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# DEMOCratic governance and Social responsibility for a better and secure EUROPE [DEMOS EUROPE]

Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Sectoral Programme  
Erasmus University Charter no.  
50387-IC-1-2007-1-RO-ERASMUS-EUCX-1  
Erasmus IP ref. no. 13-EIP-RO PITESTI01bis

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission

# HANDBOOK

**DEMOS**

**EUROPE**



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contained therein.

**University of Pitești, Romania**  
**11-25 May 2014**

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and Social responsibility  
for a better and secure EUROPE  
IDEMOS EUROPE!**

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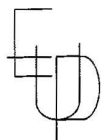
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This handbook was conceived for the intensive course to be performed within the framework of the Erasmus IP project titled „*DEMOCratic governance and Social responsibility for a better and secure EUROPE [DEMOS EUROPE]*”.

The above-mentioned project (having the reference number 13-EIP-RO PITESTI01-bis), has been financed by the European Commission through the Romanian Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Professional Training and has been implemented by the University of Pitești as project coordinator, through its Center for Sustainable Development Projects.

The handbook presents the contents of 4 teaching modules, namely:

<p>Module 1: Basic terms and conceptual delimitations on European and national democratic governance</p>	<p>Lecturer Dr. Czachor RAFAL Lower Silesian College of Entrepreneurship and Technology (Poland)</p> <p>Associate Professor Dr. Georgeta CHIRLEȘAN University of Pitești (Romania)</p>
<p>Module 2: Practicing democracy: values and social behavior in governance</p>	<p>Professor Dr. Paola NICOLINI University of Macerata (Italy)</p>
<p>Module 3: Scientific research on democratic governance and social responsibility</p>	<p>Dr. Cristina Mesquita PIRES Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (Portugal)</p>
<p>Module 4: IT and web-based technologies for designing dissemination products</p>	<p>Associate Professor Jens BERG, MA Lillebaelt Academy of Professional Higher Education (Denmark)</p>

Each module is presented in a common format: theoretical part, questions for debates, group activities and bibliography/further readings.

The teaching modules will alternate with practical modules (field research, meetings with stakeholders, group work, debates and discussions, analyses, reporting).

The course will have duration of two weeks and will be taught at the University of Pitești to a group composed of 25 students coming from five European countries: Denmark, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Romania.



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



Erasmus Intensive Programme:

**DEMOCratic governance and Social responsibility  
for a better and secure EUROPE  
[DEMOS EUROPE]**

Ref. no.: 13-EIP-RO PITESTI01-bis



Title of the module:	<b>Scientific research on democratic governance and social responsibility</b>
Scientific Domain:	Methodology of scientific research: theory and practice
Course holder:	<b>(Dr.) Cristina Mesquita PIRES</b>
Home Institution:	Instituto Politécnico de Bragança (IPB) - Portugal
Teaching activities:	3 hours
Practical activities:	3 hours

## THEORETICAL CONTENT (1)

**Key concepts:** Qualitative Research; Phenomenology. Ethnography; Grounded theory; Case study; Critical Qualitative Research; Action research

### Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is the method of choice when the research question requires an understanding of processes, events and relationships in the context of the social and cultural situation. Instead of generating numerical data supporting or refuting clear cut hypotheses, qualitative research aims to produce factual descriptions based on face-to-face knowledge of individuals and social groups in their natural settings. Qualitative research is useful for obtaining insight into situations and problems concerning which one may have little knowledge.

Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with practice and process rather than outcomes. That is, they focus on the process that is occurring instead of the outcome of that process. The focus is on participants' perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives.

In that sense, qualitative research is concerned with understanding and interpreting another person's social world through accessing their lived experiences. Because of that the qualitative researcher starts his work with two basic questions: What do I want to know? What set of techniques do I need to find out what I want to know?

In qualitative work, the fact that the researcher is also a research instrument requires all their senses are fine-tuned. He has to enhance the way he is: Seeing (observation); Hearing (interview); Writing (research reflexive journal); Conceptualizing; Synthesizing; Thinking critically;

Putting it together and Communicating.

