

### Reconstructive research and the documentary method in Brazilian and German educational science: an introduction

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## Reconstructive Research and the Documentary Method in Brazilian and German Educational Science – An Introduction

In the field of qualitative methods in social sciences, the last decades brought a number of new developments; the broad differentiation of new methods and techniques of investigation (i.e., Denzin/Lincoln, 2006; Flick/Kardorff/Steinke, 2004; Hitzler, 2005) as well as the elaboration of meta theories of qualitative research (cf. i.e., Reichertz, 2003; Strübing/Schnettler, 2004; Vogdt, 2005; Bohnsack, 2008a) and reflections about quality assurance of reconstructive work (cf. summarizing Bohnsack, 2005a; Bohnsack/Krüger, 2005; Flick, 2005; discussion in: EWE, 2007).

At the same time, in nearly all the disciplines of social sciences and humanities the interest in qualitative methods has grown rapidly (i.e. Denzin/Lincoln, 2006; Bohnsack, 2008a). This development is documented not only by an increase in the application of qualitative studies, but also by a rising number of scientific associations and working groups, journals and handbooks in the field of qualitative methods in social sciences and humanities all over the world. Therewith, the former bias on standardized methods in the production of scientific knowledge is coming to an end.

The broad spread and acceptance of qualitative research, however, has also led to the need to summarize and systematize the different developments included in the differentiation of non-standardized research methods (i.e. Bohnsack/Marotzki/Meuser, 2003; Patton, 2002; Flick et al., 2004; Przyborski/Wohlrab-Sahr, 2008). Usually, this attempt is primarily seen as a national process reflecting the development within the context of one nation or language community (i.e. Knoblauch/Flick/Maeder, 2005). Thus, this book and the conference it originates from, tried to get over this limitation. Scaled as a bilateral event, the Brazilian-German Symposium for qualitative research and methods of interpretation, which has been carried out in late March 2008 at the University of Brasília (Brazil)<sup>1</sup>, sought to systematize the

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1 For more information about the event organized by the Research Group on Education and Public Policy: Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Youth (GERAJU) of the Faculty of Education at the University of Brasilia in cooperation with the Faculty of Educational Science of the Free University Berlin cf. <http://www.fe.unb.br/simposiometquali/index.htm>. Financial support for the symposium has been provided by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), the Brazilian Coordination for Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), as well as of the University of Brasília, the Goethe Center of Brasília and the German Consul in Brazil: Mrs Julia Maria Kundermann-Brosowski. We would like to thank all of them for their generosity and support.

development of qualitative methods in the comparison of two very distinct social and scientific contexts and at the same time aimed at summarizing first existing research cooperations in the field of reconstructive research (cf. also Weller/Pfaff, 2009).

In three main chapters, this volume presents different perspectives on current developments in qualitative research on the claim of educational research. Firstly, the development of qualitative methods and studies in educational science in Brazil and Germany will be summarized in a general overview, including different fields of educational research and profession-building as well as referring to a broad range of existing approaches and methods. The second and third part of the publication then focus on the Documentary Method as methodology which has been developed for the last twenty years and recently broadly spread out in different fields of application. It will be demonstrated in this book in different topics of research and methodological reflections and in its two different types of textual and visual material.

This introduction follows the organization of the present volume. Starting with some general information about existing cooperations in the field of qualitative research, some reflections are made about the importance of qualitative methods in educational science as well as about current debates and challenges. Last but not least, a short introduction to the Documentary Method and its roots, developments, and current relevance in educational science is given.

## **1. Qualitative Research in Different Cultural Contexts and Cooperational Settings**

The development of qualitative approaches in social science must be understood as an international process which is characterized by high grades of reference between different analytical frameworks, philosophical concepts and practical experiences in doing qualitative research (i.e. Alasuutari, 2004; Chenail et al., 2007). Even if during the 20th century based on nationally pronounced scientific systems with specific associations, journals and points of reference, developments mostly occurred within the framework of the nation state, singular epistemological debates, methodological reflections and concepts of study gained international recognition and have been referred to in the development of new scientific approaches all over the world (i.e. Bohnsack, 2008a; Knoblauch/Flick/Maeder, 2005). This holds especially true for some theoretical concepts, like Symbolic Interactionism, Social Phenomenology or the Sociology of Knowledge, as well as traditions of research, such as the Chicago School, Ethnomethodology, Cultural Studies or Oral

History (i.e. Jacob, 1987; cf. also Gatti and Andre, as well as Krüger in this volume).

As with other academic fields in general and social science in particular Alasuutari (2004) states an Anglo-American dominance in the globalization of qualitative research, which first of all is related to the higher number of publications caused by the size of the academic education market in the U.S. and other English speaking countries. Second the English language itself as “new lingua franca of science” (Alasuutari, 2004: 597) plays an important role in the international spread and availability of publications. Last but not least it must be assumed that besides early German classics (such as Schütz, Weber, or Mannheim) and newer French concepts (such as Foucault, Lyotard, or Bourdieu) the methodology of qualitative research has been dominated for a long time by Anglo-American research traditions (see i.e. Jacob, 1987; Denzin/Lincoln, 2000; Vidich/Lyman, 2000), some of which (as for instance Ethnomethodology) on their part, however, were also influenced by German classics.

