

Emneevaluering HABA302 Fordypning i metode, etikk og projectplan: høst 2015

Emneansvarlig: Fungi Gwanzura Ottemöller, HEMIL

Innledning: This was a new course taught for the first time in spring 2016. It is the second part of a joint methods course for students from two master programmes at Hemil - Helsefremmearbeid og Helsepsykologi and Barnevern. The course was developed by the staff from both master programmes with input from the previous methods courses given to Barnevern students. In the first methods course HABA301 - Vitenskapsteori og metode – students learn philosophy of science and the different types of methods; in HABA302 – Fordypning i metode, etikk og projectplan – the students select and specialize in the methodology they will use in their master thesis, learn about ethics and write their project proposal.

Faglærers vurdering av:

○ ***Undervisnings- og vurderingsformer***

The teaching was organised into 3 samlinger where the students met over three alternate weeks. In each of these teaching weeks the students had 2 intensive days of lectures, group work and seminars. This combination of different teaching methods largely worked well. In the first samling, all the students had lectures and seminars on ethics and the project proposal together. They were then separated according to the type of methodology they planned to use in their master thesis project – qualitative or quantitative. 43 students were registered to take this course: 15 took the quantitative course and 28 took the qualitative course.

As part of the continuous assessment, the students had to submit 3 drafts of their thesis project proposal consisting of 1200 words to be submitted to their project supervisors. The supervisors had to approve all 3 drafts in order for the students to be able to write the exam. The students had supervision after submitting each draft. Most students managed to complete this task but there were some students who struggled to find focus and with producing drafts that showed progress. Students may need more guidance in selecting realistic and achievable thesis topics, and in future it may be useful to strongly encourage students to select topics linked to their supervisor's research interests. The majority of the drafts were approved after 3 drafts had been submitted but a few students were asked to work further on their 3rd draft before approval was given. One student's final draft was not approved due to lack of progress.

The final assessment was a 3000 word home exam which was taken by 40 students – this consisted of one common question for all students to answer on ethics, a qualitative question for those who had taken the qualitative track and a quantitative series of questions for those who had taken the quantitative track. The grades ranged from A – F, with few As (3) and the majority Bs (11) and Cs (16), and a few Ds (7) and Es (1). The average grade was C. Two students failed the exam.

○ ***Litteraturliste***

The literature list was satisfactory and consisted of a mix of English and Norwegian books, articles, book chapters etc divided according topic. We were not fully satisfied with one of the qualitative books (Silverman) and are looking for alternatives. References to additional literature were also provided by the individual lecturers.

○ ***Studentenes vurderinger og tilbakemeldinger***

The students evaluated the course separately in their tracks.:

Evaluation from the quantitative track:

Method: Socrative.com questionnaire, 31 closed and open questions, students filled out answers in the classroom on their smart phones without the staff being present. It took about 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Nine students filled out the questionnaire, out of 15 that were assigned to the quantitative group. This means the responses may not be totally representative, since almost half of the group was not present during the evaluation. Additionally, some of the 9 students indicated they had not attended one or more of the lectures. They were asked to respond to questions on how useful they found each lecture. Answer categories to all closed questions were: Not useful, Very little useful, Somewhat useful and Very useful.

To summarize the students' responses on the quantitative track: They would have wanted more SPSS practice during the lectures. The students thought the practical seminars were very useful, they learned a lot, and wished for even more of this type of learning. One student suggested small hand-in exercises during the course, so that they would understand the topics even better. It was also suggested to use the dataset that the students had collected in a better way and more often (there were feedback session where students could share the results they found, but none volunteered for this – perhaps this should be an obligatory exercise in the form of a small report between meetings).

With regards to the common lectures and seminar they had with the rest of the group, the quantitative students found the lectures generally useful although some felt ethics were more for qualitative rather than quantitative research. They did not find the student thesis topic presentation seminar where they were supposed to present their topic of interest useful as they felt they had not had sufficient time to narrow their focus, and some also felt that they should have been separated into groups of qualitative and quantitative instead of being mixed together.

