



Research
Workshop
Didactic orientation

MANTA

Mini-Publics And Other New Forms
Of Participation In Civic Education

Imprint

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

This guide provides information on the research-based learning method for participants in a MANTA research workshop. It should be used together with our MANTA research workshop material.

Many instruments of citizen participation are unknown, even to professionals.

Teachers need differentiated knowledge about these forms of participation in the form of orientation and interpretation knowledge. They should also be supported in analysing these forms of participation critically and reflectively on their own.



Tip: Our Blended Learning Training presents material that can be used by teachers for independent study in a continuing education perspective or by pre-service teachers in initial education in a structured format. Further information you can find in our Compendium. It primarily serves as the scientific foundation where theoretical debates are presented alongside case studies.

In this manual, teachers learn how to make these forms of participation part of their teaching.

Studies show that new forms of political and social participation are popular, especially among young people (cf. e.g. Albert, Hurrelmann, Quenzel 2015, 156f.). Thus, as teaching and learning content, they offer students motivating starting points and valuable opportunities to reflect on democratisation, participation, and social challenges. In dealing with new deliberative forms of participation, students learn that these instruments - and processes - can be organised in very different ways, each with different effects. In addition, in a citizens' council, for example, problems are dealt with that are very complex (cf. the phenomenon of 'wicked problems' in Grundmann, 2016).

In the MANTA project, teachers and students expand their knowledge about deliberative forms of participation. We propose a teaching/learning setting based on the didactic approach of research-based learning and combines this with problem-oriented impulses in a research workshop (Haarmann and Lange 2013, p. 77ff.). Our concept of the research workshop aims to enable students to understand and reflect on the complexity of fundamental problems and analyse possibilities for change in a scientifically oriented, self-controlled teaching-learning process.

For a simple implementation of a MANTA research workshop in everyday teaching, the manual provides

- introductory information on the didactic principles of problem-based and research-based learning,
- an overview of social science research methods and a guide to research steps,

Together, these materials and methods are intended to enable the implementation of a MANTA research workshop and provide and stimulate an introductory theoretical foundation for the methods used. This manual offers general basic guidelines, which does not mean every step must be carried out as described. Teachers can be flexible in its implementation.

Didactic orientation of a MANTA research workshop

Research-based learning

The research-based learning approach is characterised by a largely open teaching/learning situation and requires learners to play an active role in shaping the learning process and dealing with knowledge. Participants can identify, ask and explore problems and questions themselves to expand their knowledge and develop solutions.

In this sense, research-based learning can thrive on personal interest, curiosity, and imagination. In doing so, research-based learning follows the principles of scientific work. The teacher teaches methodological knowledge in a focused way, and the methodological procedure is reflected in the process.

In project lessons and key subjects of Civic, and Citizenship Education (e.g. politics, history, law, social studies), this "research workshop" can explore and discuss the potential and limits of participation instruments such as the citizens' council.

Problem-based Learning

Problem-based learning turns the traditional learning setting on its head. Instead of providing a ready-made theoretical framework, it links to concrete problems, which open the way to theoretical models. Problem-oriented approaches encourage learners to ask their questions and find their answers. In doing so, they can be guided by their interests. This method picks up on learners' interest in specific topics and tries to use this in a way that is effective for learning. The participants in the MANTA research workshop learn to analyse a problem, find and use suitable sources of information and compare, select, and implement solutions. Problem-based learning stands for an active, task-oriented, and self-controlled teaching-learning approach. Participants are encouraged to reflect on problems for which there are no clear answers or simple solutions. They are thus encouraged to explore the complexity of the real world. Problem-based learning thus promotes an active, task-oriented, and self-controlled teaching-learning process.