The current processes of globalization, however, also include the rise of collaborative relations between researchers of different nationalities and of international discourses, such as the production of international journals of qualitative research methods (as the cross-disciplinary journals *Qualitative Research*, *Qualitative Research Journal*, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Forschung*, or *Qualitative Inquiry*; as well as *The Qualitative Report* and the *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* as online journals); as well as the foundation of international associations (such as *The International Association of Qualitative Inquiry (IAQI)*; *The Oral History Society (OHS)*, or *The Association for Qualitative Research (AQR)*, the *European Science Foundation EUROQUAL (Qualitative Research in Europe)* as well as the implementation of qualitative research projects on an international or at least cross-national scale in many disciplinary contexts (i.e. Gonzales/Lincoln, 2006; Denzin/Giardina, 2007).

Cooperations in the field of qualitative research between Brazil and Germany have a young but nevertheless rich tradition, which first of all includes joint research projects on social work issues (i.e. Fichtner/Freitas/Monteiro, 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Clareto, 2006), but also address other questions in the field of social research (i.e. Weller, 2003; Moura, 2006; cf. also Weller, Moura, and Pfaff in this volume). Secondly, scientific conferences, such as the *Colloquium of Brazil in Berlin* in 1995 (see Briese-meister/Rouanet, 1996), the *Painel Brasileiro Alemão de Pesquisa*, which has been carried out a third time in 2005 and focused on qualitative research (see Clareto, 2006), or the *Brazilian-German Symposium on Qualitative Research* in which this and other publications originated (see also Weller/Pfaff, 2009), initiated attempts to cooperate in the development of methods and discuss current developments in the field of qualitative approaches of investigation in

both parts of the world. Third, during the last decade various handbooks and articles of international (i.e. Denzin/Lincoln, 2006; Corbin/Strauss, 2008), and in particular German social scientists on qualitative research methods have been published in Brazil (see already Schrader, 1974; Flick, 2004b; Bohnsack/Weller, 2006; Bohnsack, 2007). Finally, the exchange of academic personnel initiates concrete projects of cooperation in the field of research, publications as well as academic events. This includes academic education at universities on one hand (see i.e. Cisneros Puebla et al., 2006), and research projects and teaching experiences at academic and research institutions on the other.

Why all this? Are there any effects on qualitative research on an epistemological or a methodical level? Beside all content related interests in cross-cultural research all these different types of cooperation also contribute to the advance and further development of qualitative methods.

This book tries to summarize and assess trends in the development of qualitative research in Germany and Brazil. Thereby, we try to understand and compare the particular developments of qualitative educational research in Brazil and Germany on the one hand. On the other hand different methodological reflections and research examples demonstrate, what new challenges qualitative research is facing at the moment and how cross-cultural investigations and cooperations can contribute to broadening our understanding and to advance methods in terms of cultural limitations and specifications. In particular, the contributions of Wivian Weller, Nicolle Pfaff, and Rogério A. Moura in this volume are reflecting the advantages of cross-cultural reconstructive studies; these papers show how intercultural comparisons can cast light on a more structural level not only on individuals and groups in their particular milieu, but on the social production of meaning and power in general. Furthermore, the findings of Karin Schittenhelm in part II of this book suggest that this can also be achieved by doing research on people with migratory backgrounds within our own society. Nevertheless, the following observations on the history and importance of reconstructive approaches indicate that these achievements are still pretty rare in educational science, even if the basic approach of the observation of the other seems to be a rather historic approach than a new one.

## **2. Qualitative Research in Educational Science**

History of qualitative research in educational science leads back to early 19th century studies of educational processes in European schools, but at the same time shows that significant developments of qualitative methods, carried out in sociological research, in most countries have been taken into account in

the field of education only in the second half of the 20th century. In this section, we want to outline the development of qualitative approaches in general and in education in particular to come to some conclusions about current developments and problems of reconstructive research in education.

## *2.1 The Importance of Qualitative Research in Education*

First attempts of ethnographic work have been done by educational scientists in the comparison of school organization and school life in different regions of Europe (see i.e. Depaepe/Simon, 1995: 10). Other educational perspectives can be found in early anthropology as far as family life and formation practices of hitherto unknown peoples and tribes is observed (i.e. Vídich/Lyman, 2000; Depaepe/Simon, 1995). The universality of educational practices and institutions very early on led to scientific interest in the organization of educational processes in a comparative perspective.

In the 18th century, the developing field of pedagogy in German speaking countries brought some new approaches and studies which were more explicitly connected to an educational perspective (see i.e. Krüger in this volume). Trapp and Niemeyer tried to found a modern scientific pedagogy based on biographic and ethnographic methods, and authors like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sophie von La Roche or Friederike Helene Unger participated in the 18th century establishment of biographies as a source of understanding educational and formational processes of a certain time and society (cf. i.e., von Felden, 1999).

Not only in Europe but also in the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th century in philosophy and sociology, in pedagogy and in developmental psychology as well as in social psychology, qualitative methodologies and investigations gained importance. Thereby the development of philosophic basics and principles of social sciences which adhere to the differences of scientific research into natural and social phenomena occurred more or less at the same time in different cultural and academic settings. The establishment of a new, more socially oriented approach contrary to the quantitative orientated investigations of phenomena in the natural world at this time has been pushed forward by the traditions of hermeneutics, phenomenology, and sociology of knowledge in the German speaking philosophy and sociology, as well as through pragmatism, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology in U.S. sociology (see Strübing/Schnettler, 2004).

In the growing field of education in the first decades of the 20th century, first of all the German tradition of Wilhelm Dilthey and his students, like Georg Misch, have to be mentioned as early representatives of autobiographic research (cf. i.e. Krüger/Marotzki, 2006). In the U.S., where educational science had not been established as an independent social science yet, famous sociologists, such as William I. Thomas, William F. Whyte, Frederic M.

