



Course syllabus

Theory in Educational Sciences

Theori i tillämpad utbildningsvetenskap

Credit points: 7,5

Responsible department: Department of Applied Educational Science

Main field of study: Educational Work - The course is optional. It may also be part of other graduate programs related to the educational science field.

Level: Post graduate studies

Specialisation in relation to degree requirements: Licentiate of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Subject area: Educational Sciences; Social Sciences

Required knowledge: Applicants are required to be registered at a PhD program.

Grading scale: Pass (G); Fail (U)

Confirmation

The course has been reviewed by the head of the Department of Applied Educational Sciences at Umeå university on 2014-xx-xx. The course syllabus is approved from xxxx-xx-xx.

Aim

The course aims to increase the students' awareness of theories and their purposes in educational research in order to strengthen the students' ability to make informed choices of theory in relation to specific research questions and contexts.

Content

The course focuses on the meaning and purpose of theory, the grounds for choosing a specific theory, and the use of theory in research practice.

Further, based on examples from the field of educational research the course illuminates how theories can be used from micro to macro levels. Diverse examples of theories are embraced such as cognitive theories, theories about the teaching and learning sciences, theories in educational sociology, theories on general didactics and professional development.

The students will be provided with opportunities for critical reflection with regard to the use of theory. The following areas are scrutinised: the challenges of using theories when conducting empirical studies, possibilities to combine different theories, and theories underlying ideological values.

Expected learning outcomes

After completing the course, the students should

Knowledge and understanding

- Develop knowledge about the meaning and purpose of theory in scientific knowledge production
- Be able to demonstrate understanding about the relationship between theory, research question, method and interpretation of data in a study.

Skills and abilities



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- Be able to analyse and argue for the choice and use of theory in scientific texts
- Develop skills to scrutinize and argue for the choice of theory in relation to (a) specific research question(s)

Competencies of critical evaluation and set of attitudes

- Be able to critically reflect on the implications of choosing one theory in relation to another, with respect to a specific research question.

Entrance qualifications

In order to start the course the students need to fulfill the admission requirements for doctoral studies

Form of instruction

Teaching is conducted through lectures, seminars, workshops, literature studies and practical work independently presented both orally and in writing.

Examination modes

To graduate, students need to (a) present an essay about using theories in their studies, (b) oral presentation and take part in discussions about the use of theories, (c) be actively participating in lectures, seminars and workshops.

ECTS / Academic credit transfer

Academic credit transfers are reviewed individually. For more information, please see the University's set of rules and academic credit transfer regulations.

Course literature

- Carr, W. 2005. The role of theory in the professional development of an educational theorist, *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 13 (3), 333-345.
- Corvellec, H. (2013). What is a theory?
- Costley, Kevin C. (2006). Why Do We Have Theories? In ERIC, ED491769 Retrieved 13 June 2014 from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED491769>
- Hammersley, M. 1995. Theory and evidence in qualitative research, *Quality & Quantity*, 29; 55-66.
- Hammersley, M. 2021. Troubling theory in case study research, *Higher Education Research and Development*, 31 (3), 393-405.
- Biesta, G.; Allan, J. and Edwards, R. (2014). *Making a Difference in Theory*. Routledge (some chapters, not all)
- Allan, J. 2014. Making a difference – in theory – in Sweden and the UK, *Education Inquiry*, 5 (3), 319-335.
- Ball, S. 1995. Intellectuals or technicians? The urgent role of theory in educational studies, *British J. of Educational Studies*, XXXIII (3), 255-271.
- Biesta, G. 2007. Why “what works” won’t work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research, *Educational Theory*, 57 (1), 1-22.
- Biesta, G., Allan, J. Edwards, R. 2011. The theory question in research capacity building in education: Towards an agenda for research and practice, *British J. of Educational Studies*, 59 (3), 225-239.



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- Young, M. 2007. Durkheim and Vygotsky's theories of knowledge and their implications for a critical educational theory, *Critical Studies in Education*, 48 (1), 43-62.
- Zambo, D. 2014. Theory in the service of practice: Theories in action research dissertations written by students in education doctorate programs, *Educational Action Research*, 22 (4), 505-517.