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Qualitative and mixed research methods have been reaching important achievements throughout the academic world. However, there are still open challenges for multidisciplinary coherence, methodological focus, rigor and systematization towards the holistic integration and quality of research. The World Conference on Qualitative Research (WCQR2019) aims at being an important international discussion forum that sheds light on these and many other challenges in the area. The 4th WCQR took place from 16th to 18th October 2019, at Lusófona University of Porto, Portugal. For WCQR2019, the submission of scientific papers was encouraged and focused on i) Qualitative Research in Health (emphasis on the processes of research in the fields of Medicine, Nursing, Geriatrics, Gerontology, Psychology, etc.); ii) Qualitative Research in Education (emphasis on the processes of research in various areas of Higher Education, Basic Education, Assessment, Curriculum, Teaching, Teaching of Sciences, Languages, History, Technology, etc.); iii) Qualitative Research in Social Science (emphasis on the processes of research in the fields of Communication, Linguistics, Sociology, Anthropology, Business Administration, Marketing, Management and Economics, Political Science, etc.); iv) Qualitative Research in Engineering and Technology (emphasis on the research processes in the areas of Computer Science, Information Systems, Electrical Engineering, Software Engineering and Engineering Education).

The 4th WCQR topics were organized under two major dimensions:

A) Fundamentals

1. Rationale and Paradigms of Qualitative Research (theoretical studies, critical reflection about epistemological, ontological and axiological dimensions).

2. Systematization of approaches with Qualitative Studies (literature review, integrating results, aggregation studies, meta-analysis, meta-analysis of qualitative meta-synthesis, meta-ethnography).

3. Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research (emphasis on research processes that build on mixed methodologies but prioritizing qualitative approaches).
B) Operationalization

1. Data Analysis Types (content analysis, discourse analysis, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, etc.).

2. Innovative processes of Qualitative Data Analysis (design analysis, articulation and triangulation of different sources of data – images, audio, video).

3. Qualitative Research in Web Context (e-Research, virtual ethnography, interaction analysis, internet latent corpus, etc.).

4. Qualitative Analysis with the Support of Specific Software (usability studies, user experience, the impact of software on the quality of research and analysis).

Besides regular paper presentations, WCQR2019 held two plenary sessions:

• “Dealing with the Dog’s Effect of Qualitative Research”, presented by Safary Wa-Mbaleka, from the Adventist University of Africa (Kenya);

• “The Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Ethics are Confidentiality and Informed Consent: Paradoxically, they are as Robust as they are Fragile”, presented by Martin Tolich, University of Otago (New Zealand).

And three discussion panels:

• “Methodological Innovations and Resources: Forms of Data, Partnership and Pedagogy”, by Rosalind Edwards, Lynn Jamieson and Melanie Nind, from National Centre for Research Methods (United Kingdom);

• “The use of Triangulation as a tool for validation of data in qualitative research in Education” by Andrea Karla Ferreira Nunes, Rita de Cássia Amorim Barroso and Jacques Fernandes Santos, from Research Group Education, Technology and Contemporaneity University Tiradentes (GPETEC)'s (Brazil);

• “Exploring Researcher-Participant Relationship in Qualitative Research” by Safary Wa-Mbaleka, Pavel Zubkov, Gracel Ann Saban and Arceli Rosario, from Asian Qualitative Research Association (Philippines).

Covering the large scope of Qualitative Research themes and issues, the World Conference on Qualitative Research aims to be a platform for the exchange of ideas, innovative solutions, perspectives and research results regarding the field, both in academic and corporate contexts. To that end, we dedicated the first day to the use and development of Digital Tools to support research. Digital Tools Day held two plenary sessions:

• “Empowering qualitative research methods with artificial intelligence”, by Luca Longo, from the Technological University Dublin (Ireland);

• “At the Intersection of Art, Science and Technology, The Estonian STARTS.EE initiative”, presented by David Lamas, from the Tallinn University (Estonia).

And four demo sessions:

• “Design fiction and the social, cultural, and ethical implications of emerging technologies”, by David Lamas (Estonia);

• “Introduction to ATLAS.ti 8 Windows: Tools for Digging into your Qualitative Data”, by Neringa Kalpokaite (Germany);
• “Literature Review with webQDA: better organization, faster process, stellar results”, by Lucimara Fornari and Jaime Ribeiro (Brazil and Portugal);

• “Data Mining using RAPIDMINER for Mixed Methods Research”, by Brígida Mónica Faria and Luís Paulo Reis (Portugal).

Most of the abstracts are published as a complete paper and can be found in the WCQR2019 Proceedings, at Springer – Series Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, at The Qualitative Report, at Fronteiras: Journal of Social, Technological and Environmental Science, at Index de Enfermería and at ex aequo.

The entire process of research, revision and edition is the work of several collaborators and specialists. Therefore, a very well deserved and sincere word of thanks to all those who, directly or indirectly, contributed to the organization of the 3rd World Conference on Qualitative Research (attendants, authors, committees, partner institutions, sponsors, journals, etc.). A special thanks to the Lusófona University of Porto, for providing the venue and the human resources that allowed this 4th WCQR to happen. We believe that all these efforts are a form of promoting the expansion, integration and quality of qualitative research.

António Pedro Costa

Catarina Brandão

Elisabete Pinto da Costa