Thrasher, Paul G. Cressey (cf. Bohnsack, 2005b) and Franklin Frazier carried out mainly ethnographic studies about the life and learning of Afro-American and the second generation of European and other migrants (see Coulon, 1995). Further research has been carried out on school and university life (i.e. Veblen, 1965; for a summary, cf. Vidich/Lyman, 2000). Also studies in the field of psychology contributed to later research in educational science. This includes i.e. the life world studies on children in big cities, as the married-couple Muchow carried out in Germany, analyses of diaries by the Austrian psychoanalyst Siegfried Bernfeld or studies on the development of gender roles in adolescence in Asian native cultures by the U.S. researcher Margret Mead.

However, the most important impact on the more extensive spread of qualitative methods in educational science around the world, must be attributed to the methodical advancement in the field of qualitative research in sociology that has taken place in the UK, France, and the U.S. between the 1950s and 1970s, and in Germany since the mid-1960s. During this period many different methods have been newly developed, others have been redesigned and given a broader and more profound theoretical basis (i.e. Denzin/Lincoln, 2000; Alasuutari, 2004). At the same time, the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative approaches has been pushed back by a stronger differentiation and diversification within both paradigms, which also led to extensive debates about ethics (i.e. Soltis, 1989; Christians, 2000; Mauthner, 2002) and quality of scientific research (cf. i.e., Lincoln, 1995; Seale, 1999; Bohnsack, 2005a; Flick, 2006).

In educational science, the (re)introduction of qualitative methods in different countries, which occurred in the 1970s, was mostly driven by the massive expansion of educational and teaching processes, and institutions. Therefore, the need arose for evaluation and measurement of educational and training results (cf. i.e., Sherman/Webb, 1988). The spread of certain methods and the main research areas then again depend of the regional importance of topics and fields of research, as well as of specific research traditions in social sciences and humanities in general, such as sociology, psychology, or anthropology in particular. On an international level, this process of the establishment of qualitative research in educational science is documented by the foundation of specific associations and the edition of corresponding journals (i.e. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*) and publications (i.e. Sherman/Webb, 1988; Schratz, 1993; Friebertshäuser/ Prengel, 1997) in the field.

The main approaches used in educational science today can be differentiated into three main methodical directions, which Krüger, Gatti and André address in their contributions to this volume: ethnography, oral history and biography analysis on the one hand, and interaction and discourse analysis on the other.

In the field of education, ethnographic research has the longest tradition to show, which addresses hitherto unknown life worlds in their own sense. Developed as basic method of anthropological research in times of colonialization, ethnography has been theoretically reflected and founded as late as the beginning of the 20th century. Meanwhile, ethnographic fieldwork is known as an established method in most disciplines of the social sciences. In educational research the application of ethnography very much depends on traditions of research related to cultural trends. One field that can be found in nearly every national educational research is the ethnography of school, which dates back to early comparative descriptions of school life and organization in the 17th century (Depaepe/Simon, 1995), and has been established in school research by famous studies, such as Stubbs and Delamont's (1976) class room observations. In German educational science, ethnography has a strong tradition in school and adolescent research (see i.e. Breidenstein, 2004), but is also used extensively in childhood (i.e. Krappmann/Oswald, 1995; Breidenstein/Prengel, 2005) and youth research (i.e. Bohnsack et al., 1995; Hitzler, 2005). Also in Brazil, a more recent tradition of school ethnography can be found (i.e. Guimarães, 1996; Cavalleiro, 2000; Auad, 2006), but also in youth research (i.e. Carrano, 2002; Dayrell, 2005; Weller, 2003, 2007a) ethnographic methods have been applied.

Another area of study of certain importance in educational science are investigations in the field of oral history and biographical research. While biographical research focuses on the stages and processes of development in individual lives (cf. i.e., Marotzki, 1990; Krüger/Marotzki, 2006), in the case of educational research mostly on learning processes and educational qualifications, oral history in its basic form addresses the social or individual processing of lived history in form of collective fate or biographical decisions and developments (see i.e. von Plato, 2000). However, both approaches contain diverse methods and techniques of how to collect and to analyze biographical data. One important method developed by Schütze (i.e. 1983, 1995, 2003), is the biographical-narrative interview and the narration-structural method, focusing on the collection of partial or complete life histories in the form of narrations and their analyses concerning courses of processes in life history (cf., Schütze, 2003; Appel, 2005). Throughout the last 20 years in German educational science, this method as well as some simpler variations and further developments (cf. i.e., Rosenthal, 1995) established in nearly all thematical traditions (cf. Bohnsack, 2008a: 91; Marotzki, 1996: 62), such as research on professions, childhood and youth, as well as adult education. Contrary to other academic cultures in Germany, biographical research and oral history, nowadays are often found being applied in combination (i.e. von Plato, 2003). In Brazil the application of biographical methods in education is closely linked to the Foundation of the Brazilian Association of Oral History in 1994 (i.e. von Simson, 1997), whereas bio-



graphical research has been used primarily in research on profession, professionalization and teacher identity (see Bueno et al., 2006) and less in research on biographical implications in the socialization processes of childhood and youth.

Furthermore, interaction and discourse analyses during the last years in various places gained some relevance in the field of educational science. These approaches, mainly used in research on class-rooms, families and peer groups, include such diverse methodical treatments, as ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, or discourse analysis. While in the U.S., as well as in Germany, studies in conversation analysis specifically dominate the field of family and peer-group research, in France, but also in the UK, as well as in Brazil, discourse analytic research procedures of different philosophical background have been applied in these areas. Conversation analysis is mainly based on ethnomethodological strategies of research and seeks to expose the methods that are used by actors to produce social order in interaction. Founded by Harvey Sacks (cf. i.e., 1992) the analytical procedure of conversation analysis, has been developed further only by a few researchers and up to date presents a relatively coherent research strategy. Contrary to this, discourse analytic procedures, which mainly date back to the research program founded by Foucault (i.e., 1990), do not consist of a coherent methodical procedure, but include various analytical techniques, which have been developed related to established sociological and linguistic methods (i.e., Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Keller, 2005). Discourse analytic research strategies are mainly applied to the analysis of political and public discourse, but in educational science as well in class-room interactions and media cultural debates.

Additionally, newer methods, such as the documentary method is presented in this book (cf. also Bohnsack, 1989, 2003b, 2008b; Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl, 2007), or the Objective Hermeneutics (see i.e. Oevermann, 1979, 1989, 1993) can be mentioned, as they gained high importance in certain scientific cultures.

Finally, we have to mention that in educational science, qualitative methods are not only relevant in the processes of research, theory development and evaluation of educational programs and policies, but also in teaching process and formation of professionals. As Gerhard Riemann shows in his contribution to the first section of this volume, ethnographic work can lead students to a reflection of their own pedagogic practice and can contribute at the same time to an advancement of cooperative and helpful discourse about paradoxes and problems related to different fields of pedagogic and educational work.

## *2.2 History of Qualitative Methods in Brazilian and German Educational Science –Ways of Development Specific to Various Cultures*

As stated above already, and besides all cross-cultural references and relations, the rise and spread of qualitative research methods in general and in educational science in particular can be understood as processes embedded in national and culturally defined scientific landscapes, consisting of certain relations among different social science and humanities disciplines, certain research emphases, as well as theoretical and methodological references.

However, these particularities also include some basic similarities, as shown by the contributions of Gatti and André as well as Krüger in this volume, who describe the development and current importance of qualitative approaches in Brazil and Germany respectively. We want to summarize some general differences and similarities stated by these two papers here, to enable us to draw some general conclusions about the implementation of qualitative methods in educational science.

As Krüger describes the history of reconstructive methods in German educational science, its historic roots reach back into 18th century philosophy of education. Autobiographic and ethnographic approaches have been used extensively at the turn and beginning of the 20th century for the first time (cf. also von Felden, 1999). Like most trends in social sciences, however, this development was interrupted by the repressive regime of the national socialists in the German speaking countries, World War II, as well as the emigration of a vast majority of social scientists from Germany to other countries. And as in many cultures during the 1950s and 1960s, quantitative approaches dominated the scientific work in most disciplines of social sciences and humanities. This was also the case in Brazil, as Gatti and André state in their paper. In both countries qualitative approaches have been (re)imported into educational research during the 1970s. And besides all differences in the socio-historic situation of the two countries, and the setting of their academic landscape, some basic similarities leap to attention when comparing the processes of development of qualitative methods at the this time.

First of all, in both countries qualitative approaches have been adopted as an alternative to the dominant quantitative approach, which has been questioned during the 1970s as to their explicatory power to social processes in general and educational phenomena in particular, and which has been doubted in relation to its lack of social critique by ascending social movements of liberalization and democratization.

The relation of qualitative attempts to these movements and underlying social theories, such as Marxism, critical theory, or conflict theory can be stated as a second similarity of the implementation of qualitative methods in

educational research in Brazil and Germany, even though the social order and situation citised by these movements was completely different.

As recorded by Gatti and André, the social context of the import of qualitative methods, such as ethnography and biographic analysis, in Brazil during the 1970s was one of a repressive dictatorship, which had been fought against by various social movements diverse traditions in educational research were part of (cf. also Anastácio, 2006; Clareto, 2006). A different situation Krüger describes for Germany, where the late 1960s and early 1970s were characterized by strong trends towards democratization and liberalization on one hand, and an encompassing process of educational expansion on the other (cf. also von Felden, 1999). Both processes in Germany were accompanied by a strong student movement and ascending left-wing political organizations.

In the third place, certain similarities can be made out concerning the fields of research qualitative methods have been applied to. This is true first of all for the approach of action research, which had a short boom cycle during the 1970s in Germany, but up to now is much more important in the U.S. as well as in Brazil and other Latin American countries (for an overview on global strategies of action research in education see Hollingsworth, 1997; McTaggart, 1997). Qualitative research in the context of evaluation belongs to the main fields of application of qualitative methods in education in many cultures (see i.e. Kardorf, 2000; Madaus/Kellaghan, 2000; Hornbostel, 2005), where new institutional developments and educational practices need to be investigated in relation to their outcomes.

Differences between qualitative research in Brazil und Germany have to be stated firstly in the application of qualitative methods in basic research, where reconstructive studies have been carried out mainly in the field of school research in Brazil, while in Germany the focus concentrated primarily on studies in the area of socialization processes of young people. Secondly, the applied methods in both countries vary as well. While in Brazil ethnographic approaches have been introduced by British and North American publications and researchers (see Gatti and André in this volume), in Germany the development drew back to the North American theoretical traditions of symbolic interactionism (resp. Chicago School) and ethnomethodology, but soon led to new methodical developments in German sociology to which educational science referred in its early 1970s studies (cf. also von Felden, 1999).

The stage of implementation of qualitative methods in educational science in both countries was followed by a phase of differentiation in the use of reconstructive approaches in education during the 1980s concerning the applied methods as well as the fields of research. Thereby, cultural differences concerning methods and fields of research intensified at first, whereas, later on they lost significance in the process of globalization of research

in social sciences (see Knoblauch/Flick/Maeder, 2005; Cisneros Puebla et al., 2006). Meanwhile, in most national systems of educational science the analysis of biographic and interactional processes as well as ethnographic studies are established and used in a variety of research fields. Nevertheless, they are characterized by certain developments and properties.

