

Conference Report:

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**Seventh Annual Meeting of the Center for Qualitative Psychology:
Qualitative Research in the Changing Academic Context.** Riga, Latvia,
October 20-22, 2006, organized by Mechtild Kiegelmann (Center for Qualitative
Psychology, Tübingen, Germany) and Irina Maslo (University of Latvia, Latvia)

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Abstract: This conference report gives an overview of the 7th conference of the Center for Qualitative Psychology that took place in Riga, Latvia from October 20-22, 2006. The main theme discussed during the conference was the role of qualitative research (specifically in psychology and pedagogy) in the currently changing academic context due to the restructuring of European Higher Education Institutions in the Bologna process. The Bologna reform is discussed in depth and qualitative research is presented as being both disruptive and promising in the academic context. Ideas are raised for how qualitative research can find its place in this changing system, including creating joint inter-university programs, increasing the accessibility of qualitative data and methods, and using qualitative methods to best prepare students for professional employment. Other themes presented in the workgroups focused on the use of qualitative methods in teaching and learning processes and in multicultural and intercultural contexts.

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1. Overview

The Center for Qualitative Psychology (CQP) has been organizing annual international conferences for seven years. This annual meeting aims to promote continuous discourse and to foster the further development of qualitative methods in psychology, while at the same time providing a space for an international and interdisciplinary exchange between academics, researchers, and students (KIEGELMANN, HELD, HUBER, & ERTEL, 2000). [1]

This report gives an overview of the conference and the topics of discussions that took place in Riga in October, 2006. Following an introductory review of the Center for Qualitative Psychology, some details of the content and discussion of the three key note lectures will be given. The individual presentations given in the working groups will then be summarized and related to the main topic of the conference before a brief discussion at the end of the report. For more details on the conference program refer to the Appendix. [2]

The meeting was attended by academics and young researchers from Canada, Germany, Israel, Latvia, Sweden, and Spain, representing a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, including individuals from the fields of economics, education, and psychology. [3]

The theme of the meeting was "Qualitative Psychology in a Changing Academic Context," in reference to the implementation of the Bologna Process at European universities. [4]

In 1999 representatives from universities across Europe gathered in Bologna, Italy and decided on a reform of the higher education system in Europe. The main statutes of this reform aim at the harmonization of higher education in the European Union. Through the establishment of a European-wide degree structure, the Bologna reform is intended to foster mobility between institutions and to increase the employability of graduates on an international level. The influence this educational reform will have on the future of qualitative (psychological) research was the overarching theme of this year's Qualitative Psychology meeting. [5]

2. Opening Session and Workgroups

2.1 Opening session

One of the main questions of the conference was how qualitative psychology can find its place and what role it can play in the current changing academic context based on the Bologna reform. [6]

In order to address this question the first session began with opening remarks by KIEGELMANN and MASLO. While OSE, KRUZE, MASLO, and RUBENE creatively explored a philosophical journey through traditions of qualitative methodologies, RESCH and DEY used Homer's *Odyssey* as a metaphor to report their own difficult experiences using a qualitative approach for their doctoral dissertations. They discussed qualitative research as a "disturbing" but "promising" practice and emphasized the importance of qualitative methods as being more appropriate for in-depth explorations of social life, which is more complex, paradoxical, and indeterminable than assumed by purely quantitatively oriented research approaches. Following this presentation, GENTO, MEDINO, and DOMINGUEZ discussed the current status of their efforts to create an inter-university joint Master's degree for educators and professionals on the educational treatment of diversity. The introduction of this degree is an effort

triggered by a suggestion from the European University Association (EUA) to introduce more joint degrees between universities. Finally, MURIAZ and LORENZO outlined the important factors of the Bologna reform and the subsequent decisions made at the EUA meetings in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005). The main principles discussed included the designing of common structures and procedures (e.g. European Credit Transfer System [ECTS]), the improvement of learning, the development and implementation of means for reaching quality assurance, and the support of European plans. MURIAZ and LORENZO explored the advantages of qualitative approaches in overcoming the challenges related to the Bologna reform. In particular, their presentation focused on the importance of qualitative strategies in acquiring practical training in professional situations as a means to meet the competencies outlined by the reform. [7]

The issues presented in this opening session set the stage for discussions in parallel working groups, where conference participants presented results from their current research endeavors. [8]

