

Visual tools for supporting interviews in qualitative research: new approaches

Visual tools in qualitative research

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to describe and evaluate various visual and creative tools for supporting the in-depth biographical interview aimed at analyzing educational communities and their stakeholders.

Design/methodology/approach – Researching educational spaces today requires new ways of understanding, analyzing and studying. The complex characteristics, functions and realities demand research that responds to educational singularities. It is a matter of deeply understanding the educational phenomenon's peculiarities. For these purposes, instruments and research paradigms are needed to extract data and reach information saturation regarding the data obtained from the proposed objects of study. With this in mind, the following paper suggests reflecting on data collection tools that can complement the interview and biographical-narrative research approach. The authors highlight the use of photo-elucidation, the biogram-based timeline, the organigram and the flight of the geese, all of which are instruments endowed with a visual character that allows a deeper understanding of the object studied.

Findings – The main contribution of this paper is to unpack the uses and applications of four visual tools that support the interview technique. First, photo-elucidation is presented as a sensory strategy to stimulate the narrative during the dialogical exchange of the interview. Next, the timeline is described as a visual concretization of the traditional biogram widely used in educational research. Next, the authors unravel the uses of the organizational chart in educational research, which, due to its nature and utility, provides a glimpse of the organizational functioning of an institution and is particularly suitable for research in institutional frameworks. Finally, the tool known as the flight of the geese is presented. This tool is recommended for use in educational leadership and teamwork studies due to its simplicity and high representativeness of the hierarchy of roles and functions.

Originality/value – Researching educational spaces today requires new ways of understanding, analyzing and studying. The complex characteristics, functions, and realities demand research that responds to educational singularities. It is a matter of deeply understanding the educational phenomenon's peculiarities. For these purposes, instruments and research paradigms are needed to extract data and reach information saturation regarding the data obtained from the proposed objects of study. With this in mind, the following paper invites us to reflect on data collection tools that can complement the interview and biographical-narrative research approach. The authors highlight the use of photo-elucidation, the biogram-based timeline, the organigram, and the flight of the geese, all of which are instruments endowed with a visual character that allows a deeper understanding of the object studied.

Keywords Qualitative research, Biographic research, Interview, Educational research, Visual tools

Paper type General review

1. Introduction

Educational institutions are complex objects of study due to their singularities, contexts and the people involved, who create networks and relational structures that weave a unique life

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history for each school. Because of their multifaceted structure, they require a research approach to understand them and to tackle the complexity of their immediate environment. In this sense, qualitative approaches that address the object of study in depth, focusing on interpreting the data (Flick, 2015; Schilling and König, 2020), are the most suitable for analyzing multifaceted and multiple phenomena typical of the social sciences and, therefore, of the field of education.

Within the framework of qualitative approaches, biographical-narrative research has been increasingly present in education in recent years (Bolívar and Domingo, 2018). This research approach allows us to learn about the world from the perspective of others (Cisneros-Puebla *et al.*, 2004; Moríña, 2017) through not only narrated experiences that evoke events, moments and places but also thoughts, feelings and meanings given by the people who tell their stories. For this reason, this approach is relevant in education studies that emphasize the development, trajectory or identity of those involved (both of specific individuals and of communities), along with collaborative networks and institutions, telling their story through the people involved and the situations and experiences that are generated.

Words are a valuable resource in this research approach. Words evoke memories and experiences that help create an institution or person's life history and sketch the environment and the casuistry that give it shape and meaning. For this reason, the interview becomes, from this approach, an excellent instrument for data collection, which can be complemented by many others (e.g. documentary reviews, observations, field notes or diaries).

The interview allows for dialog between the interviewer and the informant, creating a connection between the two through mutual commitment and shared growth and from a situated ethic (Abad, 2016; Cisneros-Puebla *et al.*, 2004) that facilitates the discursive flow. Thus, discourse as social interaction, understood as a practical, social and cultural phenomenon from Van Dijk's (2008) perspective, provides clues for understanding phenomena from the contextual framework in which they occur. Therefore, during an in-depth interview, the researcher must ensure that the dialog flows and, at the same time, investigate the reasons, motivations and silences produced during the dialogical exchange (Ruiz, 2015). The interview, in turn, becomes a situation of observation, which helps to contemplate the social scene and provides clues for its interpretation (Beaud, 2018).

