were verified.

1.3. Teachings, proposals and perspectives

To wrap up, for myself and for the research community, my thesis has highlighted a series of enquiries, namely:

1. The concept of "lifelong learning" lacks a real semantic consensus because of the arguments around the joint concepts "education", "training" and "learning";

2. Both at the European and international level in the context of globalisation, lifelong learning policies are subject to an economic approach, but the legal framework in this area is well defined;

3. Romanian educational policies are incoherent and crumbled because of economic and political instability and because of the lack of human and financial resources;

4. At the European Union' level, the debate on the future of a common educational policy remains open. The introduction of benchmarks and the common certification system prove its growing influence;

5. The approach of international organisations on lifelong learning policies is varied. Thus, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Labour Organisation are focused on employment policies, the UNESCO is centred on literacy and education as a right for all, while the Council of Europe promotes education for democratic citizenship and intercultural education.

Based on these teachings and on my research experience, I formulated some proposals as follows:

1. The change of the mentality in order to identify the expenses in education like an investment at middle and long term;

2. Education must remain a public service (at the national level) and a national competence (at European level);

3. Relationship between social and educational partners must be deep in order to create an educational networking;

4. Create academic chairs focused on the interdisciplinary in order to increase the visibility, for example academic consortium between Educational Sciences, Management, Political Sciences, Law, Gerontology;

5. The lifelong learning policies should take into account the approach of integral development of human being;

6. The national policymakers have to work together in order to decrease the permanent conflicts between different Ministries.

7. At the level of the European Union, in the context of demographic change, the lifelong learning policy for elderly people could become one of the benchmarks for the next decadal strategy 2020/2030.

To conclude, I would like to highlight the main points of my research, namely:

1. "*The youth*" of the initiative, because my doctoral research is focused on the analysis of the interviews conducted by myself with policymakers. At the theoretical level, there are several researches about the lifelong learning policies, but in the past the researchers didn't made a practical research with policymakers. In this way, I was confronted to a lack of examples and I had to create "by my own" the methodology. This was sometimes a delicate area, as well as the constitution of the sample.

2. Do a research on lifelong learning policies needs a "*holistically approach*" and I had to master several different disciplines such as educational sciences, political sciences, international relations, European studies, law or human rights. Research on lifelong learning policies is a new domain which interest few researchers nowadays but which will be more explored in the future, in spite of the complexity and the variety of knowledge and skills involved.

Section 2: Example of a PhD research on Humanities in the United Kingdom

In this section, I would like to give you an example of methodology research used for my PhD work in the United Kingdom. My doctoral research was done at School of Languages and Area Studies in University of Portsmouth and Vietnam National University and was titled '*A study of the extent to which university English education fulfills workplace requirements for Vietnamese graduates and the extent to which action research can lead to improvements in university English education*'. In order to explain the research methodology I used for my research, I will introduce you to the three following parts:

1. Context, research problem and hypothesis;
2. The interview approach use: advantages, challenges and practice;
3. Contributions of the interview method to the research findings.

2.1. Context, research problem and hypothesis

My study is set in the globalising context of international companies relocating their businesses to Vietnam in increasing numbers. With globalisation, increasing numbers of organisations conducting their businesses internationally are using English as a lingua franca, which creates a perceived worldwide need for communicative competence in English for business purposes (Pennycook, 1994). Such a need has been evident in Vietnam since the late 20th century for, with economic growth and expansion, the number of joint venture companies has been rising (Vietnamese Business Associate and Vietnam National University-HCM, 2004). However, various researchers (e.g. Vo & Nguyen, 2004; Vietnam National University, 2008) have reported that graduates have limited

English proficiency, with communication skills and pronunciation often poor. This creates difficulties for employers with vacancies to fill. The Vietnamese authorities have recognized that English language education at university should be prioritised to meet the needs of both learners and employers (Vietnam National University-HCM, 2008), an understanding which has implications for materials design and teaching methods. It is likely in a university context that if the teachers themselves are able to design and use materials effectively, perhaps in line with principles that reflect a learner- and context-sensitive interpretation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Learning (e.g. Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood & Son, 2004; Wyatt, 2011a).

However, despite annual reports emphasizing the real need within the Vietnamese workforce for communicative skills (e.g. Vietnam National University-HCM, 2008), there has been almost no research providing a picture of the communication skills in English that are required of employees if they are to become successful as users of English at the workplace. Such a picture could usefully stimulate an assessment of the extent to which English education at university provides the support learners need. This study aims to explore these issues.