Reading the papers of Gatti and André as well as Krüger in a comparative perspective, suggests differences between Brazilian and German educational research concerning methodological developments. In Germany new methodological developments, such as the documentary method (see i.e. Bohnsack, 1989, 2003a; Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl, 2007; Bohnsack, 2008a) or objective hermeneutics (see i.e. Oevermann, 1979, 1989, 1993), which both have been carried out in the context of socialization research, contributed to the advancement of the application of reconstructive methods in educational science. Today, they belong to the most frequently applied approaches in the field of education (cf. the contributions on the documentary method in this volume). Krüger describes the development in the 1980s as a period of methodological development in Germany and of a stronger polarization of research in either quantitative or qualitative approaches, while during the 1990s the use of reconstructive approaches were considered as quite an ordinary way of investigating social realities.

According to Gamboa (1996, 2007), educational research in Brazil focused on three main epistemological approaches. One tradition is represented by empirical-analytical studies linked to quantitative methods. The other two traditions are more strongly connected to qualitative approaches and are divided into phenomenological-hermeneutic studies and critical (Marxist) studies<sup>2</sup>. Concerning qualitative approaches, Gamboa put more emphasis on the dominating epistemological orientations and the type of data collection, than on the methodological approaches of data analysis. For instance, he identified that the use of participant observation techniques, biographic methods, and the analysis of documents are more common in the phenomenological-hermeneutic studies. Action research and document analysis constitute an important source for Marxist-oriented research that became a strong field after the beginning of the 1980s<sup>3</sup>.

A second important difference between Brazil and Germany can be seen in the relations between theory and empiricism, and in the political use and

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2 According to Gamboa (1996) quantitative methods can also be found in Marxist-oriented studies but they are not predominant in this field.

3 Marxist-oriented studies still form a strong tradition in educational research in Brazil. However, different approaches linked to the tradition of oral history, cultural and feminist studies, and post-modernist studies are also represented by some research groups at different universities. These groups frequently implement discourse analysis for the interpretation of qualitative data. Studies in the tradition of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and grounded theory which are characterized by the use of reconstructive methods, represent new fields of Brazilian educational research.

application of results. In Germany, the vast majority of educational studies belongs to the area of basic research, and the application of qualitative methods (for instance in evaluation research) is just being developed (see i.e. Flick, 2006; Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann, 2008). In Brazil, a large segment of studies carried out on the level of PhD projects and theses can be characterized as investigations which either aim at controlling the impact of certain social or educational projects or which at initiating changes in educational politics (see i.e. INEP 2002; Gatti/André in this volume).

### *2.3 State of the Art and Current Problems of Reconstructive Research*

Summarizing historic and recent developments of qualitative methodology and its application in educational science, it has to be stated that qualitative research in the last decades has been established as an ordinary and fully accepted segment of research tradition in the field within most cultural contexts. Even if differences in the spread and use of individual methods and techniques, as well as disparities in the application to various objects of educational research are still significant, qualitative approaches have by now reached a broad acceptance in educational science all over the world. In this context, some problems and trends in reconstructive educational research need be understood as global challenges and tendencies, which shall be summarized in the following.

One important challenge, sufficiently obvious in the foregoing assumptions, is the need for international cooperation in the area of reconstructive approaches, not only on the level of the systematization and integration of existing methods and techniques (see i.e. Alasuutari, 2004; Schütze, 2005), but also related to the implementation of cross-cultural research projects and exchange of results (see i.e. Cisneros Puebla et al., 2006). As indicated above, in particular the latest efforts could help to advance specific approaches and methods to overcome existing borders of cultural understanding. This book can be read as a first attempt to do this on a bilateral base.

A second requirement in the development of reconstructive methods that has become evident in the debate between representatives of quantitative and qualitative approaches, is the need to develop common standards and quality indicators for reconstructive methods (see i.e. Howe/Eisenhard, 1990; Steinke, 1999; Morse et al., 2002; Bohnsack, 2005a; Flick, 2005). One reason for this debate about the quality of qualitative research are complaints about an alleged lack of theoretical background and reflection as well as of methodical treatment in the process of data analysis (see i.e. Krüger, 2000 for Germany; Gatti/André in this volume for Brazil).

Summarizing a number of attempts of formulating and explaining quality standards and factors in the context of reconstructive research, three endeavors of quality management can be distinguished. The first group of metho-

dologists up to the present has tried to adapt the traditional quality factors of quantitative research to reconstructive approaches (i.e. Kirk/Miller, 1985; Morse et al., 2002; Golafshani, 2003). At the same time, this attempt gained much criticism (cf. i.e. Denzin/Lincoln, 1998), because the classic understanding of criteria, such as validity, reliability and objectivity, do not fit the practices of reconstructive research and needs to be reformulated for the application to qualitative work (see i.e. Seal, 1999; Flick, 2005). A second very present attempt is to develop general and unspecific standards valid for all kinds of research methods, qualitative as well as quantitative. Criteria, such as the fit between research questions, data collection and techniques of analysis, or coherence of background assumption (see Howe/Eisenhard, 1990), are important to improve the quality of empirical research in general, but are not apt for the evaluation and review of qualitative studies in particular. Finally, a third, and in our perspective the most promising attempt, lies in the formulation of standards of quality specific for qualitative research and its practice (i.e. Peshkin, 1993; Lincoln, 1995; Bohnsack, 2005a). Thereby it has been pointed out that, contrary to criteria of quality for standardized methods, standards for reconstructive approaches can be developed only out of the practice of research, such as terms and theories are produced from among the experience of reality, and are not conducted deductively from epistemological principles (see Bohnsack, 2005a). These criteria comprehend the reconstruction of the basic principles of social interaction, the production and orientation on elaborated methods of interpretation, the methodically controlled access to strange life worlds and interaction systems, as well as the disclosure of the difference between subjective sense and the structure of practice (Bohnsack, 2005a).

A third important challenge for qualitative research, that is often seen in relation to the debate about the quality of qualitative research, can be found in the need for triangulational research design. On the one hand this is discussed within the context of qualitative approaches (see i.e. Denzin, 1978; Flick, 2004a) and either seen as strategy of validation of research results (such as Denzin, 1978; Fielding/Fielding, 1986; Lamnek, 1995) or as a way to improve the coverage and complexity of a certain investigation (see i.e. Seale, 1999; Flick, 2004a). On the other hand the discussion about triangulation, in particular in the sense of gaining a more complete picture of the investigated object, is also addressed to the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (see i.e. Erzberger, 1998; Newman/Benz, 1998; Bryman, 1992, 2006). Even if the traditional contrast and rivalry between quantitative and qualitative methods in social and educational science is still evident in many methodological publications (i.e. Denzin/Lincoln, 2000; Flick/Kardorf/Steinke, 2003), various attempts have been made to combine both approaches in educational research on national and currently also on international level (see i.e. Krüger/Pfaff, 2004 for a summary for Germany;

CERI, 2007; Steiner-Khamsi, 2002 and for practical research: Pfaff, 2006). Whereas the differentiation between reconstructive methods on one hand and standardized or theory-driven methods on the other has its epistemological relevance (see: Bohnsack, 2008a), this is not true for the differentiation between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Finally, more recent systematizations of qualitative research and methods state the limitation of existing reconstructive traditions on textual material (see the articles of Bohnsack and Krüger in this volume), even if in early educational studies especially in German, but also in U.S. social research images played an important role (see i.e. summarizing Keck, 1991; Mollenhauer, 1997; Kaplan/ Hine, 1988; Hine, 1999). Nowadays, more and more attempts are made to overcome the restriction of social and educational research to textual material, and new approaches and procedures of interpretations of pictures, videos and films have been developed (see i.e. Dance et al., 1995; Marotzki/Niesyto, 2006; Friebertshäuser/von Felden/ Schäffer, 2006; Bohnsack, 2003b, 2007c, 2008b).

While the challenge of improving quality and the explication of standards in qualitative research, as well as the call for triangulation, can be seen as a need which is addressed to the paradigm of reconstructive research as a whole and should include all methods and techniques of interpretation in the same way, the requests to systematize international research and to carry out cross-cultural studies, as well as to overcome the limitation of work on textual materials have to be valued as problems that need solving in the first step within single reconstructive methods.

### **3. Documentary Method – Development and Application**

Both challenges already have been addressed for several years by the means of the documentary method. The present volume as a whole, the following section of our introduction in particular, focus on this method and we will summarize existing attempts in both fields – improving quality and overcoming the limitation of work on textual materials – within the area of educational documentary research. The documentary method aims at reconstructing the implicit knowledge that underlies everyday practice and gives an orientation to habitualized actions independent of individual intentions and motives (cf. i.e. Bohnsack, 2008a). By reconstructing social structure and the patterns of orientation in everyday practice from data material, such as interviews, group discussions, pictures or films, this method contributes to overcoming a classical dilemma of qualitative research, which either remains on the level of common sense knowledge or claims to offer a privileged access to information on social structure beyond the knowledge of the actors themselves (see Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl 2007 and Bohnsack, 2005b).

### *3.1 Historic Roots and Basic Principles*

The ‘documentary method’ originates in Karl Mannheim’s (i.e. 1964) sociology of knowledge and the ethnomethodological tradition of research (cf. i.e. Garfinkel, 1961, 1967), which itself is to some extent rooted in Mannheim’s sociology. Based on those two traditions, it has been developed in its current form during the 1980s in the context of the analysis of group discussions by young people (cf. i.e. Bohnsack, 1983, 1989).

Originally, Mannheim coined the term “documentary method of interpretation” as a central perspective of his sociology of knowledge in 1922 trying to combine hermeneutic approaches and those trying to catch meaning, within a more objective perspective of socio-structural analysis (cf. Bohnsack, 2003a). Mannheim differentiated between two forms of understanding: the immanent interpretation which works on an explicit and matter-of-fact level, on the one hand, and the non-immanent or so-called ‘genetic’ interpretation which is based on (implicit) shared experience and the *weltanschauung* of social actors. Associating the genetic perspective of understanding with the documentary method and with sociological analysis in general, Mannheim (1980) defines *weltanschauung* as an objective of sociological and documentary research, as well as the implicit or “atheoretical” knowledge underlying and orientating habitualized social action (cf. i.e. Bohnsack, 2003a, 2007; Weller 2005). Therefore, Mannheim suggests a change in analytical stance from the question of truth and normativity in the construction of social reality to the question concerning its development and social production: from what to how (cf. also Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl, 2007). Based on this analytic stance it is possible to reach the level of the so-called ‘atheoretical’ knowledge, that is seen as an not directly explicable knowledge of actors, and as underlying every social (inter)action. This analytical stance Mannheim’s sense can be understood as an early change to a constructivist attitude of investigation, or, with the words of the sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1990), as an “observation of second order”.