For Bolívar and Domingo (2019), interviews play a decisive role in the development of narratives. Specifically, an in-depth biographical interview sequenced according to cascades of reflexive deepening is essential for biographical studies (Cruz *et al.*, 2021; Kelchtermans, 2016).

Various visual support tools can be employed during an in-depth biographical interview, significantly contributing to the triangulation of information and thus enhancing the study's validity (Flick, 2018; Torres, 2021). These tools, characterized by their creative and graphic approach, can stimulate dialog, offering richer and more fruitful narratives than those obtained in a traditional interview (Mannay, 2017). Thus, the interview can be enriched with different tools that help to obtain more nuanced and deeper biographical accounts, awakening emotions and memories that could not be evoked by words alone. Moreover, creative methods, through the use of images, help contextually frame the phenomenon under investigation, with the genealogy of the context, as Bolívar and Domingo (2019) point out, being a key aspect for understanding the stories. Visual techniques can be used to research individual, collective and institutional life trajectories (Harper, 2012). In turn, they can be combined according to the research objectives and implemented at different stages of the cascade of reflexive deepening, depending on the nature of the technique or the research interests.

The main contribution of this paper is to unpack the uses and applications of four visual tools that support the interview technique. First, *photo-elucidation* is presented as a sensory

strategy to stimulate the narrative during the dialogical exchange of the interview. Next, the *timeline* is described as a visual concretization of the traditional biogram widely used in educational research (De Oliveira, 2020; Domingo *et al.*, 2017). Next, we unravel the uses of the organizational chart in educational research, which, due to its nature and utility, provides a glimpse of the organizational functioning of an institution and is particularly suitable for research in institutional frameworks. Finally, the tool known as the *flight of the geese* is presented. This tool is recommended for use in educational leadership and teamwork studies due to its simplicity and high representativeness of the hierarchy of roles and functions. This study aims to describe and evaluate various visual and creative tools for supporting the in-depth biographical interview aimed at analyzing educational communities and their stakeholders.

2. Photo-elicitation, sensory strategy and narrative stimulation

The use of images – specifically photography – to support the interview was introduced by John Collier (1967) in his book *Visual Anthropology*, who called this method “photo interviewing.” As the name suggests, this strategy is combined with the interview to delve deeper into the case study and evoke ideas and arguments that would not otherwise be possible with the spoken word alone.

Today, this method is better known as *photo elucidation*. The term “elucidation,” synonymous with clarification or explanation, hints at the focus of this methodology. Elucidate means “to clarify and explain an issue, especially if it is confusing or controversial, for its possible resolution” (RAE, 2022). Therefore, photo-elucidation involves eliciting the informant’s words and narrative through image-produced stimuli. This method uses the image as a source of stimulation for narrating the informants’ experiences, situations or impressions. Its use accompanies and supports the traditional interview because, according to Mannay (2017), “images evoke deeper elements of consciousness than words alone do, so that photo-elicitation interviews do not simply elucidate more information but evoke a different kind of information” (p. 30).

Thanks to the potential of visual materials to reveal essential aspects of the cultural context that surrounds them (Collier, 1967), photo-elicitation is aligned with social science research and, more specifically, with the field of education, being considered by Harper (2012) as a “natural” method for educational studies.

The photo-elicitation interview becomes useful for retrieving latent memory and stimulating emotions and experiences associated with the informant’s life (Collier, 1967). It is, therefore, a valuable resource for biographical-narrative research, as it helps to gain a glimpse of the genealogy of the context, which is essential information in this type of research, as argued by Bolívar and Domingo (2019) and Moríña (2017).

Among the benefits of photo-elucidation is also the closeness established between researcher and informant, as the image becomes a bridge between people who may see and interpret the world in very different ways (Harper, 2012), favoring a more balanced relationship between the two (Meo and Dabénigno, 2011). In this way, the image brings the interlocutors closer together, overcoming the language barrier that can sometimes occur if the two do not adopt the same discursive style. Furthermore, using the image during the interview also creates a more relaxed atmosphere for the informant, which favors their motivation to take part in the study.