Evaluation from the qualitative track:

Initially the plan was to evaluate the course during the class time that had been set up for the evaluation but very few students attended lectures that day. Thus, the evaluation was set up as an online questionnaire with open questions for the students to complete anonymously. The questions related to what the students found useful or not useful in each lecture/seminar and their suggestions for improvements. Two week after the questionnaire was sent out and a reminder had been sent only 5 students had responded. Thus this evaluation is based on a very small number of students. It is not representative of all the qualitative track students, but gives some indication of what was useful. The feedback was generally positive in that the students found the majority of the lectures and seminars relevant and useful. There was some opinion that the course should have had more lectures than seminars and that some of the lectures could have presented the information more in depth. Some of the seminars were seen as having too much time allocated to them or too little time. Some of the students also felt that in some of the exercises or seminars – for example, the presentation of the thesis topic – they should have been in programme specific groups. They also expressed that some of the lectures were too focused on or more relevant for the barnevern students. Some did not find the library sessions very useful and felt they were presented with information they already knew. They felt that the content of the course was linked well to the learning objectives and that the course reasonably prepared them to conduct their master research.

- **Faglærers kommentar**

It was disappointing that so few students from both tracks took the time to evaluate the course. The comments were generally positive and the suggestions for improvement were useful and will be addressed below. There was concern that a significant number of students did not attend lectures and seminars regularly. It is important that students are made aware that the information given during the lectures and the interaction both with the lecturers and fellow students is an invaluable part of the learning experience. Regarding the exam, the examiners had a mixed impression regarding the quantitative questions with some students exhibiting a good understanding and others showing a more limited grasp of the concepts. In the qualitative track there were many good exams showing an understanding of the topics, but some students seemed to understand ethics as mainly pertaining to the ethical guidelines, heavily relied on literature and did not show much independent thought. In the question on quality some students struggled to separate quality in qualitative and quantitative research and exhibited quantitative thinking in their responses. Some responses were also considered superficial and lacked indepth understanding of the concepts.

- **Faglærers samlede vurderinger med eventuelle forslag til endringer**

Overall the lecturers felt that the course went well and in line with the learning objectives, and that those students who took full advantage of the resources provided are reasonably well prepared to conduct their master projects. However, there is room for improvement and the following are suggested:

With regard to the common lectures:

- A longer and more indepth presentation of the project proposal should be given to give the students a clearer indication of what is required.
- The ethics lecture should also provide more background on the importance of ethics, perhaps within a historical perspective to help ground students in why ethics are important in research. It should also provide examples relevant to both qualitative and quantitative research.
- Give better information to the students in preparation for the seminar on the master topic and consider grouping them according to methodology.
- Reassess using the submission of project proposal drafts as the continuous assessment
- Highlight to students the importance of regularly attending lectures and seminars

With regards to the quantitative track:

- Give a presentation of more 'basic' knowledge in the lectures e.g. theory on regression, what do the numbers mean in real life, go through a few formulas and graphs etc.
- Provide more practical exercises using SPSS analyses during the lectures. It is important to continue with seminars, as they were deemed very positive by all students.
- -The data collection exercise on physical activity was deemed positive and should be kept, but utilized more and better during the course. Possibly students can hand in reports on analyses they did on their own datasets between the meetings. That could also help for them to learn to interpret and write up data better.

With regards to the qualitative track:

- Reorganize the lecture on how to develop a research question so it is more useful for all students and they all get feedback
- Include more practical exercises that will be useful to the actual research project such as developing an interview guide.
- Include more theoretical and practical work on coding and analyzing qualitative data
- Further develop focus and content of seminars
- Make sure the library information session is relevant for students and that they do not get the same information as presented in the autumn semester. The session should present information relevant for the master project.