

Evalueringsrapport for emnet MABVA317 Childhood and parenting in diverse contexts

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1 Introduction

This evaluation report will assess the implementation of MABVA317 Childhood and parenting in diverse contexts during spring semester 2024. The report is organized in the following sections; first, a brief introduction of the course is provided; second students' feedback on the course and own evaluation and recommendations about the course are presented.

2 Overview of the course:

We offered the course MABVA317 in Spring 2024 (15 ECTS credits) as part of the interdisciplinary Master's program in Barnevernsarbeid (students had diverse backgrounds in bachelor programs in general psychology, special pedagogy, kindergarten teacher education, and child protection pedagogy). The course is intended to be a foundation for further studies in the master's in Barnevernsarbeid. Furthermore, Erasmus bachelor and master students at the University of Bergen were also allowed to apply.

A total of 14 students took the course. Out of them, 7 were Erasmus students coming from (7 Erasmus students, and 7 Barnevernsarbeid students). The international students came from 4 countries and all of them were studying bachelor's in psychology.

Previous assessment of the course and feedback from the Senior Executive Officer pointed out that the form of assessment (term paper/emneoppgave) was not practical regarding the situation of Erasmus students who needed to have the right to "kontinuasjonseksamen" once they are back at their university of origin. However, a term paper (emneoppgave) can only be submitted during the undervisningssemester.

The course leader and course teachers further assessed that a 5 days home-exam written assignment based on a case work task would be a more practical form of assessment that could support relevant learning (constructive alignment). Drawing on the given case work, students were asked to write an essay addressing the professional and ethical dilemmas in working with migrant families using the lenses of migration, gender, and intensive parenting. This form of assessment was also thought to facilitate better in-depth and relevant learning, particularly addressing learning outcomes that were included in the new course MABVA317 (offered for the first time in 2023 as part of the new master program), i.e. knowledge about and critical analysis of the meeting between migrant families and the Norwegian welfare state).

MABVA317 Childhood and parenting in diverse contexts draws on historical, gender and cultural perspectives to explore children, childhood, parenting and parenthood, and is organized in 4 subject areas:

- Children and childhood: introducing Childhood studies and research on children in diverse contexts and life situations

- Parenting culture: addressing historical shifts in constructions of parenting and the development of intensive parenting and risk consciousness
- Parenting experiences: addressing how parenting as a global ideology intersects in various ways with the cultural, economic, and social position of the parents (gender, class, migration/ethnicity). Tensions between parenting as experienced by parents and as defined by professionals are also explored.
- Migrant and ethnic minority families and the welfare state: addressing the meeting between the Norwegian welfare state and families and children with migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds, and the professional and ethical dilemmas in this context.

The course took place from week 15 till week 22 (7 weeks).

Course teaching activities have been lectures, seminars, and self-study. There was a 75% compulsory attendance in seminars; and two seminars were compulsory (one oral presentation and one remix-activity).

3 Home exam as assessment method:

The assessment took the form of a written assignment, an essay, 3000 words (+/-10 %), references not included. Students were informed that text generated by ChatGPT, and other AI text generators was not allowed in the submitted work.

It was a 5-days home exam in which students got presented a fictional case about a family with migration background who were under observation by child welfare workers who were considering placing the children in foster care based on specific reasons. Students got a description of such reasons and some contextual information about the situation this family was in. Finally, they were asked to take the case as an example around which to discuss the professional and ethical dilemmas in working with migrant families using the lenses of migration, gender, and intensive parenting.

In the first week of the course, there was a seminar in which we addressed key concepts for the course, and I provided also information about the exam. They were given information about the exam type (essay) and were presented exams that got good grades (A/B) in previous courses MABVA317 (before the implementation of the new master program). The students were informed that the examples of "good exams" they got to see had a different form as these were an emneoppgave in which students could choose themselves a topic related to the course's aim and learning outcomes they wanted to write an essay about. Although they would have a home exam in which they needed to address a specific question they were given, the students valued having the opportunity to see previous exams. This was particularly the case for the Erasmus students who did not have experience with writing an essay (they are used to multiple choice type of assessment).

As for the grades, there were two students who got A, two students got B, six students got C, three students got D, and one student got E. One student was suspected to use ChatGPT and there is still one commission working on this case as they are evaluating whether the student used AI and how to proceed further.

In their feedback on the form of assessment, the students highlighted that they were satisfied with the information they got beforehand ("good information about the exam") and the activities conducted in the seminars that helped them to engage with the literature and that facilitated discussions and analysis of relevance for the writing of the exam ("relevant gjennomgang i seminarerene som har vært veldig nyttig"). Few complained about having short time to write the exam, especially two Erasmus students who had another exam on the same week they were having

MABVA317 home exam (“the time seems a bit short but the information about it was good”). Many stated they would have preferred to have had an emneoppgave so they could choose the topic they wanted to write about.

