Study Handbook: Introduction to Subject Education

Forskarskola i ämnesdidaktik, ht2016
Course content and course design: Introduction to Subject Education

The aim of the course is to provide the students with a general foundation in the field of subject education in particular focused on research methods and research questions as well as to give them the opportunity to delve deeper into their own sub-field of subject education and thereby sharpen the formulation of their own research problem. The teaching is organised in the form of lectures and seminars, some which are preceded by a preparatory assignment. In addition, the students are continuously working on texts of direct relevance to their thesis (denoted TEXT 1 – TEXT 3 below), that will function as the first scaffolding of their future kappa or monograph. The course is examined by the completion of these texts as well as participation in a course conference. Further, it is compulsory to participate in all seminars.

Literature


English alternative to Hallesson’s thesis:


[In addition: texts chosen by the students as well as additional texts on research methods]

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1 Subject education is here used as a translation of 'ämnesdidaktik'. Ämnesdidaktik can also be translated as e.g. subject education, discipline-based education, subject-based teaching and learning or curriculum studies, but when referring to a particular sub-field it is common to use names such as science education or geography education.
# Teachers and contact information

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**Main teacher**
Charlotte Engblom (Department of Education), 018-471 24 62
### Outline of course design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Session 1: Introduction</td>
<td>September 7</td>
<td>Charlotte Engblom (Department of Education)</td>
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<td>Session 2: What is 'subject education' ?</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Jonas Almqvist (Department of Education)</td>
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<td>Catharina Nyström Höög (Department of Scandinavian Languages)</td>
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<td>Session 3: Learning theories</td>
<td>September 21</td>
<td>Eva Lundqvist (Department of Education)</td>
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<td>Session 4: Research methods I</td>
<td>September 28</td>
<td>Bor Gregorcic (Department of Physics)</td>
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<td>John Airey (Department of Physics)</td>
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<td>Ugo Corte (Department of Sociology)</td>
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<td>Session 5: Research methods II</td>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Maria Ulfgard (Department of Literature)</td>
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<td>Kristina M. Andersson (Department of Education)</td>
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<td>David Sjögren (Department of History)</td>
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<td>Session 6: My sub-field</td>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>Malin Löfstedt (Department of Theology)</td>
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<td>Session 7: Academic writing</td>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>Angela Hoffman (Department of English)</td>
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<td>Anders Johansson (Department of Physics and Centre for Gender Research)</td>
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<td>Session 8: Research questions in subject education</td>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Arnold Pears (Department of Information Technology)</td>
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<td>Session 9: The research project as a coherent whole</td>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Anna Danielsson (Department of Education and Professional Studies, King’s College London)</td>
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<td>Yvonne Hallesson (Department of Education)</td>
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<td>Session 10: Course conference</td>
<td>November 8 (NB: Tuesday)</td>
<td>Ann Grubbström (Department of Social and Economic Geography)</td>
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Session 1: Introduction (2 h)

Aim
The students are able to outline some basic characteristics of the field of subject education with reference to specific examples of research projects.

Content
Introduction to the field of subject education, with examples of different research projects within the field. The graduate students present their research interests and their sub-fields. The library gives an introduction to information searching and reference management.

Teacher
Charlotte Engblom (Department of Education)

Preparatory assignment
Conduct a short interview with a researcher in your sub-field of subject education about the ‘past, present and future’ of this research field. A list of possible interviewees from the departments participating in the graduate school will be provided, but other researchers can also be interviewed. Suggested interview questions: Which journals do you read/publish in? Other important journals in the field? Which are the most important research groups nationally and internationally in the field? What conferences do you participate in? Can you say something about the history of the field? How would you characterise ‘typical’ research within the field? Here you can also ask the researcher to suggest an article for Session 3. Which are the major contemporary discussions within the field?

Writing assignments (to be completed BEFORE the session)
1) Briefly formulate your research problem (TEXT 1).
2) Write a short narrative (c. 1 page) about your educational and professional background, what brought you to the graduate school, and how you position yourself today (e.g. as a secondary teacher or a physicist).

Literature
Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 2 (The nature of education research – exploring the different understandings of educational research).
Session 2: What is ’subject education’/ämnesdidaktik? (2 h)

Aim
The students are able to give a description of the field of subject education, and to contrast subject education and pedagogy/didactics.

Content
A deepened discussion of the field of ämnesdidaktik/subject education, including an introduction to the field of didaktik as well as different research traditions within ämnesdidaktik/didaktik.

Preparatory assignment
To be communicated by the teachers in the beginning of the course.

Teachers
Jonas Almqvist (Department of Education)
Catharina Nyström Höög (Department of Scandinavian Languages)

Literature
Session 3: Learning theories (2 h)

Aim
The student are able to account for different theories of learning and exemplify how these can be applied in research.

Content
Introduction to different theories of learning, with examples of how these can be applied in research.

Teacher
Eva Lundqvist (Department of Education)

Preparatory assignment:
Write a summary of the chosen article (about 1 page) and send the summary to the teacher the day before the seminar. The summary should include the following aspects: Purpose and research questions, theory of learning (and potential additional theories used in the article), method and results. Preferably, the choice of article can be discussed during the interview conducted before Session 1.

