Theoretical and Methodological Discussions on the Field of Qualitative Research

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Based on long-term, qualitative, inductive, and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the framework of Goffmanian interactionism in twelve elementary schools located in various regions of the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, I provide insight into the theoretical and methodological discussions of qualitative research.

In my research project, I explore the dynamics of social marginality in ethnically mixed classroom and I deal with on the micro-politics of school integration of marginalized pupils. My focus on this politics is a challenge on many fronts. Methodologically I am facing not only the ethically sensitive and unpredictable circumstance of inquiring about children and with children, but there are also interlocking tensions that constitute my research context and problems of practice in contemporary qualitative research. My interest therefore lies in identifying some of these tensions, hesitations, contradictions, and pitfalls in educational research. What kind of tension do I have in mind? How are they enacted in the research and how they translate into practices of social actors?

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2011) polemicize against postmodern sensibility, traditional positivism and postpositivism, and conservative, neoliberal global environment. Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) refer to getting the view from insider and from outsider, the particular versus the general, process versus structure, discovery versus construction. I would like to follow up their ideas to engage in polemical debate about another tension. I want to draw attention to clash of children and teacher’s perspectives or conflict between colorful and black-and-white perspective in the light of the ethnographic practice. In the context of qualitative research, I especially focus on tensions related to egocentrism and sociocentrism, involvement and traditional scientific approach without participation, and social distance dynamics between researcher and informant. I also refer to ethnographic treatment of data, ethical aspects as well as perspectives on children and childhoods.

I bring into dialogue various views on the obstacles of research in educational area in order to enrich our understanding of educational research process. The implication for research is that we should pay more attention to tensions and hesitations in social science and qualitative research methods in general. In my opinion, close attention should be paid to interdisciplinary approach as well. I argue that closer alliance among social anthropology, pedagogy, psychology and philosophy is particularly fruitful one.

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References