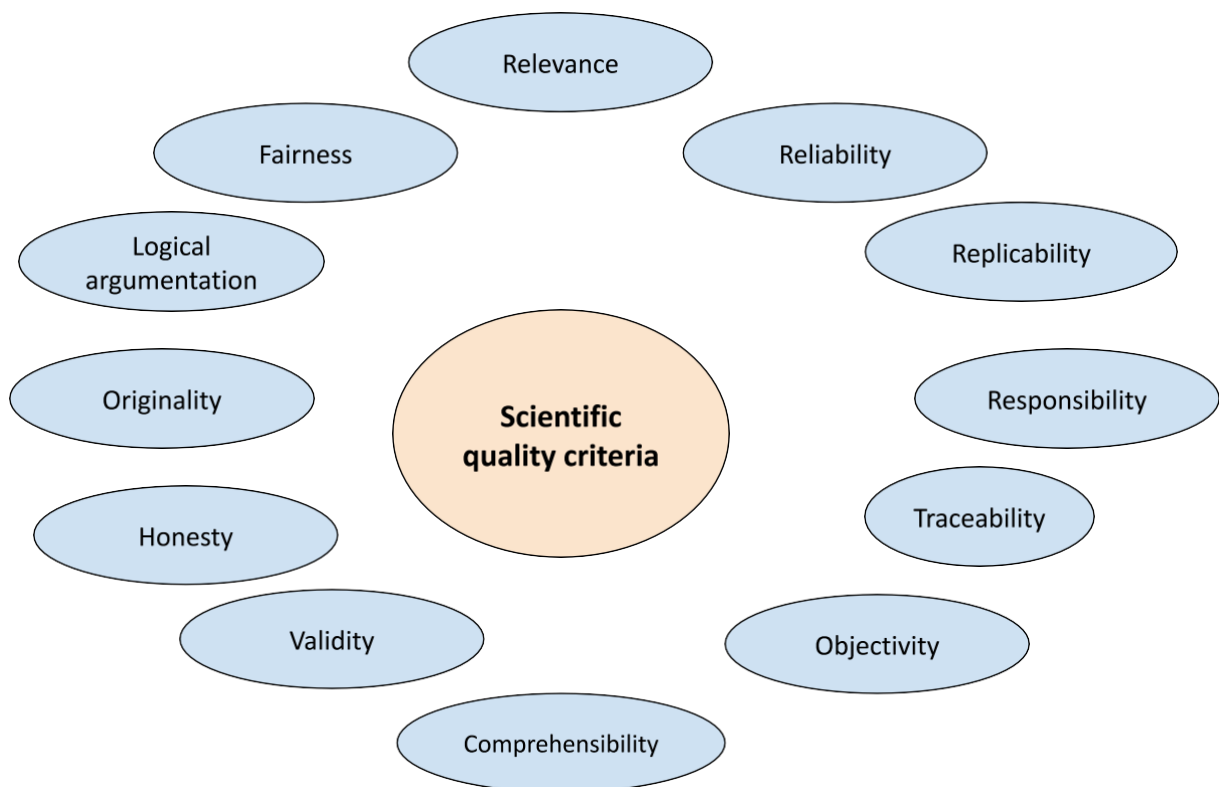
Our goal: Critical thinking

Our concept of the MANTA research workshop aims to teach participants to adopt a critical, reflective attitude and to learn that there are no easy answers to complex questions. This consideration is an essential aspect of political judgment. It also includes the ability to think critically and develop arguments to assess the long-term consequences of extensions or additions to representative democracy, such as deliberative forms of participation. Critical thinking empowers participants to see themselves as active and responsible citizens of society.

Overview of social science research methods

Understanding general research processes in the social sciences is helpful to reflect the methodological approaches of research- and problem-based learning.

This chapter provides an overview of the basic steps of the scientific research process in Social Sciences. To do this, it first looks at the criteria that constitute scientific research and discusses the essential steps in a research process, such as selecting a research topic, formulating a research question, structuring the research process itself, and writing a research report.



What do we mean by research?

A simple explanation could be the search for the answer to a (research) question. There is no complete and definitive list of quality criteria for research. Nevertheless, certain criteria can be named (cf. Balzert et al.

2011: 13 ff.): Honesty, objectivity, replicability, reliability (of the measurement method), validity (i.e. what can the method measure at all?), traceability, relevance, logical argumentation, originality, comprehensibility, fairness, responsibility.

Guide to research steps



1. Develop a research question
2. Review the state of research
3. Design research plan, clarify methods
4. Conduct and evaluate research
5. Classify, evaluate, and reflect on results
6. Present, explain, and publish results

1. Research topic and research question

Choosing a research topic and defining a clear research question are challenging steps. Initially, many ideas may seem interesting. Research topics may emerge from library research, societal debates or practical problems. To find a matching research question, taking up a politically or socially controversial topic is a good idea to feed this debate with scientific knowledge.

Ideas for a suitable research question often do not come from an extensive literature review alone. Still, they are likely to be closely linked to one's own experiences, beliefs, and theoretical approaches. Sometimes, you may not even be aware of this connection. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these personal influencing factors to critically reflect on how they might affect your research.

A research question should be clearly and precisely formulated and be able to be answered using social science research methods. Research questions do not contain judgements but meet these necessary criteria:

- Research questions should be open and not directly answerable,
- but answerable within the research framework.
- They should give structure to the research and guide it,
- while being answered in the conclusions.

Finally, the research question should motivate the researcher, as it is the heart of the whole research.

2. Review the state of research

Conduct a detailed literature review to understand the current state-of-the-art of knowledge in your research topic. This will help you place your question in the context of existing research or revise it if necessary.

3. Design the research plan, clarify the methods

Once the research question is formulated, you need to find a way to answer it. Develop a research plan in which you define the methods and techniques you will use to collect and analyse data. The social science research methods will depend on your research question, theoretical and methodological preferences. These include, for example, the choice between qualitative or quantitative research, surveys, interviews, and more. Each method has its advantages and limitations.

When planning your research, you need to consider all the necessary steps for your data collection. You will also need time to interpret the data and write the final report.

4. Conduct and evaluate the research

Implement your research plan and conduct the planned research. Collect data and carefully consider your methodological choices. After completing the data collection, evaluate your results.

5. Classify, evaluate and reflect on results

Evaluate the results of your research question. Interpret how the results contribute to solving the problem or support or disprove your research question.

6. Present, explain and publish results

Present your results in a clear and understandable format, whether in the form of a scientific paper or a research report. Explain your conclusions and how they fit into the research context. Consider publishing your work in scientific journals, conferences, or other relevant media.

Although only a short introduction to the research process is possible within the scope of this manual, it is clear that scientific research is a complex, time-consuming, and labour-intensive activity. Research requires patience, self-reflexion, and the ability to develop and follow a work plan. In addition, the person conducting the research should be open to rethinking one's methods and results and having them critiqued by others. In fact, thorough social science research is the exact opposite of simplistic, obvious solutions: Social science research reveals that there are far more questions than answers, more uncertainties than certainties, and more tentatively formulated than conclusive answers.

Sources & reading recommendations

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- Einzelne Texte aus dem Leitfaden basieren auf dem Erasmus+ - Project: REFLECT LAB – Supporting lecturers in applying inquiry based learning - Manual for Learners (https://www.reflect-lab.eu/fileadmin/reflect-lab/pdf/IO3_en.pdf)



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