However, first empirical implementations of the documentary method according to Mannheim have been carried out by ethnomethodology, which took up the term and analytical stance (Garfinkel, 1961, 1967). Garfinkel first used the term documentary method to clarify a principle discovered by the experiments of crisis, which demonstrated the weakness of daily interaction (cf. Bohnsack, 2008a: 57 for details). The documentary interpretation was thus understood as a circular relation called ‘reflexivity’, in which every expression has the character of an index or a document of something representing a presumed or underlying pattern of meaning, where both sides, the document as well as the pattern, are used to explain and express the other side. Ethnomethodology demonstrated the high relevance of this principle for everyday life in many different empirical settings by critical reconstructions



of bureaucratic organizations, of social work practice or of social science research itself (summarized in Bohnsack, 2008a). Among other things, these investigations showed that communication and interaction are always based on the need to produce inter-subjectivity in the concrete situation of interaction and that current methods of scientific investigation do not meet this complexity of social reality. Ethnomethodology, however, did not answer the question of how social interaction can be investigated and how social science can gain access to the milieu specific life worlds and the *weltanschauung* of specific social groups.

One aspect of Mannheim's methodology which has been neglected by ethnomethodology as well as by conversational analysis is the double structure of daily interaction which consists of a public and social meaning of a name or expression on the one hand and a non-public milieu specific on the other. Mannheim differentiated in this context between communicative or generalized knowledge and conjunctive knowledge or experience (see Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl, 2007: 14). This important angle of the documentary method which in particular aims at reconstructing this conjunctive or milieu specific level of experience has been re-implemented in the advancements of the documentary method primarily in the context of group discussion analyses in the 1980s (cf. i.e. Bohnsack. 1983, 1989; Bohnsack et al., 1995).

Subsequently, the method was extended to the interpretation of texts and its linguistic instruments (cf. i.e. Bohnsack, 2001; Bohnsack/Schäffer, 2007; Przyborsky, 2004; Bohnsack/Przyborsky, 2006). The paper of Ralf Bohnsack in part II of this volume on group discussions and the documentary method introduces and summarizes these developments. Further advancements of the method have led to its application to interviews (cf. i.e. Bohnsack et al., 1995; Nohl, 2006), pictures (Bohnsack, 2007a, 2003a; Michel, 2001), as well as videos (see i.e. Wagner-Willi, 2006, 2007; Bohnsack, 2008b; Baltruschat in this volume)<sup>4</sup>. In particular, in these last fields, methodological and epistemological work has been carried out recently. These concepts are presented by Ralf Bohnsack and Andrea Sabisch's contributions on pictures, and Astrid Baltruschat on videos in part III of this volume<sup>5</sup>.

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4 For recent developments in the field of the documentary interpretation of videos see <http://doingculture.com/moviscript/>, a regularly updated bibliography of methodical advancements and studies carried out based on the documentary method can be found [http://www.ewi-psy.fu-berlin.de/einrichtungen/arbeitsbereiche/qualitativ/dok\\_meth/](http://www.ewi-psy.fu-berlin.de/einrichtungen/arbeitsbereiche/qualitativ/dok_meth/).

5 For the basic rules of transcription of text see the paper of Ralf Bohnsack in section II and for the transcription of video see the paper of Astrid Baltruschat in section IV of this book.

### *3.2 Current Fields of Application in Educational Science*

During the last 20 years following its advancement and redesign, the documentary method in Germany has been applied in various disciplinary fields in social and educational science (cf. Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann/Nohl, 2007; Bohnsack, 2008a). By now, the areas of application cover objects as diverse as childhood and youth, religion, school, media, police, medicine, rituals and scientific work itself. As in the organization of this book, we need to distinguish between the application of the method to textual and visual material.

First of all, we have to look at the field of youth research which marks the beginning of the implementation of the method, as we see it today (see Bohnsack, 1989; Bohnsack et al., 1995), and where various studies have been carried out in the meantime (i.e. Nohl, 1996, 2001; Schäffer, 1996, 2003; Breitenbach, 2000; Weller, 2003; Schittenhelm, 2005; Pfaff, 2006). This research tradition includes studies on a broad diversity of social groups and has been carried out on deviant as well as on musical or political, on gender specific and migrant youth groups. One significant theoretical result can be seen in the concept of 'actionism', which represents spontaneous and enhancing practices of action, that are of certain importance for the production of habitual understanding and accordance needed for the constitution of communities and social milieus (see i.e. Bohnsack, 1997, 2004f; Bohnsack/Nohl, 2001, 2003; Gaffer/Liell, 2001). This rich tradition of documentary studies is represented in this volume by Wivian Weller's paper on the presence of girls and female members in local hip hop communities.

Other fields of documentary research, mainly based on group discussions with young people, have been established in the last decade. First, there have been plenty of projects on youths with migration background in Germany focusing particularly on the experience during a certain stage in adolescence in the context of a migratory background and ethnical marginalization (cf. Nohl, 1996, 2001; Bohnsack/Nohl, 1998, 2000; Weller, 2003, 2005; Schittenhelm, 2005). Contributions related to migrants in Germany are presented by Arnd-Michael Nohl and Ulrike Selma Ofner in this volume, who investigate the job carriers of highly qualified migrants based on the documentary analysis of biographic interviews. In addition, Karin Schittenhelm's paper to some extent deals with migrants in Germany, whose transitions to work after graduating from school are compared with those of young Germans.

In parts connected with the research on migrants, some early projects on gendered orientations were carried out looking into the male habitus of young migrant men (see Bohnsack, 2001b; Bohnsack/Loos/Przyborsky, 2001). Meanwhile, more work has been completed in the context of documentary gender research (see i.e. Behnke/Meuser, 1999; Breitenbach, 2000, 2001; Schittenhelm, 2005, 2007).