2.2 Workgroup 1

The first workgroup began with a presentation by FLAVIAN ("The Role of a Teacher—or—What do Teachers Really Need to Teach?"), in which she reflected on teachers' attitudes in the teaching process. In her paper, FLAVIAN questions if teaching children how to gain knowledge should be the main goal of teachers. Based on her observations as a professional in the field of special education, FLAVIAN concludes that teachers need to clearly define their role as facilitators in the process of teaching children how to think. In the next presentation, SÁNCHEZ ROMERO ("Qualitative Methods: Analysis of Interviews and Focus Group About Strategies of Learning in Primary School for Attention of Students of Foreign Origin") focused on the qualitative methods of individual and focus group interviewing used in her study, which investigated the application of teaching strategies in intercultural primary school settings as a way to improve the process of learning for children with diverse backgrounds. BIRZINA ("Implementation of Humanistic Principles in Learning of Information and Communications Technology [ICT] for Adult Students") explored the process of organizing and facilitating ICT learning for adults. The research assesses the impact of a humanistic approach to learning and teaching, with a focus on self-directed learning in the acquisition of computer competency. The final presentation of the first workgroup was given by FERNATE ("Potential of Transdisciplinary Approach in Learning Process"). Using a mixed methods design FERNATE's research focuses on the relationship between physical and mental capacity. Within this framework FERNATE looks specifically at athletes. She presented the aim of the research as the development of a model of integrated work capacity which will help athletes improve their proficiency. [9]

2.3 Workgroup 2

The second workgroup began with a paper presented by MURIAS and LORENZO ("The Research to Support the Bologna Process"), in which they assert the imbalance at universities between the importance of scientific knowledge and inquiry and the importance of good teaching at the university level. In the paper they present an effort by the Spanish Distance University (UNED), in which training nets have been established to support professors in their teaching with special training programs. They discuss this system of nets as an innovative endeavor which fits well into the previously set goals of the Bologna reform. WITZEL ("Basis Considerations about an Archive Concept for Qualitative Interview Data") continued the session with an introduction to an empirically based concept for creating an archive for qualitative interview data. The paper explains the need for systematic documentation of qualitative research data and explores already existing data archives as bases for a new innovative concept. In the final presentation of this workgroup, MORITZ ("Dialogical Processes in Music Teaching") reported on a project which looks at the complexity of the relationship between teachers and their pupils, specifically in private piano lessons. In order to explore this question MORITZ uses grounded theory as her exploratory research design. She focuses on the process of communication between the teacher and pupil and organizes the plethora of data into meta-categories and explains the "dialogical processes" that are evident in this relationship. [10]

2.4 Workgroup 3

The third workgroup presented a myriad of new research endeavors, with a focus on issues of multiculturalism and interculturalism in education. Looking at the experiences of Latvian and Russian youth in schools, PIGOZNE ("Qualitative Approach to Research of Integration as Value Orientation of Youth in Rezekne in Multicultural Media Environment as Learning Place") investigates the process of integration as a process of dialogical communication between different cultures. Following PIGOZNE, ULLRICH ("Parents' Perspectives on Fostering Self-Determination Skills in their Children with Disabilities") identifies critical features of effective parent-child interactions in promoting self-determination in children with disabilities. Using a case study design, she explores the ways parents approach this task. REVILLA, DOMINGUEZ GARRIDO, and GENTO PALACIO ("Design of the Didactic Means and the Cognitive Development for Intercultural Education") continued with a presentation of their efforts to design a process of evaluation to assess strategies and activities used to increase the interculturalism of primary school children in a rural area of Spain. Keeping with the theme of interculturalism in the classroom, the goal of MARGEVICA's research ("The Approach of Intercultural Pedagogy to the Teacher's Education in a Multicultural Society") on intercultural competence was to identify the basic components of a model of intercultural education for Latvian teachers. In the final paper presented in the third workgroup, HERFORT ("Improving Global Cultural Competencies of Engineering Students at the University Level") examines cultural differences, success factors, and intercultural interaction in managers from Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Sweden and explored strategies for increasing

the intercultural competence in students, so as to help them become more effective managers. [11]

2.5 Workgroup 4

In the fourth workgroup six doctoral students took advantage of the round table dissertation consulting with KIEGELMANN and WITZEL. In this session, students were given the opportunity to discuss their work, present their problems, and receive constructive feedback. The research topics discussed included: science education and ideology, the development of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), the development of pupils' inquiry skills in science teaching-learning processes, and the development of students' enterprise capability in the study process. [12]

3. Summary

The chief purposes of the annual meeting of the Center for Qualitative Psychology are to provide a space for researchers and academics to present and discuss ideas that have to do with qualitative research in psychology, to encourage networking and the inception of joint projects, and to give students the opportunity to consult with more experienced researchers about their research and methodological questions. Over the course of the meeting in Riga, it became clear that qualitative approaches to research do not only play an important role in the changing academic context but also in processes related to the Bologna reform (MURIAZ & LORENZO), in exploring teacher attitudes (FLAVIAN), in teaching students with diverse needs (SÁNCHEZ ROMERO), in exploring the complexities of processes in teaching (MORITZ), in investigating processes of dialogical communication between cultures in schools (PIGOZNE), and in studying the paradigm shift from segregation and welfare to inclusion and self-determination for individuals with disabilities (ULLRICH, WOOD, & COOK). It was therefore concluded that qualitative approaches in psychology and pedagogy are of great importance, especially in growing multicultural contexts, for both academic research and practical application. [13]

