

The method as an essential element in the research process

El método como elemento esencial en el proceso investigador

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“The method is the road or means to reach an end, the way to do something in an orderly manner, the path to act and proceed in order to achieve a certain goal”

Mendieta Alatorre

The study and knowledge of all different sciences entails challenges that require a planned resolve in order to achieve pre-established scientific goals, which undoubtedly calls for effective methods to validate the development of the research itself. It is important to implement a scientific model that is open to new formulas regarding the search for knowledge, but it is equally necessary -even essential- to use structured tools capable of orienting said search from the very beginning of the research, since the opposite could cause unfortunate turns that, on many occasions, lead to inefficiency and conceptual confusion. Even though all research processes tend to follow an argumentative logic aimed at obtaining contrastable results, the intention guiding said research is frequently linked to intuitions not always supported by a previous study, based on a rigorous analysis of the different circumstances that may accompany the development of the research. This usually generates delays, discouragement and, sometimes, conceptual errors that are difficult to solve. That is why all research should be accompanied by a thorough prior reflection aimed at establishing and conceptualizing a tangible scientific method, built on well-founded pillars capable of consolidating a solid structure that clearly determines every single aspect to be addressed in the research. In other words, an effective research method will guide the procedures, as well as helping researchers achieve their set goals.

On the other hand, the definition of scientific knowledge implies in itself a diversity of methods, allowing for a multiplicity of validating perspectives when it comes to the

definition of objectives and the planning of the development of the research. Therefore, the construction of a scientific method, regardless of its classification, should always establish as fundamental principles aspects such as: the definition of the problem, the outlining of research questions, the consequent hypothesis and the relational analysis of the problems and objectives, as well as the identification of the structural model that will be applied to the subject matter of the research. This allows us to assert that research methods should be understood as instruments, as a set of organised procedures capable of orienting scientific production towards a good, reliable end. However, the right selection and definition of a method does not equal definitive success, since a solid research project also requires an effective implementation, as well as a thorough evaluation of all the variables that may arise unexpectedly as a consequence of the complexities of research; a process that undoubtedly admits diverse routes in order to formulate a formal interrelation between the different aspects linked to any subject matter.

Research methods are, therefore, key elements structuring the primary ideas that will orient the most likely solutions to the original questions posed by researchers. Communication Studies, as a field of knowledge within Social and Human Sciences, has to find its own structural articulation with the ability to articulate a distinct scientific personality, which should not be separate or isolated from all Social Sciences.

The recent International Conference of Methodologies in Communication Research held at the Complutense University of Madrid -currently in its sixth edition- aims to consolidate a process of rationalization of the specific methodology in and for the field of Communication Studies. The various proposals for different techniques and methodologies addressed and discussed throughout the Conference -some of which are developed in this issue-, show a clear intention to devise solutions to the specific aspects of the field, drawing on initiatives fundamented on a thorough study of classic methodologies. The diversity of topics and the various origins of the researchers participating in said Conference indicate a relevant and growing interest in communication research as a necessary and essential tool for social cohesion. The University, as a key institution for the advancement of critical thinking needs to develop actions such as this Conference to enhance our understanding of the deep revolution that our society is currently undergoing with regards to the different ways and possibilities of communication.

In all this tangle of ideas and concepts, the structuring and hierarchization of rational thought must be approached from the simplicity and/or complexity of the scientific method as the only reliable source of knowledge. In our new reality, built from uncertainties, rumors, fallacies and over-information, it is essential to generate scientific consensus that will ensure the existence of well grounded spaces of reflection free of all kinds of prejudices; methodology is the foundation of this building.

Therefore, the implicit value assigned here to the scientific method as a necessary element in every research process is reinforced in this second issue of the Journal

Communication and Methods by bringing together articles whose varied subject matter consolidates the validity and usefulness of what is described here. Topics included in this issue are as diverse as: content analysis in the process of modelling fictional characters; categories of brand image analysis; benchmarking using ICT tools; discourse analysis in influencers for the study of non-verbal communication; the construction of a city's image through Instagram publications; optimisation of the effectiveness of video game discourse; the impact of text messages on advertising posters; experience as a new epistemological and methodological horizon in Audiovisual Communication research; a model of sound reproducibility in passive music therapy; difficulties of qualitative research on media activism; multiple methods in communication studies; and methodology for the study of the history of video games in Spain, among others. Notwithstanding the intrinsic interest of all different contributions, this thematic plurality offers a varied approach to the scientific process itself, showing an enriching diversity that validates the multiplicity of procedures available when planning a research project. For this reason, this second issue of *Communication and Methods*, in addition to thanking all its collaborators for their valuable contributions, maintains the line of recognition of all research processes that consolidate their work by building a solid and rigorous research structure beyond mere ornamentation.

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