### Characteristics of qualitative research

Below we present briefly the main characteristics of qualitative research

General framework	Seek to explore phenomena Instruments use more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation
Analytical objectives	To describe variation To describe and explain relationships To describe individual experiences To describe group norms
Question format	Open-ended
Data format	Textual (obtained from audiotapes, videotapes, and field notes)
Flexibility in study design	Some aspects of the study are flexible (for example, the addition, exclusion, or wording of particular interview questions) Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next Study design is iterative, that is, data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned

### Types of research

**Phenomenological Study:** Aims to find the essence or structure of an experience by explaining how complex meanings are built out of simple units of inner experience, for example, the essence of being a participant

in a particular program or the essence of understanding a subject. The method involves temporarily putting aside or “bracketing” personal attitudes and beliefs regarding the phenomenon, thereby heightening consciousness and allowing the researcher to intuit or see the phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it. All collected data is laid out and treated as equal, clustered into themes, examined from multiple perspectives, and descriptions of the phenomena (how and what) are constructed.

**Grounded Theory Study:** Derives from collected data a theory that is *grounded* in the data, but therefore localized, dealing with a specific situation like how students handle multiple responsibilities or what constitutes an effective lesson plan. The method involves comparing collected units of data against one another until categories, properties, and hypotheses that state relations between these categories and properties emerge. These hypotheses are tentative and suggestive, not tested in the study.

**Case Studies:** A descriptive intensive analysis of an individual, unit, or phenomena selected for its typicality or uniqueness. Different methods could be used to conduct this analysis (like ethnography) but the focus is on the unit of analysis, like an individual student’s experiences.

**Ethnographic Study:** Traditional in anthropology for studying human society and culture. It is less a method of data collection and more the use of a socio-cultural lens through which the data are interpreted. Extensive fieldwork is usually required in order to give a cultural interpretation of the data and immersion in the culture is common, but a description of the culture (the beliefs, traditions, practices, and behaviors of a group of

individuals) and an interpretation of the culture through the point of view of an insider to that culture are necessary components of ethnographies.

**Critical Qualitative Research:** This writing aims to reveal and critique the social, cultural, and psychological assumptions regarding present day contexts with the goal of empowering individuals and enabling change. It challenges current power distributions and the status quo, as opposed to merely revealing meaning. Research questions may address race, gender, and class influences, how current power structures may serve some groups’ interests and oppress others, and how truth and knowledge are constructed. This analysis is critical for methods like participatory action research which uses such critique as the basis for collective action.

**Action Research** – which is also known as Participatory Action Research (PAR), community-based study, co-operative enquiry, action science and action learning – is an approach commonly used for improving conditions and practices in social environments. It involves practitioners of different areas – education healthcare; social problems..) conducting systematic enquiries in order to help them improve their own practices, which in turn can enhance their working environment and the working environments of those who are part of it – clients, patients, and users. The purpose of undertaking action research is to bring about change in specific contexts. Through observations and reflection sessions and with the help of a critical friend, practitioners making evaluations and judgments about what it is they do. The difference between this and carrying out an action research project is that during the process researchers will need to develop and use a range of skills

**Steps on qualitative research**

**1. Decide on a question you want to study.** A good research question needs to be clear, specific and achievable. To do qualitative research, your question should explore reasons for why people do things or believe in something.

**2. Define you objectives of research and choose the participants population**

**3. Do a background literature review.** A literature review can help you find out what others have found about your question. Doing this may help you to focus your question more specifically. A literature review will also help you to become better informed about the topic you are choosing and help you to determine if there is a need for your question to be answered.

**4. Choose a qualitative research methodology you want to use.**

- Ethnography
- Phenomenology
- Grounded Theory
- Case Study Research
- Action-research

**5. Define you objectives of research and choose the participants**

**6. Collect your data**

There are several methods of collecting data that you can use to do qualitative research:

- Direct observation
- Participant observation
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Focus groups

**7. Analyze your data.**

Once you have collected your data, you can begin to analyze it and come up with answers and theories to your research question.

- Coding
- Statistics
- Narrative analysis
- Content analysis

**8. Prepare your report.** When preparing the report on your qualitative research, keep in mind the audience for whom you are writing and also the formatting guidelines of the research journal you wish to submit your research to. You will want to make sure that your purpose for your research question is compelling and that you explain your research methodology and analysis in detail.

