

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Professional practice as a social worker with individuals, families, groups and communities must be grounded in an analysis of the reality that contributes to the diagnosis of situation-problems, as well as an evaluation of the social intervention processes.

Putting these processes into practice requires solid training in the scientific knowledge relating to the epistemological and methodological bases of social sciences and social research. For this purpose, this subject examines these issues in depth, in both theory and practice. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring social work students are capable of performing research procedures, both diagnostic and evaluation-based, as well as being able to use the main quantitative and qualitative techniques for data gathering and analysis.

COMPETENCIES

- Understand the importance and general utility in professional practice of information emanating from social research.
- Know and properly use the language specific to social research and be able to interpret its results.
- Discern the theoretical and practical differences among the various perspectives involved in social research.
- Know and understand the foundations of methodological design for gathering information in social research.
- Know and understand the main procedures (practical or technical) applied in social research.
- Understand the fundamental principles of interpretation, synthesis and communication of social research results.

CONTENT

1. Research and social work. The place of research in social work. Typical models, processes and practices in social work research.
2. Reflections and methodological and epistemological bases of social research. Basic issues regarding scientific knowledge. Knowledge of social reality. Main paradigms underpinning social research. Quantitative and qualitative methodology: pluralism and methodological complementarity.
3. The research process. Research design. Obtaining data and fieldwork. Data analysis and interpretation. The research report.
4. The main research procedures. Sample design and selection in qualitative and quantitative research. Statistical surveys. Open interviews. Discussion groups. Observation. Biographical techniques and practices.
5. Use of documentary sources and databases. Different types of documentation. Main Spanish and European databases and documentary sources. Selection criteria and critical review.
6. Organization and communication of information arising out of social research: keys for drafting conclusions and preparation of the final report.