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## **Access to school units regarding the organization of an experimental research**

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**Abstract:** This article aims to identify ways in which experimental research can be conducted within a school unit, especially in cases where such research is required (e.g., for a bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, etc.), and where the student/master's student is not a teaching staff member, is not known by the school community, and there is no intermediary between the researcher and the school staff.

**Keywords:** research, school institution, access

### **1. Introduction**

Research is a systematic process of collecting and analysing data/information to clarify a specific aspect. Scientifically, it is a process undertaken by a researcher with the goal of solving a problem, while from the perspective of research methodology, it represents a general approach assumed by the researcher in the investigative process (Popa, 2019).

Research is a cyclical process: it begins with a problem/question without an answer, followed by a clear objective in presenting the issue. The problem is divided into subproblems, solutions are proposed through hypotheses, data are analysed according to the hypotheses and the organization of the data, and the results are interpreted to resolve the problem by confirming or disproving the hypothesis/hypotheses (Popa, 2019).

According to Sorin Cristea (2009), pedagogical research is a field of social activity within the context of the educational process. Its general function is to regulate and self-regulate activities organized for this purpose. The aim of conducting research is to draw valid inferences concerning social life, specifically within the field of education and teaching.

In specialized dictionaries, various terms are used to describe pedagogical research: applied research, innovative research, conceptual research, didactic research, educational research, experimental research, etc. As Cristea mentions, experimental research refers to an objective and systematic study of the possible cause-effect relationships in one or more experimental groups subjected to one or more treatments, with results compared.



Experimental research involves an in-depth study of the specialized literature to clarify the concepts that will be used throughout the research, the existence of a group of subjects on which tests/questionnaires will be applied, the formulation of research objectives, the creation of hypotheses, the use of an instrument (questionnaire/test), the presentation of the results obtained, their interpretation from a quantitative perspective (using Excel or SPSS), and of course, from a qualitative perspective (interpretation from a psychological, educational, and personal viewpoint).

During the course of their specialized studies, students/master's students are required to conduct research in the field of education on certain aspects, which will be confirmed or refuted with the help of hypotheses. Although the student and supervisor's responsibilities are often fulfilled, the issue arises when discussing access to educational institutions. Access to a school unit is often difficult when the researcher is not a teacher and does not have acquaintances, relatives, or friends who could help secure this access.

Although certain documents are required to be completed and submitted for this purpose, they do not guarantee success. After preparing these documents, discussions with teachers/instructors who teach in the relevant classes are necessary. The agreement of both the teaching staff and the parents is essential.

It is common for teachers to agree to participate in this process, even though it requires them to give up several hours of their instructional time. The problem arises when the researcher encounters the refusal of parents to grant consent for their children's participation in the research. In such a situation, what can a researcher do? One possible option would be to try multiple schools, but preparing the required documentation for each educational institution could be time-consuming, and there is no certainty that this approach would be successful.

To facilitate access for students and master's students who need to conduct scientific research, a bachelor's thesis, or a dissertation, it would be appropriate to create guides at the university level that provide clear guidance for each stage of the process and offer possible solutions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to establish partnerships between universities and County School Inspectorates, so that students/master's students can carry out the necessary research for their professional development and, why not, make new discoveries in the field of education.

In order to identify the extent to which these situations (the inability to find subjects for research) occur, I conducted a mini-study with 68 subjects to determine whether they had or had not had the opportunity to conduct research within an educational institution.

## **2. Objectives and hypothesis of the research**

### **2.1 Objectives:**

1. Identifying the possibilities for a researcher to access a school unit;
2. Analysing the situations that condition access;
3. Conducting a study on the access of students/master's students to school units;
4. Analysing the results obtained from the application of questionnaires, performing a quantitative interpretation of these results, with the goal of determining the extent to which a student/master's student is able to conduct experimental research.

### **2.2 Hypothesis of the Research:**

It is presumed that there is a variety of situations that could facilitate a researcher's access under the condition that the researcher is not a teacher and does not have social connections designed to facilitate communication with the school organization in question.

### **3. Presentation of the instrument used**

The instrument used in the research was a brief questionnaire regarding how students/master's students access educational institutions to conduct experimental research. It was designed with five items.

Regarding the question format, the questionnaire consisted of 2 closed-ended questions, 1 mixed question, and 2 open-ended questions. The questionnaire was created in March 2023 and was applied in May to students/master's students aged between 20 and 45 years, in a digital format.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, a brief introduction was provided, outlining the role of the research (analysing the causes and methods by which a student/master's student gains access to educational institutions to conduct research), the purpose of using the obtained results (academic), and ensuring their confidentiality. The introduction also explained how the questionnaire helps achieve the established objectives and provided an estimate of the time required for completion (approximately 5 minutes).