This type of research is open and creative. Since it must be adapted to the phenomenon under study, there is flexibility regarding the number of images that can be used during the interview, the type of image used (e.g. photograph, drawing, collage and plan), the number of meetings required and even the person who should produce these images (Wang, 2023). The

answers to these questions (among others) depend on the aim of the research and the phenomenon under study.

As [Meo and Dabenigno \(2011\)](#) state, the images used during the interview can be prepared before or during the course of the research. If the first option is chosen, the researcher must prepare this material before the meeting with the informant and before preparing the rest of the data collection instruments. The images can be taken by the researcher or the team, professional photographers or even selected from archives and image repositories. These visual materials can be of a very varied nature and origin ([Rose, 2006](#); [Sarrot and Mingo, 2019](#)). For example, they can come from magazines or newspapers, books, advertising campaigns, graffiti or websites. If the second option is chosen, that is, the images are obtained during the course of the research, whether they are provided by the researcher or by the informant, they have the clear advantage of being embedded in the research context and, therefore, loaded with meaning, which can facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the information ([Meo and Dabenigno, 2011](#)).

Within the use of images in interview research, depending on who is the producer of the photographs or images used to establish the dialog, we can distinguish a variant that has created this methodological current. We can speak of photovoice if the informant produces the photographs on which the dialogical encounter is based. The founders of the method, [Wang and Burris \(1997\)](#), took their inspiration from Paulo Freire and his ideas on the pedagogy of the oppressed ([Freire, 1969](#)). Photovoice is a way of empowering the informant and fostering critical consciousness. From this methodological approach, the informant takes the reins of the research, choosing and producing the images that they consider relevant to collect or capture the reality that represents the phenomenon under study. It is an integrated approach within participatory methodologies, usually used in studies that aim to empower and give a voice to the people involved ([Harper, 2012](#)).

3. From the biogram to the visual diagram: support and graphical representation of biographical data

In general terms, the biogram can be defined as an instrument for collecting biographical data that facilitates the study of personal or professional identity or the institutional development of an educational entity or organization. In the educational research framework, [Parrilla \(2009\)](#) describes it as a personalized chronogram of the individual's critical incidents that mark their life and their interpretation of such events.

Authors such as [Domingo *et al.* \(2017\)](#) have addressed two key issues concerning the use of the biogram. First, it allows the compilation of past experiences (located in diachronic time and space) to investigate and understand the events that have been a turning point in the development of an individual and the construction of their identities. Second, it is an optimal resource for helping the individual understand their personal, academic and professional backgrounds, training processes and decision-making. In short, the biogram is a tool for organizing a person's narrative and biographical data and creating schematic summaries of their life.

Recent national and international research has made use of the biogram to study the identity of principals ([Cruz *et al.*, 2021](#); [Lucena Rodríguez *et al.*, 2021](#)), the institutional development of a school ([Fernández- Terol, 2021](#)), teaching identity ([Domingo *et al.*, 2017](#); [Huchim Aguilar and Reyes Chávez, 2013](#); [Panés Chavarría and Lazzaro-Salazar, 2018](#)) and the student body ([Nieto Cano *et al.*, 2018](#)).

In general terms, the steps used to create a biogram are as follows ([Lucena and Cruz-González, 2021](#)):

- (1) Use of the in-depth biographical interview;
- (2) Creation of schemes of ideas and a process of comprehensive deepening;

- (3) Compilation and organization of critical incidents in the biogram allow the researcher to identify the most impactful life events, the emergence of influential people and the social, cultural and professional factors that have shaped the life trajectory and
- (4) Dialectical validation of the discourse.

The biogram can be created using a table where the following elements are collected: (1) chronology; (2) description; (3) milestones, key characters, themes or leitmotives and (4) identity impact. However, it is important to note that constructing the biogram and the life history is not a collection of unconnected data but rather an opportunity for the individual to construct a narrative identity and make sense of their own life (Bolívar, 2012). Although the biogram is an operational tool that outlines the narrative of the subject's life story and recreates the entire contextual, emotional and sentimental framework (Domingo *et al.*, 2017) for researchers, there are other alternative tools of a visual nature.