4. Future Developments

In a final plenum session, plans to change the status of the Center for Qualitative Psychology into a non-profit organization (*eingetragener Verein*) were discussed. KIEGELMANN and NENTWICH had drafted potential statutes for a non-profit organization. The participants reviewed these statutes together and changes were made to better meet the needs and future plans of the CQP. It was decided that a board consisting of four people would be put in place at the next meeting consisting of a president, vice president, treasurer, and financial controller. [14]

The theme of the next meeting, to be held in Berlin-Erkner, Germany, February 16th-18th, 2007, was discussed and decided on: "Qualitative Approaches in the Field of Psychology." Questions were raised about how to increase the quality of contributions. The meeting ended with each participant giving feedback about the weekend. Some of the points noted, were that more time should be allotted for

the dissertation consulting, and that each presentation should be given 30 to 45 minutes, with breaks planned after each one so that participants would be able to move more easily between workgroups. The majority of the feedback was very positive. The participants were very pleased with the setting of the conference and for the opportunity to get to know other researchers in the field and have time to initiate and plan joint projects. Further information is available on the website for the CQP. [15]

Appendix: Meeting Schedule

Friday

4:00 PM Arrival

6:00 PM Dinner

7:00 PM Plenum: Introduction of Participants and Projects

Saturday

9:00 AM – 12:30 PM Plenum: Qualitative Psychology in the Changing Academic Context

Mechthild Kiegelmann, Irina Maslo, & Günter L. Huber: Opening Remarks

Liesma Ose, Aida Kruze, Irina Maslo, & Zanda Rubene: From Quasi-Experimental to Qualitative Approach: Within use of Mixed Methods in the International Collaboration of Researchers

Doerte Resch & Pascal Dey: Probing the Opportunity of Qualitative Research as "Disturbing Practice"

Samuel Gento, Antonio Medina, & Concepción Domínguez: Inter-university Joint Master Degree on Educational Treatment of Diversity

Tiberio Feliz Murias & Mari Carmen Ricoy Lorenzo: The Practical Training in the Professional Contexts. A Competence Approach for the Implementation of the Bologna Process

12:30 PM Lunch Break

2: 30 – 4:30 PM Parallel Workgroups 1 & 2

Workgroup 1:

Heidi Flavian: The Role of Teachers—or—What do Teachers Really Need to Teach?

Cristina Sánchez Romero: Qualitative Methods: Analysis of Interviews and Focus Group About Strategies of Learning in Primary School for Attention of Students Foreign Origin.

Rita Birzina: The Implementation of Humanistic Principles of Learning of ICT for Adult Students

Andra Fernate: Potential of Transdisciplinary Approach in Learning Process

Workgroup 2:

Tiberio Feliz Murias & Mari Carmen Ricoy Lorenzo: The Research to Support the Bologna Process

Andreas Witzel: Basis Considerations about an Archive Concept for Qualitative Interview-Data

Karin Jeschke & Klaus Jansen: Triangulation of Qualitative Methods in Teaching Methods in Psychology (unable to present at the meeting)

Christine Moritz: Dialogical Processes in Music Teaching

4:30 – 6:30 PM Parallel Workgroups 3 & 4

Workgroup 3:

Tamāra Pīgozne: Qualitative Approach to Research of Integration as Value Orientation of Youth in Rezekne (region of Latgale, Latvia) in Multicultural Media Environment as Learning Place

Annette Ullrich: Parents' Perspectives on Fostering Self-Determinations Skills in their Children with Disabilities

Antonio Medina Revilla, María, C. Dominguez Garrido, & Samuel Gento Palacio: Design of the Didactic Means and the Cognitive Development for an Intercultural Education

Ieva Margevica: The Approach of Intercultural Pedagogy to the Teacher's Education in a Multicultural Society

Inge Herfort, & Andreas Weiss: Improving Global Cultural Competencies of Engineering Students at the University Level

Workgroup 4: Research Consulting

Anna Tapola: Science Education and Ideology

Ineta Lūka: Development of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Competence in the Studies of a Higher Educational Establishment

Daiga Kalnina: Development of Pupils' Inquiry Skill in Science Teaching-Learning Process

Karine Oganisjana: The Development of Students' Enterprise Capability in Study Process

Imants Gorban: (unable to present at the meeting)

Swetlana Surikowa: Qualitative Approach to Research of Understanding of Children's Social Competence and the Opportunities for its Development

7:00 PM Dinner

8:00 PM Time for Networking and Initializing Joint Projects

Sunday

9:00 AM Plenum: Plans for Creating a Non-profit Organization

11:00 AM Plenum: Reports on Joint Projects and Planning the Next Workshop

1:00 PM Lunch

Departure

References

Kiegelmann, Mechthild; Held, Josef; Huber, Günter L., & Ertel, Irmentraud (2000). Das Zentrum für Qualitative Psychologie an der Universität Tübingen [24 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), Art. 14, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-00/2-00kiegelmannetal-d.htm> [Date of access: June 08, 2005].

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