
Book Review / Compte rendu

Bogdan, Robert & Biklen, Sari K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*, second edition. Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.

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Qualitative research emphasizes description, induction, grounded theory, and the study of people's understanding. This is in contrast to quantitative research with its emphasis on measurement, operationalized definitions, variables, hypothesis testing, and statistics. The approach to educational research using qualitative methods for studying various educational issues is growing. This "way of knowing" would seem to be particularly suitable for the study of some issues related to counselling.

The textbook being reviewed was first published in 1982. Since then, a large number of texts have become available. This second edition represents growth in the field. While the earlier material is still relevant, the authors added sections on the study of gender and feminism, postmodernism, deconstruction and qualitative research, and the application of computer technology to the collection and analysis of qualitative data.

The volume is presented as an introductory text, useful for those just becoming acquainted with this material. It contains a broad discussion of what qualitative research is and how it relates to education. It presents both theoretical and historical concepts. Then, the authors apply the concepts to the actual practices of detailing design, fieldwork, data collection, and data analysis. They discuss writing up findings. In an applied research chapter, they discuss evaluation, pedagogical, and action research.

Some terms common to qualitative research are participant observation, in-depth interviewing, systematically detailed written record, field notes, naturalistic data, inductive nature of data analysis, and ethnographic data. As in most areas, there are different schools of thought, each with its preferred methods and terminology.

The authors include a discussion and chronicling of traditions of qualitative research in education. They discuss 19th century roots, the rise of anthropology, Chicago sociology, sociology of education, and developments in each of the last decades.

They list five characteristics of qualitative research: qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument; qualitative research is descriptive; qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products; qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively; and, meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. The authors' discussions of these characteristics are very helpful.

Nine common questions about qualitative research are discussed. Can qualitative and quantitative approaches be used together? Is qualitative research really scientific? How does qualitative research differ from what

other people such as teachers, reporters, or artists do? Are qualitative findings generalizable? What about the researcher's opinions, prejudices, and other biases and their effect on the data? Doesn't the presence of the researcher change the behaviour of the people he or she is trying to study? Will two researchers independently studying the same setting or subjects come up with the same findings? What is the goal of qualitative research? How does qualitative differ from quantitative research? The cautions and explanatory comments would seem to apply well beyond just qualitative research.

A three-page chart that differentiates clearly between qualitative and quantitative research is also included. Careful analysis of this chart would be instructive to beginners about the fundamental characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative research.

Would this book be helpful reading for professional counsellors? Yes, it would. Would the study of qualitative research for education be a good addition to preparation programs? Yes, I believe that it would significantly improve the professional counsellors' repertoire of skills. Would this method totally replace quantitative methods? No, probably not, because so much of our literature has made use of this methodology in building the profession.