Through the responses provided by the participants, the research analysed how students/master's students gain access to an educational institution, as well as the possible reasons why a researcher might not receive a positive response in this regard.

As for the closed-ended questions, the respondents were asked to select the answer that matched their personal perspective. In the case of the mixed question, they had the option to either choose from the provided answers or add an alternative response. For the open-ended questions, each respondent answered freely.

The results obtained were compiled into a material database in Excel.

### **4. Presentation of the Sample of Subjects**

The research sample consisted of 68 subjects, aged between 20 and 45 years. Of the 68 participating subjects:

- 31 subjects (representing 45.50% of the total number of participants) intend to work in primary education, and 37 subjects (representing 54.50% of the total number of participants) intend to work in secondary education;
- 10 subjects (representing 15% of the total number of participants) are male, and 58 subjects (representing 85% of the total number of participants) are female;

All 68 subjects come from rural areas.

Of the 68 initial subjects, 4 (representing 6% of the total number of participants) stated that they had not conducted research up to that point, while 6 (representing 9% of the total number of participants) intended to do so.

Of the 58 participating subjects who confirmed they had previously conducted research, 49 subjects (representing 84.5% of the total number of participants) stated they had encountered difficulties in gaining access to a school unit, while 9 subjects (representing 15.50% of the total number of participants) said the process was easy, as it only required submitting the documents requested by the administration. The quantitative differences are significant, indicating that gaining access to a school unit is a challenging task for a novice.

## 5. Ethical Requirements

The questionnaire was completed voluntarily by everyone, with the subjects being informed of the purpose of the research and how the obtained data would be used.

The results obtained from the research were used while ensuring the confidentiality of each participant and respecting their right to data protection. No nominal information was requested from the participants (only the initials of the respondents were mentioned), but rather details related to gender, age, and place of origin.

The results obtained do not have any impact on the surrounding environment. The quality of the research and the value of the results obtained are contingent on the honesty and transparency of the respondents.

## 6. Presentation and interpretation of the results obtained

### Item No. 1:

**Have you conducted an experimental research study in a school unit so far?**

- a) Yes;
- b) No;
- c) I intend to;

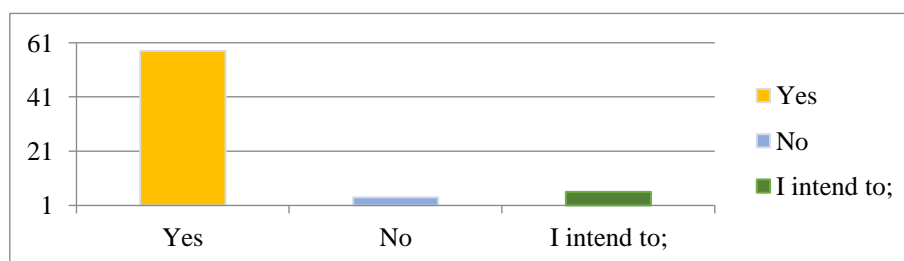


Chart 1: Graphical distribution of subjects based on whether they have conducted research so far

Based on the data obtained, as shown in the diagram above, it can be observed that: out of the 68 initial subjects, 58 subjects (representing 85% of the total number of subjects) have conducted research so far, 6 subjects (representing 9% of the total number of subjects) intend to conduct research, and 4 subjects (representing 6% of the total number of subjects) have not conducted any research so far.

The quantitative differences are evident, with the majority of the respondents stating that they have conducted experimental research in a school unit.

**Item No. 2:**

**How did you get in touch with the school unit(s)?**

- a) E-mail;
- b) Personal discussions;
- c) Other option .....

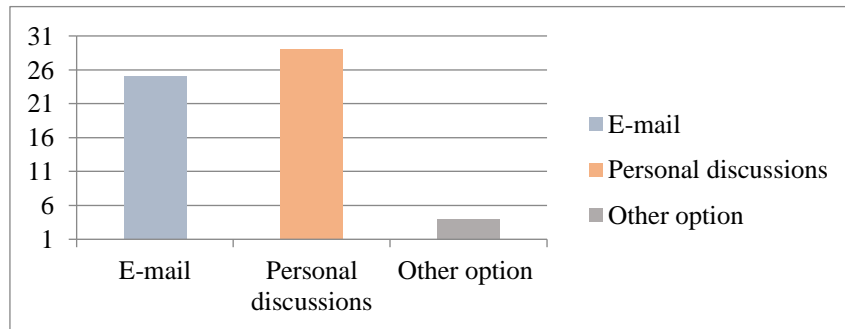


Chart 2: Distribution of respondents' answers regarding communication with the school unit

Based on the data obtained, as shown in the diagram above, it can be observed that: 25 subjects (representing 43% of the total number of subjects who conducted research) made contact via e-mail, 29 subjects (representing 50% of the total number of subjects who conducted research) initiated a personal discussion, and 4 subjects (representing 7% of the total number of subjects who conducted research) stated that they contacted the school's secretariat. This indicates that the majority of the respondents prefer the option of a direct conversation.