#### **Advantages of qualitative research**

One advantage of qualitative methods in exploratory research is that use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as quantitative methods do. Open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are:

- meaningful and culturally salient to the participant
- unanticipated by the researcher
- rich and explanatory in nature

Besides qualitative methods allow the researcher to ask why or how. The researcher must listen carefully to what participants say, engage with them according to their individual personalities and styles, and encourage them to elaborate on their answers.

#### **QUESTIONS / DEBATING ISSUES (1)**

- What is qualitative research?
- How can I do qualitative research?
- What can we learn from qualitative research?
- What are the advantages of qualitative research?

#### **GROUP ACTIVITIES (1)**

- Discuss in group your question research and try to explain what type of research you want to do.

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## THEORETICAL CONTENT (2)

**Key concepts:** field research; desk research,

### Field research

Field research is especially effective for studying subtle nuances in attitudes and behaviors and for examining social processes over time. The main strength of this method, then, lies in the depth of understanding that it allows. Rarely is field research challenged as being "superficial."

Qualitative research, typically involves fieldwork in which the researcher observes and records behavior and events in their natural setting. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, or site in order to observe the subject as it normally and naturally behaves.

For the **field research** you need to:

Select context and gain access.

Enter the field and establish relationships in the setting.

Adopt a social role and learn the ropes of that role.

Select participants / subjects taking into account the research questions

Once you have decide your research question and choose the field/context of the study you must do your **desk research**:

Decide which are the best instruments for data collection

Create the tools for data collection (design your guide interview; schedule observation times, situations, subjects, deciding how to record field notes and observations)

Define your timetable

---

### QUESTIONS / DEBATING ISSUES (2)

- Where will I collect my data?
- How many participants / subjects I choose?
- What time I have to do the research?
- How should I prepare the instruments for data collection?

### GROUP ACTIVITIES (2)

- Select your instrument data collection
- Chose your participants/subjects
- Discuss and present the timetable for your research

### BIBLIOGRAPHY / FURTHER READINGS (2)

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- Janesick, V. (2004). "Stretching" Exercises for qualitative researchers. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

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### THEORETICAL CONTENT (3)

**Key concepts:** research methods, interviews; observation; field notes; focus-group.

#### Qualitative research methods and instruments

The qualitative methods, we will explain here, are participant observation, interviews and focus groups.

#### Participant observation

Participant observation is a key tool in ethnographic investigation, which seeks to describe human interaction and behavior through firsthand accounts and field work. Participant observation is in effect a combination of a wide variety of methods, including observation; informal interviews and/or conversations; analysis of other materials and evidence encountered while in the field; biographies, life histories, and personal accounts and stories of participants; and researcher documentation and diaries. It is associated primarily with the qualitative research approach because it is (a) often exploratory in nature and (b) used when there is a lack of existing empirical evidence about a group of individuals. It can also incorporate quantitative features either in terms of the data collected or analyzed. Because the approach involves the observation of people on a firsthand basis and coming to understand their collective and individual behaviors, norms, and customs, it is necessary for the researcher to carry out extended periods of field work to permit in-depth immersion. Longitudinal and repeated periods of study allow for the collection of greater and more varied data, provide increased opportunities for comparative observations, and enhance the accuracy of data and resultant findings.

### **The interview**

The interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. During interviews, the person being interviewed is considered the expert and the interviewer is considered the student. The researcher's interviewing techniques are motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research topic. Researchers engage with participants by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to participants' responses, and asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses. They do not lead participants according to any preconceived notions, nor do they encourage participants to provide particular answers by expressing approval or disapproval of what they say.

Interviews are usually conducted face-to-face and involve one interviewer and one participant.

### **To prepare the interview**

- Draw the interview guide taking into account the thematic blocks; objectives of data collection; formulating open questions
- Study the interview guide.
- Study the informed consent document (We will present this point in iten: Ethics in qualitative research).

### **In the Day of the interview:**

- Verify that you have all the equipment.
- If the instruments and consent forms exist in more than one language be sure you have the appropriate ones for that participant.
- Arrive early at the interview site to set up equipment.
- Test your recording equipment.

### **Conducting the Interview**

- Greet the participant in a friendly manner to begin establishing positive rapport.
- Briefly describe the steps of the interview process (informed consent,

question and answer, their questions).

Obtain informed consent.