My research questions stem from the following hypotheses relating to the situation discussed above:
- There was a gap between English education at university and English requirement of graduates at the workplace (Vietnam National University, 2008; Vo, 2004, 2007).
- A number of difficulties in using English communicatively have challenged graduates at the workplace (Vietnam Business Associate, 2008).
- English education at university, though with some efforts to shift from traditional to communicative teaching methods, seemed not to support enough learner's needs.

I consider that investigations into the reality of English in the workplace and how English is being taught at university would support efforts to identify the gap that needs to be filled for Vietnamese graduates to meet the workplace requirements. Furthermore, I judge that assisting teachers to be reflective on their teaching practice by doing action research may help to solve the problem.

2.2. The interview approach use

My study was guided by the following research questions:
1. To what extent does English education at university fulfill the workplace requirements for Vietnamese graduates?
   The two sub-questions of the first research questions are as follows:

- To what extent do graduates seem able to communicate in English to fulfill their work-related tasks?
- To what extent does English education at university provide the support they need?
2. To what extent is action research able to improve English education at a university in some way?

In order to address the above research questions, my research approach was qualitative and interpretive, since the goal was "to explore new linkages and causal relationships, external and internal influences, and internal priorities inherent in a particular social context" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 193, Silverman, 2005). I drew on the following methods: observations recorded through field notes, interviews recorded on audio or video cassette and authentic documents (emails) that were evidence of communicative behaviour (Dörnyei, 2001). However, due to limitations of space, in this article I would like to focus on the interview method. The discussion on why the interview approach was used for my research will follow.

I used this interview approach because of these below advantages:
- Interviews provide a suitable method for the purpose of exploring in depth and in detail the thoughts, feelings and reasoning of the informants (e.g. human resource managers and graduates within companies) (Denscombe, 2007)
- This study is a small-scale research (around five to 13 for each type of informant), semi-structured interviews with the common form of one researcher-to-one informant meetings can be used for the purpose of easy arrangement and control (Denscombe, 2007).
- One aim of the study is to investigate teacher's understanding of CLT which relates closely to teacher's practical knowledge and thinking, the interview method to assist a teacher in the explication of his/her practical theories of CLT. Provide enough opportunities and ample time to recall accurately teacher's approaches to teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).
- This method makes the voice of teachers rather than that of researcher (Elbaz, 1991); Semi-structured, in-depth interviews help lower the difficulties of explaining teacher's practical theories (Mangubhai at al., 2004).
- Co-operation with the other methods for the reliability of studies and the validation of findings.

Some challenges of using the interview method
Despite being considered as a powerful gathering data technique, it is necessary to be aware of the disadvantages of the interview method (Myers & Newman, 2007). A number of challenges using this method that I needed to consider are:

- How well the interviewer establishes a good relationship, listens carefully to interviewees and comments sympathetically (Borg, 2006, Karavas-Doukas, 1996).
- Set of main questions to be used within a semi-structured interview approach also depend on:
  + How to develop an open-ended interview protocol (Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999).
  + The decision on "how wide the net should be cast in interviews" (Mangubhai at al., 2004)

How I used the interview method

There were two main stages of the research using the interview method, with this first conducted at the companies and then at the university. Firstly, in order to determine what kind of English language competencies were required, there were interviews with 2 managers and 2 employees at each of the participating IT companies. Two one-hour interviews were conducted at each company, one with the managers and one with the employees, and sets of open-ended interview questions were designed accordingly. Though the researcher also kept notes, interviews were audio-recorded, except in one case where the company declined to be recorded, but provided more time for the researcher to take notes.

Research methods at the university included ten 20-30 minute interviews with the teacher about the classroom activities observed conducted in the shared first language (Vietnamese) to help put the teachers at ease and to save time. I tape-recorded all these discussions to transcribe and translate afterwards.

Interviews with the companies

The two sets of questions were designed for the interviews with the companies: one for human resource managers and the other for the employee participants. Apart from the first section of background questions, a number of specific questions in the second section of the two sets were similar. They included what area of English employees needed to use English most (e.g. email, meeting, chat pages); what might cause the breakdown of the conversations when employees used English (e.g. linguistics skills, communication strategies) and what difficulties employees often met using English at the workplace. The similarity of the specific questions among the two sets allowed the comparison between the two kinds of participants which was done in the data analysis. These questions were further developed with some open-ended questions such as:

- What are some of English expressions to write/speak the most at the workplace?
- How do employees deal with difficulties they meet when they try to communicate in English?
- What is their opinion about whether English graduates learnt from school support the current use of English for work?

Other questions were also designed to explore the employer's evaluations of their employees' use of English and also some other factors which might affect the workplace communications (e.g. cultural factors). These questions were on the basis of the themes discussed for the purposes of the study in terms of factors (i.e. politeness strategies, relational talk) that constitute the success of a workplace conversation.