Considering the above, it is during fieldwork and after data analysis that there is an opportunity to conduct qualitative research and to incorporate innovative approaches and tools that support this type of research process. For example, Mas (2007) has already proposed using the biogram by incorporating sensory, emotional, metaphorical or symbolic elements alongside traditionally considered (personal, social, professional or contextual) aspects.

The potential to create a visual representation of the data collected for subsequent analysis or to present the results draws on contributions from the field of visual thinking and its application in social and educational research (Castillo and González, 2016; Katoppo and Sudradjat, 2015). Visual thinking also uses this approach as a resource based on simple drawings explaining complex concepts.

Taking the participatory research approach, the creation of the biogram can be enriched by asking the informant to make a visual representation of their life (as a diagram, understood as a timeline) or, more traditionally, by the researcher constructing it using the data gathered during the interview. With this approach, a visual diagram, understood as a timeline, provides a graphical representation of the variations of a phenomenon or the chronological relationships between the elements or parts of a whole. For this reason, using the timeline as a graphical representation of the biogram is of interest. Figure 1 shows an example of a visual diagram of the institutional development of an educational organization used in the work of Fernández- Terol (2021). This diagram will allow the researcher to synthesize the data and integrate these for further analysis and interpretation. This approach will enable the creation of a timeline or life map that allows different elements and aspects of the life history to be related chronologically. Moreover, it will make it easier to display the data to the research participant to reflect on and discuss this information.

One of the advantages for researchers who wish to enrich their interpretation and presentation of results with this diagram is that it will visually present the most important biographical data, allowing them to highlight those critical moments or those with the greatest impact on the life of a person or an educational institution.

4. The organization chart: a mental map of the school organization

The organization chart is a mental map that reflects, through shapes, colors and drawings, the most significant themes, elements and factors of a sector, department or institution (Buzan and Buzan, 2017). It allows us to graphically observe relationships and how the brain naturally processes information, thus reflecting our way of thinking. For example, through an organizational chart, it is possible to see the organizational structure of an educational institution, the hierarchical levels, the lines of authority and the staff positions based on the



Figure 1.
Diagram on the institutional development of an educational organization

Source(s): Fernández- Terol (2021)

role they play in the institution (Thompson, 2009). Similarly, it is possible to recognize horizontal or vertical leadership thanks to the lines, designs and figures that represent one type of leadership or another.

Organizational charts are heterogeneous and arise from the perceptions and senses of the people who make up an institution. For this reason, there are no equal organizational charts but rather unique and context-specific ones (Mclean and Link, 2022). An organization chart is also a tool that, among other functions, can be used in research to complement other tools, such as interviews. For example, together with the interview, the organization chart can inform us about the life history of a team, a department or a school institution (Salgueiro Caldeira, 1993). Moreover, it should be noted that there are different types of organizational charts according to their nature, purpose, scope, content, presentation and graphic layout (De Zuani, 2005; Franklin Fincowsky, 2009; Thompson, 2009). Table 1 displays the aspects mentioned above.

The various types of organizational charts can be used to determine a school's structure, relationships, hierarchies and leadership. According to Fernández (2002), the organization of a school can be viewed in a systematic way and on three levels: (1) aggregate level: teachers and individual functions; (2) structure level: which reveals information about the relationships between people in a school and (3) system level: composed of the relationships of people, functions and professions and their impact on the environment. These levels are suitable for being displayed in the organization charts because they make it possible to concretely perceive abstract elements (relationships, hierarchies, authority, positions, etc.) (Claver and Llopis, 2002).

It is also possible to find studies where organization charts have been used as data collection instruments, for example, in studies on quality management systems (Becerra *et al.*, 2019) or leadership development strategies implemented by a management team (Martínez and Granados, 2001). In addition, these charts have been used as an instrument for evaluating teaching performance based on competence in Spanish (Matos, 2012). Finally, the organization chart can serve as an element of information in biographical-narrative research (Bolívar, 2012), determining and providing concrete and specific information through graphical representations.

