

Toward hybridization of quantitative and qualitative methodology to make educational science more relevant

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During last decade the educational science has been faced with a growing demand to strengthen its relevancy for policy making and for improvement of practice (evidence informed policy making) and its collaboration with policy makers and practitioners (triangle of knowledge – research, policy and practice). Accepting this demand asks from researchers to change typical ways of operating and to develop new communities, concepts, and methodologies. In this paper I am going to pinpoint a need for hybridization of quantitative and qualitative approaches as an essential component of upcoming changes. In the first part, I will discuss strong and weak sides of quantitative and qualitative approaches in terms of production of relevant knowledge for educational science, policy and practice. The quantitative approach is typically considered as the recommended way for producing sound and relevant knowledge that can inform both policy and practice (for example, the randomized controlled trial). The strong side of this approach lays in the fact that it produces a generalized and decontextualized knowledge about impact of different factors on some educational outcomes. However, the very same characteristic might be considered as its key shortcoming. Education policy and practice are highly contextualized activity of different actors who are framed, structures and mediated (not determined) by different sociocultural context, regulations, institutional settings, and interpersonal dynamics between key actors. This is the reason why quantitative approach cannot be only source of relevant knowledge neither for policy makers or educational practitioners. Thus, it needs to be combined/hybridized in different ways with the qualitative approach in order to be able to bring back contextual aspects of established general and decontextualized knowledge. Following this conclusion, in the second part I am going to present some examples how two approaches can be hybridized in a meaningful and productive way.