Literature
Each student choses one scientific article from their own subfield, that in an explicit way builds on a specific theory of learning.
Session 4: Research methods I (3 h)

Aim
The students are able to problematise and contrast different research methods.

Content
General introduction to qualitative and quantitative research, including how different methods are often combined in research. Three researchers describe and problematise one research method each (video-data, interviews, and ethnography).

Teachers
Video-data: Bor Gregorcic (Department of Physics)
Interviews: John Airey (Department of Physics)
Introduction to qualitative research, and ethnography: Ugo Corte (Department of Sociology).

Literature
General introduction: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 4 (Design of empirical research), Chapter 21 (Mixed methods)
Video-data: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 23 (Observation-based research)
Interviews: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 24 (In-depth interviews), Chapter 26 (Focus groups and group interviews)
Ethnography: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 10 (Ethnographic and representational styles), Chapter 39 (Ethnography as epistemology)

[Additional literature about applications of different research methods, to be communicated by the teachers.]
Session 5: Research methods II (3 h)

Aim
The students are able to problematise and contrast different research methods.

Content
Three researchers describe and problematise one research method each (analyses of texts, action research, and documentary methods and secondary data).

Teachers
Analyses of texts: Maria Ulfgard (Department of Literature)
Action research: Kristina M. Andersson (Department of Education)
Documentary methods and secondary data: David Sjögren (Department of History)

Writing assignment (to be completed one week AFTER the session)
Write about 2 pages describing a method that can potentially be used to investigate your research problem (TEXT 2).

Literature
Analyses of texts: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 36 (Media analysis)
Action research: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 8 (Action research)
Documentary methods and secondary data: Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 17 (Secondary data), Chapter 29 (Documentary methods).

[Additional literature about applications of different research methods, to be communicated by the teachers.]
Session 6: My sub-field (2 h)

**Aim**
The students are able to critically discuss some central research traditions within their own sub-field of subject education.

**Content**
During this session the students will delve further into their own sub-field of subject education, in small group discussions of journal articles.

**Teacher**
Malin Löfstedt (Department of Theology)

**Preparatory assignment**
Read and summarise three contemporary journal articles (or chapters from theses/books) from your sub-field.

**Writing assignment** (to be completed one week AFTER the session)
Sketch a first draft of a possible structure of a literature review for your thesis (TEXT 3).

**Literature**
Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 3 (Finding your theoretical position).
Journal articles (or thesis/book chapters).
Session 7: Academic writing (2.5 h)

Aim
The students are able to identify norms of academic writing, especially concerning definitions, consistence in the use of concepts, clarity, and coherence.

Content
Two hours about academic writing in English (focused on the typical rhetorical structure of research papers and the structure and language patterns of abstracts), half an hour about designing a conference poster.

Teachers
Academic writing in English: Angela Hoffman (Department of English)
Poster design: Anders Johansson (Department of Physics and Centre for Gender Research)

Preparatory assignment
Bring copies of the abstracts that accompany two published articles in your field. Be prepared to point out and discuss the rhetorical structure that the authors of these abstracts have used.

Literature
Session 8: Research questions in subject education (2 h) (Laborativa lärosalen)

Aim
The students are able to formulate a specific and methodologically well-founded research question.

Content
This session will focus different dimensions of the formulation of research questions within subject education (such as, what makes a research question ‘subject education’, the relevance of the question to a school context, the coherence between question and methodology).

Teacher
Arnold Pears (Department of Information Technology)

Preparatory assignment
Collect the research questions from all the articles in the latest issue of one journal in your sub-field.

Writing assignment (to be completed the day AFTER the session)
Re-work the research problem you formulated after session 1 into more precise research questions for your research project (TEXT 1B).

Literature
Arthur et al. (2013) Chapter 7 (Conducting your research).
Journal articles.
Session 9: The research project as a coherent whole (2 h)

Aim
The students are able to evaluate the coherence of research projects, and to, with a high degree of independence, discuss and apply one research method in the context of their own project.

Content
Introduction about research design. Two researchers in subject education (with recent PhDs) present their research projects, with a focus on how the various parts of the project form a coherent whole.

Teachers
Research design: Anna Danielsson (Department of Education)
Tobias Fredlund (Department of Physics)
Yvonne Hallesson (Department of Education)

Preparatory assignment
Collect the texts you have written during the course (TEXT 1B, TEXT 2, TEXT 3) in one document and make minor adjustments you see necessary in order to increase the scientific coherence. Up-load this text to Studentportalen three days prior to the session. Read and comment on another student’s text; focus on the coherence of research questions, literature review, and method.

Literature

English alternative to Hallesson’s thesis:
Session 10: Course conference (2 h)

Aim
The students are able to present a comprehensive research plan in the form of a ‘conference poster’ and critically engage with other students’ research plans.

Content
The students present the current state of their research project in the form of a poster, complemented with a short oral presentation. In addition, each student is assigned the task to comment on another student’s poster.

Teachers
Ann Grubbström (Department of Social and Economic Geography)
Charlotte Engblom (Department of Education)
Anna Danielsson (Department of Education)
Everyone involved in the graduate school is invited to attend.

Preparatory assignment
Construction of a conference poster.