5. The flight of the geese: where are you and where are you going?

The flight of the geese is a unique tool in the scientific literature but has been used in social (Blanco, 2017; Correa, 2019) and business fields (Del Equipo *et al.*, 2013). For example, this instrument determines how an individual feels within a work team, a collective project or an institution. Similarly, it allows us to establish whether the person feels like a leader (Byron and Mejias, 2003) or is integrated into a workgroup.

The flight of the geese is a wise metaphor that reveals the characteristics of a team and its ways of working, the leadership of a school institution, a person's sense of belonging and their relationship with their professional, social and family context. In this sense, this instrument can be used to complement the interview in biographical-narrative studies.

This simple tool is inspired by a flock of geese flying in a V-shape. This way of flying increases the power of flight by 70% compared to a single goose. From this, and extrapolating this idea, it can be considered that people who go in the same direction and have a clear and common purpose can achieve their goals faster and easier as they travel with the support and drive of others.

Moreover, every time a goose leaves the formation and feels the resistance of the air, it appreciates the difficulty of flying alone. Hence, it immediately rejoins the group to benefit from the power of the companion in front. In this sense, learning from the metaphor of the

Organizational charts	Types
Organizational charts based on their nature	<p>Micro-administrative: Representing a single organization or school as a whole or from a single area</p> <p>Macro-administrative: Covers more than one school</p> <p>Meso-administrative: Composed of organizations or institutions from the same sector or specific area</p>
Organizational charts based on their purpose	<p>Informative: They are intended to be available to the general public and accessible to everyone in an educational institution. Therefore, the design of the organization chart must be specific, representing the main or most relevant components and their primary relationships</p> <p>Analytical: Analyses behavioral aspects of an organization, as well as its micro or macro vision. It also provides a concrete insight into tangible elements of a school, such as the professional and personal relationships within a team, the distribution of curricular tasks in a department, decision-making in a management team etc.</p> <p>Formal: Represents the planned operating model of an organization. It could be considered as the official organizational chart of an institution</p>
Organizational charts based on scope	<p>General: Represents information about the hierarchical level in a department or team</p> <p>Specific: They show the structure of an area of the organization in a particular way</p>
Organizational charts based on content	<p>Integral: Graphic representation of all parts of a school and their hierarchical relationships</p> <p>Functional: Reflects the main functions carried out by a person or a team of people. In addition, it is possible to identify the units and interrelationships with this representation</p> <p>Posts, positions, and units: These determine specific jobs, roles, and positions so that these aspects can be identified with particular names</p>
Organizational charts based on presentation and graphical layout	<p>Vertical: These present units branching from top to bottom, starting from a central position at the top. From this position, the various hierarchical levels begin to branch out in a staggered manner</p> <p>Horizontal: Their representation starts from left to right, with their main position on the far left. Columns order the hierarchical levels, and horizontal lines mark their relationships</p> <p>Mixed: Combines elements of a vertical and horizontal organization chart. These are useful for schools with a large number of people</p> <p>Block: These are derived from vertical organization charts and allow more units to be integrated into smaller spaces so that different units appear in the prominent position</p> <p>Circular: In this type of organizational chart, the most important organizational unit is in the middle of a series of concentric circles. Each of these circles represents a different level of authority, decreasing from the middle towards until reaching the last circle, which is the largest and represents the lowest level of authority. Similarly, units of the same hierarchy are placed on the same circle, and lines connecting circles express their hierarchical relationships</p>

Table 1.
Types of
organizational charts

Source(s): Adapted from [Thompson \(2009\)](#)

flight of the geese, teams and their members must stay in formation with those who lead and have clear goals, being open to accepting and offering help.

When the leader of the geese gets tired, he leaves his post and moves to a later position in the flock so that another goose takes his place. This can be interpreted as the need to take turns and relieve each other to tackle complex tasks and share leadership (Fullan, 2019; Leithwood, 1994).

Similarly, the geese at the back of the formation are responsible for ensuring that the geese in front maintain speed, an act of support that teaches us that, regardless of the position that each person occupies in a system, their contribution and cooperation are essential to achieve the common goals set or desired (Rodas and Sipión, 2014). Moreover, when a goose gets sick or is injured and does not keep up with the flock, two other geese leave the formation to help and protect it. They stay with him until he recovers or finally dies. Then they fly off together to join another flock or return to the original flock. The lesson from this is the importance of sticking together during challenges and becoming stronger in the face of them, i.e. building resilience as a team with no one left behind (Olmo- Extremera, 2017).