**ItemNo. 3:**

**Did you receive a positive response?**

- a) Yes;
- b) No.

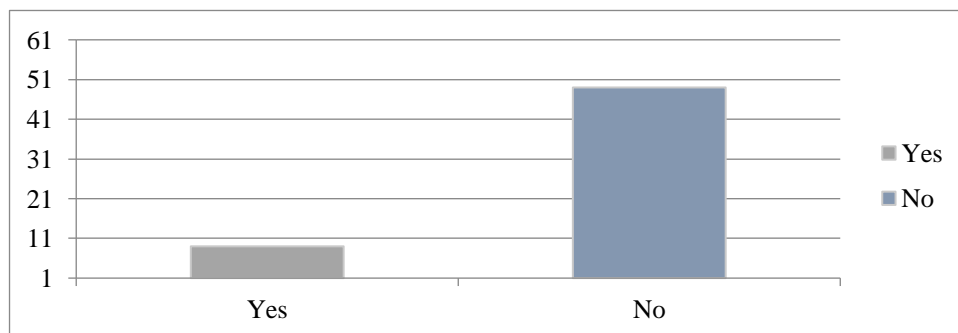


Chart 3: Distribution of respondents' answers regarding agreement/disagreement on conducting research

Based on the data obtained, as shown in the diagram above, it can be observed that:

- 49 subjects (representing 85% of the total number of subjects who conducted research) stated that they received a negative response;



• 9 subjects (representing 15% of the total number of subjects who conducted research) stated that they received a positive response.

The results above invalidate the hypothesis, with the observation that the majority received a negative response. This reflects that a significant percentage of the participants consider access to a school unit difficult when they are not teachers and do not have connections that could facilitate communication.

**Item No. 4:**

**In case you answered „no” to the previous question, please provide the reasons why you received a negative response.**

The item above aimed to identify possible reasons why respondents received a negative response regarding their desire to conduct research in a school institution. The following responses were identified:

- „Parents do not agree to this.”
- „It would mean that the teacher would lose several teaching hours, as this research requires multiple visits from you.”
- „It requires several weeks of teaching time for the research, and the period you propose is too short.”
- „A collaboration agreement is needed. However, I need to discuss with my colleagues to see if they agree.”
- Unfortunately, we are involved in many activities, and for now, we cannot accept such a collaboration.”

The responses above highlight how easily beginners are often rejected.

**Item No. 5:**

**What do you think are the reasons why a researcher does not receive a positive response regarding the conduct of an experimental research study?**

The item mentioned above aimed to identify the respondents' personal perspective on why a researcher does not receive a positive response when attempting to conduct research in an educational institution.

The following responses were identified from the answers provided by the respondents:

- „They probably see it as a waste of time.”
- „The teacher is not willing to give up a few teaching hours.”
- „It is important for parents to support the activity. Otherwise, it cannot take place.”
- „In general, help is offered to close or known individuals.”
- „Sometimes the teacher wants to help, but if the parents don't agree, they can't be forced.”

**Conclusions**

Summarizing the results obtained, we conclude that access to a school unit is difficult when the researcher is not a teacher and does not have acquaintances/relatives/friends who could facilitate access.

Following the interpretation of the items, we found that the hypothesis stating that there are various ways to facilitate a researcher's access to a school unit in the absence of relevant contacts was disproven. The results showed that most of the time, these individuals are rejected for a range of reasons related either to the teacher/tutor, the students, or the parents.



However, there may be a variety of ways in which the researcher can convince the school management/teachers/parents to allow the research to take place. Still, this depends on the openness of the school management/teachers to offer support. In situations where the researcher explains the importance of the work, the teachers may consider that everyone has had a beginning, which is often difficult.

From our own experience, we can confirm that this process is not the easiest. In conducting research for semester evaluations and for the bachelor's thesis, we encountered various rejections. In some cases (especially in rural areas), we were unable to carry out the survey with a particular group, as even though the teachers wanted to support us, the parents refused, fearing that certain data might be disclosed. However, we did not request any nominal information, we clarified the purpose of the research, and we ensured the confidentiality of the data collected.

#### **Future Directions:**

Based on the conclusions, we propose the following future directions:

- Reapplying this study with a larger sample to obtain more significant results.
- The need for creating guidelines for students and master's degree candidates to facilitate access to school organizations.
- Establishing partnerships between universities and County School Inspectorates to enable students/master's degree candidates to carry out research necessary for their professional development.

#### **References:**

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