Turn on the tape recorder and verify that it is working.

Conduct the interview according to the interview guide.

Give the participant the opportunity to ask questions.

Turn off the tape recorder and thank the participant.

Clarify any factual errors expressed by participants during the interview.

### **After the Interview**

Check the tape to see if the interview was recorded. If it was not, expand your notes immediately.

Punch out the re-record tab.

Make sure all materials are labeled with the archival number.

Debrief with other field staff.

### **Focus-Group**

A focus group is a qualitative data collection method in which one or two researchers and several participants meet as a group to discuss a given research topic. These sessions are usually tape recorded, and sometimes videotaped. One researcher (the moderator) leads the discussion by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions – that is, questions that require an in-depth response rather than a single phrase or simple “yes” or “no” answer. A second researcher (the note-taker) takes detailed notes on the discussion. A principal advantage of focus groups is that they yield a large amount of information over a relatively short period of time. They are also effective for accessing a broad range of views on a specific topic, as opposed to achieving group consensus. Focus groups are not the best method for acquiring information on highly personal or socially sensitive topics; one-on-one interviews are better-suited for such topics.

### **QUESTIONS / DEBATING ISSUES (3)**

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation?
- What form do participant observation data take?
- What should I take into account to conduct an interview?
- What are the advantages to conduct a focus group?

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### GROUP ACTIVITIES (3)

- Draw an interview guide or questionnaire

### BIBLIOGRAPHY / FURTHER READINGS (3)

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### THEORETICAL CONTENT (4)

**Key concepts:** data analyses; coding, categories; thematic analysis; exemplars; narrative analysis; content analysis

#### Methods of analyses

Most qualitative research probably is based on written productions resulting from oral discourse or field notes. The term *analysis* was defined by MacNaughton and Huges (2008) as a “search for an explanation and understanding in the course of which concepts and theories will probably be advanced, considered and developed” (p. 172). In qualitative research data analysis involves three tasks:

Organizing the data for analyses (label the data, transform it; check with participants,)

Coding and categorize data (it’s a complex process, of reading and understand the relevance of the data and creating categories.

You must list your coding categories; define each category so that are clear what is include or exclude; identify the rules by which

you assign content to a category; provide an example of each category, so that others can check how you have categorized your data).

Sifting the data for patterns; analyzing the data and displaying the results (Identify themes, ideas and patterns in your data)

The analysis of qualitative data requires a research to interpret their data actively, in order to elicit the various meanings that they represent.

#### Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon. The process involves the identification of themes through careful reading and rereading of the data. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis

#### Exemplars

Exemplars can work in two ways: they can illustrate themes that have emerged already; or they can come together to demonstrate that a theme exists.

#### Statistics

You can analyze your data using statistics. Descriptive statistics simply describe what the data is showing while inferential statistics tries to formulate conclusions beyond the data.

#### Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis focuses on speech and content, such as grammar, word usage, story themes, meanings of situations, the social, cultural and political context of the narrative.

### Content analysis

Content analysis looks at texts or series of texts and looks for themes and meanings by looking at frequencies of words.

### QUESTIONS / DEBATING ISSUES (4)

- How do I best analyse my data?
- Do I need to do a quick overview at this point or a deeper analysis?
- What software packages help me with a deeper analysis?
- How could I compare the data collected by different instruments?

### GROUP ACTIVITIES (4)

Read the excerpt of the interview presented here and make the categorization and coding of data

### BIBLIOGRAPHY / FURTHER READINGS (4)

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### THEORETICAL CONTENT (5)

**Key concepts:** ethics, informed consent, confidentiality, rigor, validity.

### Ethics in qualitative research.

#### Informed consent

Informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate. Informed consent is one of the most important tools for ensuring *respect for persons* during research.

Typically, formal informed consent is necessary for all qualitative research methods except participant observation, regardless of the sampling method used to identify potential participants and the strategies used to recruit them. Whether this informed consent is oral or written depends on a number of project-specific factors and ultimately upon approval by the ethics committee. During recruitment, obtaining informed consent for qualitative research involves clearly explaining the project to potential study participants.

### QUESTIONS / DEBATING ISSUES (5)

- What is informed consent?
- How do we achieve informed consent for qualitative research?
- How can I ensure data confidentiality?