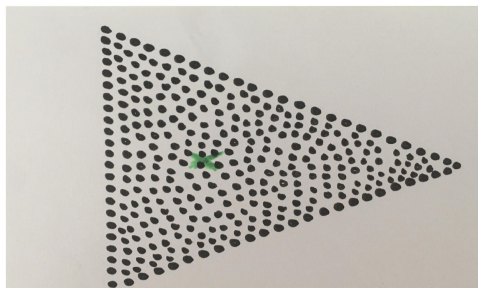
With the above, we are invited to reflect on the individual and their social relationships within a school institution, the individual and the creation of bonds of trust with external and internal members of their environment, the individual and the construction of their identity as a person and professional within a society and their work environment and the individual as a resilient being with the capacity for leadership.

The metaphor “flying like geese” can inspire the life story of a teacher in their classroom and school, as well as the actions of school management or even the improvement goals of an educational organization. This metaphor can also provide information about a school model, be used as an instrument in a biographical-narrative approach or be an additional element that broadens the information gathered in a personal or organizational interview.

These aspects can be observed in Figures 2–5, used during the data collection process of the Olmo- Extremera (2017) research. These figures show the representation of different flocks of geese (black dots) with specific locations pointed out by the interviewees, indicating how they feel within their educational center and in their work team based on the figure presented by the researcher.

From Figure 2 and the interview conducted previously, it can be considered that the person feels that they are at the center of their school organization. From this, it can be interpreted that this person is committed to the school, informed about the events taking place, and integrated into the team.

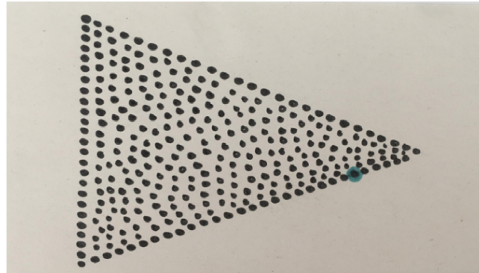
Figure 3 shows how the participant has placed themselves at one end and at the front of the flock, as they occupied a management role within the management team (secretary). This



Source(s): Olmo- Extremera (2017) unpublished data

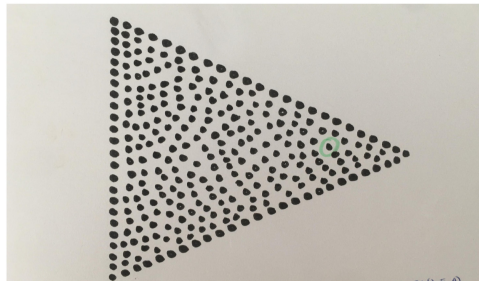
Figure 2.
Central position

Figure 3.
Leadership position



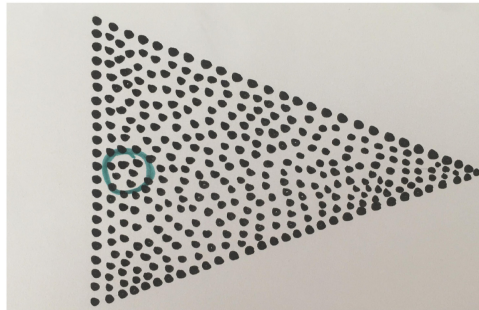
Source(s): Olmo- Extremera (2017) unpublished data

Figure 4.
Central leading position



Source(s): Olmo- Extremera (2017) unpublished data

Figure 5.
Rearguard position



Source(s): Olmo- Extremera (2017) unpublished data

position suggests that the person feels that they are a leader and that, from such a position, they can offer support and strength while observing other colleagues.

In Figure 4, it can be seen how the participant has placed themselves in a frontal position among other geese. In this case, the informant held a position in the management team (head of studies), which is why they occupied a front and centralized position. From this, it can be interpreted that this participant feels they are a leader because they are in a front position and, simultaneously, protected by their team of colleagues.

