



<sup>1</sup> Research Centre Didactics and Technology in the Education of Trainers, Department of Education and Psychology, Aveiro University, Portugal.

E-mail: [apcosta@ua.pt](mailto:apcosta@ua.pt)

## Processes for construction and evaluation of qualitative articles: possible paths?

António Pedro Costa<sup>1</sup>

### How to cite this article:

Costa AP. Processes for construction and evaluation of qualitative articles: possible paths [editorial]. *Rev Esc Enferm USP*. 2016;50(6):xx-xx. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0080-62342016000070002>

Peer review processes are a symbol of credibility and reliability for scientific journals. These publications depend on different types of evaluation: single-blind, double-blind, open, cascading and pre-publication and post-publication peer review, so as to ensure the quality of their publications<sup>(1)</sup>. In the social sciences, the double-blind peer review is most commonly used, in which the reviewers do not know who the authors are, and vice-versa. However, do the paths defined vary in the review of qualitative articles? Articles that are grounded in qualitative data analysis use nonnumerical and unstructured data (texts, videos, images and audios). There are no standards as to how results must be presented. Nevertheless, “qualitative” articles are characterized by explanation of the analysis process, in which the authors describe how data were organized, whether the dimensions, categories, and subcategories were defined deductively or inductively, the definitions that reflect the theoretical framework, inferences to data, and the grounding and evidence for the articles. Essentially, they differ from quantitative articles in their methodological strand, considering that, in many points, their frontier is a very fine line or simply does not exist. The COST<sup>(a)</sup> Action designated as New Frontiers of Peer Review ([www.peere.org](http://www.peere.org)) is made up of researchers from varied knowledge areas who represent over 35 countries, with the main goal of improving the efficiency, transparency and accountability of peer review through trans-discipline, cross-sector collaboration. The following objectives were defined for this purpose: to analyze peer review by integrating quantitative and qualitative research and incorporating recent experimental and computational findings; to evaluate the implications of different models of peer review (open vs. anonymous, pre- vs. post-publication) and different systems for scientific publication (open vs. private publication systems) to improve the rigor and quality of the process; to discuss the current forms of incentive structures, rules and measures; to improve collaboration in all stages of the peer review process; and to develop a coherent program for peer review (principles, instructions, indicators and follow-up activities) for the parties interested that truly represent the complexity of research in several domains.

Three working groups were created based on these objectives. Also in the scope of the COST Action, some members have been analyzing data gathered from the evaluation process of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ibero-American Congress on Qualitative Research (CIAIQ2016) and the 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Qualitative Research (ISQR2016) ([www.ciaiq.org](http://www.ciaiq.org)). In the first study developed, which will result in an article, 339 answers were obtained. The authors and members of the scientific commission received the questionnaire survey one day after the reviews of the articles submitted to the CIAIQ2016 and the ISQR2016 had been sent.

<sup>(a)</sup> COST is the longest-running European framework supporting trans-national cooperation among researchers, engineers and scholars across Europe ([http://www.cost.eu/COST\\_Actions/tdp/TD1306](http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/tdp/TD1306)).

The study focused on the motivations of the reviewers and on some indicators related to the evaluation process (information provided by the organizing commission, EasyChair platform and instructions, evaluation instructions, period to submit and receive evaluations, evaluation criteria, double-blind review, number of reviewers per article, and review quality). The initial conclusions of this study refer to the checklist used to evaluate the articles, and the process itself served as guidance and allowed for the construction of knowledge of the authors and, in some cases, of reviewers with “less experience.”

This concern with the construction of tools and the availability of checklists that allow the writing of qualitative articles led some authors<sup>(2)</sup> to define a checklist called the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ), made up of 32 items. Despite being created for studies based on data resulting from interviews and focus groups, the COREQ shows the need for the scientific community to prepare researchers for the criteria that must be observed by qualitative articles. In addition to the COREQ, the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR)<sup>(3)</sup> and the Enhancing Transparency in Reporting the Synthesis of Qualitative Research (ENTREQ)<sup>(4)</sup> can also be found in the literature, both with 21 items each. Along the same lines as the COREQ, researchers can explore other tools such as the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP)<sup>(5)</sup>, which features several checklists, two of which stand out as fitting the theme of this editorial: 1) CASP Systematic Review Checklist and 2) CASP Qualitative Checklist, both with 10 items each.

The objective of these tools is to improve the transparency of the aspects of qualitative research, providing clear models for describing studies. These models help both authors in the preparation of their manuscripts, and editors and reviewers in the evaluation of potential articles for publication, providing readers with critical, applied and synthesized analysis of study results. These tools can also show the ability of researchers to write articles based on qualitative data (texts, audios, videos and images). Most of the aforementioned proposals focus on the process of constructing and writing quality articles.

## REFERENCES

1. Wijesinha-bettoni R, Shankar K, Marusic A, Grimaldo F, Seeber M. Reviewing the review process: New Frontiers Peer Review; 2016. p. 82-5.
2. Tong A, Sainsbury P, Craig J. Consolidated criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ): a 32- item checklist for interviews and focus group. *Int J Qual Heal Care*. 2007;19(6):349-57.
3. Brien BCO, Harris IB, Beckman TJ, Reed DA, Cook DA. Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research: *Acad Med*. 2014;89(9):1245-51.
4. Tong A, Flemming K, McInnes E, Oliver S, Craig J. Enhancing transparency in reporting the synthesis of qualitative research: ENTREQ. *BMC Med Res Methodol*. 2012;12(1):181.
5. Healthcare BV. Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) [Internet]. 2013 [cited 2016 Nov 25]. Available from: <http://www.casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists>