

Research design for social work research: a question of coherence (1.5 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Friday October 13 (13h45-17h15)

Friday November 10 (13h45-17h15)

Venue

University of Neuchâtel, Ave. du 1er mars, 26, room B29

Teaching team

Swetha Rao Dhananka, Professor, HETS-FR, HES-SO

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS, UniNE

Content of the seminar

The aim of this seminar is to equip the students with methodological knowledge, patterns of thought and concrete application to elaborate their own research design for their PhD study. Research design is the “glue” that holds the theoretical and empirical parts of the research together. It structures the research, builds its coherence and presents a roadmap for its execution. It is an arrangement of conditions that allows to control the variance and to conceive data collection and analysis in a manner that presents a logical basis for countless decisions with adequate feasibility and procedure.

In this seminar students will learn to appreciate the inherent logic behind each research design that will be collectively derived from concrete examples and consolidated in class. They will acquaint themselves with different types of research designs along with their related control pathways and will discuss the adequateness of each, to certain types of research questions, while considering social science research quality criteria.

In particular we will delve into the case study research design widely used in social work research and discuss the central notion of comparison.

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation. Based on a research question, submit 1 A4 page until the 28.11.2023:

- graphically representing the (potential) research design
- situating the research question in a possible theoretical framework, or at least in a body of literature
- indicating the constants, the variables / the cases
- discussing the type of control
- arguing the pertinence of the research design for the research question, based on the quality criteria
- discussing potential biases
- indicating potential data-gathering methods



Form of teaching

This seminar is conducted as a workshop and includes moments of collective reflection moderated by the faculty and consolidated in class with support of theoretical inputs. The application of discussed designs is experimented in group work and drawing upon student's research projects as cases. On the second day time is reserved to discuss 1-2 student projects.

Learning goals

- Understand the purpose of elaborating a research design
- Be familiar with different types of research design and know to argue the adequateness of each in relation to particular types of research questions
- Understand the centrality of comparison to grasp causality
- Distinguish variables, constants and different types of case constellations
- Consider social science research quality criteria when elaborating a research design

Pre-condition and registration

Registration as a PhD student at a Swiss university or pedagogical contract as a future PhD student of the ITTS. Some coursework in research methodology or research experience is of advantage. Registration at messagerie.itts@unine.ch until September 29.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.