However, [Figure 5](#) points to a very different position from those described previously, i.e. at the back of the flock. This could be taken to indicate that the interviewee (who held a position in the management team, namely head of studies) does not feel integrated into their work team, as reflected in a position that is far from one that would be occupied by a leader. Despite this, being in this position allowed them, from the rear, to observe the actions and functions carried out by the school and the work team.

Moreover, to interpret these images, they must be supported by an explanation from the informant, specifying why they have placed themselves in this position and what it means to them to be there. This is why, for this tool to be used effectively, other tools, such as the interview, must complement it.

6. Concluding reflections

Given the growing interest in biographical-narrative research ([Domingo et al., 2017](#); [Bolívar and Domingo, 2019](#)), the present work broadens the scope of authors and researchers concerned with developing and consolidating a methodological framework that facilitates research in the social and educational fields ([Ávila and Ramalho, 2004](#); [Bolívar, 2012](#); [Bolívar and Domingo, 2018](#)).

The cascade and in-depth interviews become the main means for gathering life story data and evoking the participants' critical life events. However, due to the need to develop more participatory research processes and to approach the subjects under investigation from more subjective, personal and human approaches – with special emphasis on their trajectories – it is necessary to use other instruments that complement the interview ([Rivas and Herrera, 2010](#)).

The tools presented in this paper invite us to reflect on the impact of their use. They are instruments with a visual character, so their application represents a break from traditional data analysis and extraction paradigms ([Wang, 2023](#)). Nevertheless, they can be considered complementary tools, especially appropriate in biographical-narrative research that seeks to achieve a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study. Adopting this complementary approach enriches the research and ideas, scenarios and latent memories emerge, which provide the information with greater meaning, favoring its understanding ([Mannay, 2017](#)).

Moreover, these instruments can be considered creative data-collection techniques that provide the researcher and the participant with information from other perspectives and sources. At the same time, they facilitate the interpretation and conversion of abstract data into more concrete information. Visual techniques provide a clear and direct understanding of the object of study, allowing the researcher and the researched to capture information that would not otherwise be possible using other procedures ([Rodrigues, 2017](#)). In using and applying the strategies described above, the participatory methodologies approach ([Reason and Bradbury, 2001](#)) has been taken as a reference. From this approach, the proposed tools empower the informant, foster critical awareness and involve them in the research process.

Another reason for using such tools is the evolution of qualitative data collection techniques. The use of creative instruments and processes – whether complementary or additional to traditional instruments – provides an opportunity to strengthen data collection and understanding. In research areas of a subjective nature within the social sciences, such as the educational sciences, the use of creative and innovative tools to enrich the data-collection process can contribute to enhancing biographical-narrative research by providing nuances, filling in gaps and analyzing whispered silences.

Constructing a flow chart, using the flight of geese metaphor, visual diagrams and photo-elucidation will help the researcher delve into the meanings the informant attaches to their own world and to consider these within the social and political contexts that surround them. For this reason, and in line with other authors ([Bolívar and Domingo, 2019](#); [Moriña, 2017](#)),

these resources are very useful for organizing, exploring and investigating the narratives that emerge from the voices of the subjects and promote reflection and a dialectical interaction between researcher and researched.

Contributions from the field of visual methods and their application in social and educational research have heralded the potential of applying visual techniques and resources during fieldwork (Banks, 2019; Mannay, 2017). Previous studies (Bolívar, 2012; Correa, 2019; Fernández- Terol, 2021; Meo and Dabenigno, 2011) have shown that these tools help the researcher to (1) create a contextual framework of the cases, subjects and institutions under investigation; (2) delve into emerging themes and aspects of a more subjective nature with the informant; (3) inquire into the networking and relational structures of an educational institution and (4) delve into the development and trajectory of an educational institution or the identity dimension of the school's professionals, areas of growing interest in the field of social sciences (Cruz *et al.*, 2021; Domingo *d* 2017). However, it must be considered that the form of these methods and their application may vary depending on the interests and needs of the research. In short, this work highlights the utility of employing various creative and visual tools that complement conventional techniques and strategies in the collection of qualitative data.

7. Finding

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Further reading

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