Interviews/ discussions with teacher participants
As for interviews and discussions with teacher participants, initial questions were designed drawing on the concepts used for exploring teacher's beliefs and practical theories on CLT and CLT practices. These questions usually took the form: "Do you use (e.g. strategies, skills, etc) in your use of a CLT approach?" or "Are there any (e.g. teacher roles, aims) that are central to your use of teaching method (e.g. CLT approach)?" (Mangubhai at al., 2004, p. 296). Follow-up questions were designed based on the initial questions in keeping with "the basic requirements for creating a context appropriate to teacher disclosure" (ibid). For example, 'How to create more business contexts for students?'; 'Can it be possible to use authentic materials sometimes?'; 'Why you did use group work for this activity?'. Apart from field notes, I also relied on audio recordings to capture and store the interview data. This offered a permanent record, sufficient data that can be checked later on (Denscombe, 2007).

There are some key things I kept in mind carrying out the interviews
- The interviewees would be engaged in the processes of interviews if they found the interviewer "supportive and non-evaluative, asking open-ended questions, seeking clarification" (Mangubhai at al., 2004).
- Field notes and audio recordings to capture and store the interview data which offered a permanent record, sufficient data (Denscombe, 2007).

2.3. Contributions of the interview method to the research findings

I am now presenting the contributions of the interview method to my research findings, which I also would like to take as the conclusion for section 2: an example of methodology research used for a PhD work in the U.K – the interview method use and the contributions.

Firstly, the interview data with the similarity of the two set questions as discussed above allowed the comparison and conclusions. For instance, it is shown in this study that what the employees reported correlates with the employers' ideas on what English required at the workplace. This reveals part of the language use that graduates need to know as below
- *Could you please (tell me how to/ explain me this?)*
- *Do you have any ideas about…?*
- *I'm working on…I'll finish it by…Can I send it to you by…?*

- *Please get this information for…*
- *What I am trying to say is/ My question is…*
- *Can you check whether…*

Secondly, the interviews help to have some foundations for further research (i.e. observations) to check the conclusions. For example, an interview with an employee followed by an hour observation of his working behaviors how that employee actually use English via email and online texting at the workplace. This supported the findings of the field I found in the observation, which allowed me, the researcher to go to the conclusion.

Thirdly, the interview data supports the observation data to help understand the comparison of participants' cognitions elicited beforehand and subsequently. For instance, in this study the teachers were observed having some positive changes after the training workshops, the interview data help reveal the changes in teachers' cognitions of communicative language teaching (CLT) implementation comparing with theirs before the workshops. This contributed to examine the effectiveness of the workshops.

To conclude, the use of interview method in my study contributed to the findings that addressed my research hypothesis: The findings reveal a gap between the communication in English required at the Vietnamese workplace and the use of materials and methods for English language teaching at the Vietnamese university that the graduates had attended. This prompts a re-assessment of the extent to which English education at this university currently provides the support graduating students need. The study then offers recommendations, in terms of both the design of materials and the professional development of teachers, to address the gap identified, so that information technology graduates in such contexts can enter the workplace with the English that will enable them to communicate more effectively.

2. Conclusions

In this article, we presented to you a comparative analysis of qualitative methodology used in doctoral researches in France and in the United Kingdom. As it is indicated in the paper, , in the both countries, at the scientific level, the similarities are more prevalent than the differences. Consequently, a number of resemblances are the closeness concerning the varied sampling, the comparison of different groups of sampling, the adaptation of interview guide to different groups of sampling, the confrontation between the discourse level and the reality, the recorder of the interviews, the deontology respected to conduct interviews, the integral transcription of the interview, as well as the utility of the research done. For our readers, we can summarise the major similarities on qualitative methodology in France and in the United Kingdom as shown in Table 2 below:

Main methodology items	France	United Kingdom
Variety of sampling	x	x
Multiple groups of sampling	x	x
Adaptation of interview guide to each group of sampling	x	x
Recording of interviews	x	x
Ethical deontology to conduct interviews	x	x
Integral transcription of the interviews	x	x

Table 2: Similarities on the two qualitative researches

Finally, we can conclude that the utility of the research was the same in France and in the United Kingdom. The main scientific goals in both researches were: 1) to compare the discourse with the reality; 2) to identify the foundation for further research; 3) to confirm or infirm the working hypothesis; 4) to support the findings by practical observations and 5) to propose recommendations in order to improve the conditions concerning the topic analysed by our researches. This leads to the consideration that our article could be thought-provoking for other researchers working on team and for the whole scientific community.

Acknowledgement

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