



9.10

Introduction of the topic of comparative studies in sickness absence

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Programme

- Introduction to the topic – *Bültmann & de Rijk*
- Presentation of experiences I – *Høgelund*
- Presentation of other experiences II (pilot inquiry) – *Bültmann & de Rijk*
- **Coffeebreak (10.45-11.15hrs)**
- 1st group discussion: considerations comparative research – *Hensing*

- **Lunch (12.30-13.30hrs)**

- Funding – *Bültmann & de Rijk*
- Presentation of experiences III – *Benavides & Delclos*
- 2nd group discussion: subthemes in guideline – *Bültmann*
- **Coffee/Teabreak (15.15-15.45hrs)**
- Reports from groupdiscussion – *Bültmann*
- Summing up of day & agreements how to proceed – *de Rijk* (16.15 hrs)
- Closing – *Kristina Alexanderson* (16.45hrs)

- **Dinner (18.00-21.00hrs)**

Framework

1. Organisation
2. Background knowledge
3. Theoretical background
4. Research question & aim
5. Design
6. Sample
7. Data
8. Analysis
9. Ethical considerations

10. Context analysis: necessary

1. Organisation

- Established collaboration
- Not too many partners
- Leader that has support from the others and overview
- Enough time

2. Background knowledge

- Sickness absence high/low?
- Type of welfare state?
- Focus on RTW or not?
- Role of employer / state?
- Unemployment rates high/low?
- Political discourse on sickness absence: what is seen as the (cause of the) problem?
- Figures OECD, ISSA and Eurofund!

3. Theoretical background

- Rationale of study must be sound
- Explanatory framework for the differences (theory)
 - Role of the context of sickness absence in different countries (differences)
 - Determinants of sickness absence (similarities)
- Make implicit theory explicit
- Theory should link to aim and design of the study
 - Choice of the countries
 - E.g. gender theory: compare countries with low and high gender segregation
 - Link with improvement
 - E.g. theory on influence of RTW policy included in evaluation of RTW-intervention in different countries → results allow for adaptation of intervention to national RTW policy

Example

- Holland et al. (2011) in *Employment and Health*
- Theory on impact of labour market policies on labour participation of disabled (measured)
 1. Deregulation (more flexible access) would improve
 2. Decommodification (more generous system) would decrease
 3. Investment in active labor market policy would improve
- 5 countries (advanced social welfare / varying policies)
- Labour participation of disabled: NO>DK/SE>CAN>UK
- Results: 1 and 2 denied, 3 partly confirmed

4. Research question and aim

- Aim:
 - Why are partners interested in participation?
 - Do partners have common definitions of the concepts?
 - Define specific objectives for the international comparison (study aim):
 - Why is it important/interesting to compare just these countries?
 - What theories have informed you?
 - Link to policy improvement
- RQs:
 - Develop common definitions of the concepts
 - Subquestions per country?
 - Role of the context?

5. Design

Cross-sectional?

- Longitudinal possible?
- Consider mixed method
 - Include qualitative inquiry to inform regarding interpretation, background processes etc.

6. Sample

- Who?
- How to select comparable groups?
 - Parttimers or not (different determinants in different countries)
 - Unemployed or not?
 - Inclusion at x weeks of sickness absence: selection effects?
 - Etc.

7. Data

- Are data comparable? Standardization and harmonization
- Registered data:
 - Collected for what purpose?
 - Biases?
 - What is collected, how and among whom?
- Collect new data:
 - Agree on measures
 - Translation of measures
 - Are concepts and items interpreted in the same way?
 - Questionnaires or internet survey?
- Quality of the data collection:
 - Response
 - Monitoring / checks of data collection

8. Analysis

- Control for what?
- Differences between samples regarding:
 - Socio-demographics
 - Legislation
 - Culture regarding paid work, labour participation among women etc.
- Research question and aim should be leading

9. Ethical considerations

- Policy implications can be large!
- Be sure: valid study
- Not: blaming the victim
 - high number of women with disability pension and low threshold → raising threshold?

10. Context analysis (1)

- Context info needed:
 - What is currently at stake?
 - Check for bias and (alternative) explanations
- Include context variables:
 - Document analysis (legislation etc.)
 - Observation, semi-structured interviews / focus groups
- Process analysis of data collection
 - Role of existing routines

10. Context analysis (2)

- Possible differences:
 1. Different levels of sickness absence
 2. Different meanings of the variables measured
 - check in qualitative study
 3. Different processes behind the levels
 - Check differences in determinants, test models, do qualitative studies
 - Have a theoretical framework that helps to understand the differences

Example

- Comparative research on health among immigrants in Europe
- Result: Bloodpressure and diabetes of African immigrants in UK better than African immigrants in NL
- Context analysis showed 3 explanations:
 - Cultural sensitive approach to bloodpressure treatment in health care in UK, not in NL
 - Free health care in UK, not in NL
 - More intensive anti-smoking campaigns in UK