At the same time, broad documentary research on educational processes and institutions has been established in the context of various areas of educational science. First of all, there is a broad tradition of documentary research on school related topics, such as studies on religious pedagogics (i.e. Schmid, 1989), nursery schools (Nentwig-Gesemann, 1999), on civic education (i.e. Krüger et al., 2002; Helsper et al., 2006), on students' school careers (see Helsper et al., 2008; Krüger et al., 2008), on teachers' profession development (i.e. Hansmann, 2002; Storr 2006; Lamprecht, 2008), on didactics (see Bonnet, 2004) and on classroom interaction (Lähnemann, 2008; von Rosenberg, 2008). Additionally, video analysis has been carried out on school related phenomena, such as the transition between classroom and school yard (see Wagner-Willi, 2001, 2004, 2005). In this volume, Astrid Baldruschat presents an exemplary documentary analysis of two movies made by students and teachers in the context of a school-related art competition. Then there is research in the field of social pedagogics and social work (Streblow, 2005; Kutscher, 2006; Kubisch, 2008; Bohnsack, 2008c). Rogério A. Moura in his paper presents a study on vocational training programs for disadvantaged young people in São Paulo (Brazil) and Berlin (Germany).

A more recent area of application of the documentary method within educational science is the context of childhood research, where the discursive and game-related actions and practices are investigated (i.e. Nentwig-Gesemann, 2002, 2006). The contribution by Nicolle Pfaff represents this area of documentary research in relation to distinctive actions of children concerning social categories, such as class, race and ethnicity or gender.

Furthermore, the documentary method has also been applied to the field of evaluation research (see Bohnsack, 2006; Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann, 2006, 2008), for example in the context of social work (i.e. Streblow, 2005), school-related development processes (see i.e. Bohnsack/Nentwig-Gesemann, 2006) or in the field of civic education (see i.e. Brademann et al., 2009).

### *3.3 International Spread of the Documentary Method and Cross-Cultural Documentary Research*

Although the documentary method may have been developed in Germany based on the philosophic and methodological work of Karl Mannheim, the redesign of the method in the 1980s firstly has been applied in the development and application of ethnomethodology in the 1960s and 70s in the U.S. Based on ethnomethodological application of Mannheim's methodological assumptions the documentary method in its current conception has been developed (see Bohnsack, 1989, 2008a).

Nevertheless, the application of the redesigned method, as well as of other German developments of reconstructive methods, such as the narration structural analysis (see Schütze, 1983, 1995, 2003) or objective hermeneutics (1979, 1989, 1993), enter English speaking academic fields but slowly. This publication is meant to contribute to this process (cf. also Bohnsack, 1997a, 1997b; Bohnsack/Loos/Przyborsky, 2001; Nohl, 2000; Bohnsack/Nohl, 2003; Fritzsche, 2004; Helsper et al., 2008; Krüger et al., 2008).

As shown above, the documentary method is mostly found in German educational and social science. Notwithstanding, the relatively young methodological concept reached further academic cultures and found intensive implementation in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland (see i.e. Bohnsack, 2001c, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Krzychala, 2004; Nentwig-Gesemann, 2004), but also in Russia (see Bohnsack, 2004d, 2004e). Furthermore, some research has been carried out in Turkey (see i.e. Nohl, 1999, 2002) and, as focused on in this volume, in Brazil (see i.e. Weller, 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Bohnsack/Weller, 2006; Bohnsack, 2007).

In connection with the spread of the documentary method to other cultural contexts, a variety of cross-cultural projects have been developed. Especially in the field of youth research studies investigating young people's experience and orientations guiding action in different cultural and socio-economical settings have been carried out (see i.e. Nohl, 1999, 2000, 2003; Weller, 2003, 2005a, 2006). Wivian Weller's contribution on girls in the hip hop culture in this volume, represents this type of cross-cultural youth research based on the documentary method.

Another field where cross-cultural studies have been carried out, are investigations on educational institutions and school careers. In this volume, Rogério A. Moura presents his study on vocational training programs for underprivileged young people in Germany and São Paulo, and Arnd-Michael Nohl and Ulrike Selma Ofner present first results from the German part of a cross-cultural comparison on the cultural capital of highly qualified migrants in four countries: Germany, Canada, UK and Turkey.

Last but not least, as a rather young field of documentary research, in the area of childhood research some early cross-cultural projects exist, from which Nicolle Pfaff in her contribution describes some preliminary assumptions from her study of social distinction in different cultural and socio-economical settings.

#### 4. Perspectives of Reconstructive and Documentary Research in Germany and Brazil

In the last decades, when qualitative research faced tendencies of normalization, institutionalization and diversification, new methods, such as the documentary method, have been developed and applied in diverse disciplines of social sciences and humanities. In educational science reconstructive approaches have been used since the 1970s on the investigation of various topics and partly in relation to the evaluation of educational processes. Even if the further dissemination of qualitative methods happened in similar ways in diverse cultural and national academic settings, the disciplinary application of research methods up to the present continues to be a national or cultural practice. As the use of certain methodical procedures depends on culture specific theoretical, topical and methodological preferences, cross-cultural studies based on reconstructive methods are still rare.

To solve some general problems in the development of reconstructive approaches, such as the need for cross-cultural systematization, for standards and criteria of quality, or the demand for triangulation, requires that we put behind national borders as well as the Anglo-American dominance in methodological developments. Based on shared theoretical and methodological roots, these common challenges could be met in terms of international cooperation and cross-cultural research. It is our concern to make some contributions to these developments with the present volume and to inspire further cooperations.

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