I recommend changing the exam type to an emneoppgave because this assessment has a more process-oriented approach that can bring positive outcomes in the form of, for example, academic writing skills, deeper discussions, engagement with theoretical frameworks, and peer-feedback.

A challenge experienced during this course was that many students did not read the literature. If they were to write an emneoppgave, they would choose their own topic, and this could result in more motivation to engage with the literature list and seminars. Moreover, with an emneoppgave, we could plan a compulsory seminar in which students should give each other feedback based on a 2 pages draft in which they describe the topic they aim to address and an outline of the essay. This activity would be of great relevance providing them with valuable comments that could guide them in their writing of the exam as well as with relevant experience in “peer-feedback”. Finally, in an emneoppgave, students need to think about an issue/question that interests them in relation to the major course’s topic areas. In this way, they are developing relevant skills that could be a foundation for further studies in the master program (i.e. writing a Masteroppgave).

I have discussed all these matters with the Senior Executive Officer who agrees with the benefits of having an emneoppgave. She has checked with the exam administration whether this exam type is possible for this course (Erasmus students) and they have given permission to have this assessment form next year.

4 Organisation of the course

Students’ recommendations for improvement:

- To have an emneoppgave instead of a home-exam
- To receive specific information about which literature they must read
- To have fewer lectures that specifically focus on a PhD study.

5 Lectures and seminars

Overall, there was good attendance at the lectures and seminars. The course leader and teachers particularly experienced high attendance by the international students.

Students seemed interested in the course and have been active in discussions. In the feedback they provided about the course, several mentioned they would like to have more weeks of this course because the topics addressed were so interesting and the perspectives prompted critical thinking and discussions of relevance for their future professional practice.

All in all, students’ feedback on the lectures have been very positive. Comments like “I really enjoyed the lectures and seminars”, and “interesting topics” were common in the evaluation. The students were “happy” about the lecture provided by Professor Ann Phoenix (Invited Speaker part of the NORPA workshop the emneansvarlig was responsible for). They valued the content of the lectures as being interesting and relevant. One student mentioned she/he would have loved to have more lectures on gender. A few mentioned that there were “too many” lectures providing very specific knowledge as they were based on PhD studies (“litt for spesifikk forskning som blir brukt» «Kunne vært mindre om ulike PhD prosjekter, likevel spennende å høre om de»); however, others saw this as something positively contributing to their learning («it was good that you have a lot of case studies and researchers introduced in lecture”). They also valued “teacher’s passion and engagement with

the topic” and “the teacher own experiences were very helpful to better understand some of the concepts we learned in the class”.

The students found it helpful to have the slides beforehand and the way mittuib and leganto was arranged in weeks/modules (“Good system at Mittuib- easy to get an overview”). Many complained about having short breaks between lectures and seminars.

As for the seminars, there were many positive comments about the “Positive atmosphere” that characterized the seminars. Several students described their experiences with the seminars as being in a “safe space where to discuss” “with openness”. They valued that the course leader had already arranged the groups (“Very nice to work in small groups that were already arranged so they were diverse”). The groups were diverse in terms of students’ academic background and Erasmus/Norwegian students. This helped to bring different perspectives that would enrich the discussions.

The students liked the activities carried out in the seminars as these helped them to “discuss and navigate the pensum”. Another comment was “very useful activities to engage with the course literature”. They valued the activities for having “god variasjon”. Example of seminar activities were article-based discussions in groups; watching a video; Remix-activity; and oral presentation. Many liked the remix-activity and highlighted how creative and thought-provoking this was. This was a compulsory activity in which they were asked to make a collage with images they found from different sources illustrating discourses on children and childhood, or on parenting. However, there was one student who said that this activity was “very creative but not so lærerikt”. I recommend either replacing this activity with compulsory seminar where they provide peer-feedback on the draft of the exam, or to inform students more clearly about the aim of the Remix-activity (not only to create a collage, but to be aware of visual representations of childhood and parenting in our everyday lives and be critical to these).

The course leader and teachers experienced weak learning outcomes in the seminars since most students did not read the proposed literature. A few students mentioned this in their feedback. They said that the group work was highly affected by this and suggested getting information about which readings they should read beforehand or making compulsory both the seminar activity and the reading requirements. The course leader and/or teachers always informed students beforehand (one week before the activity) about the literature they were expected to read and highlighted how important it was to come to the class with the readings done.

It is recommended for the next implementation of the course to have an even clearer clarification of expectations regarding the teaching of the course, and the importance of self-study time and reading in achieving learning outcomes. Moreover, having more compulsory attendance or doing some activities to make sure the students read before the seminars (i.e., asking them some questions about the readings they must submit via mittuib) are also recommended.

Recommended literature

Some Norwegian students complained about having literature in English. Although, some teachers provided them some literature in Norwegian, the reading list consisted of literature in English as this was a course that is delivered in this language.

There were Erasmus students who reported having problems accessing the literature. I think this has to do with lack of knowledge regarding how to access the library resources (UiB-VPN).

Overall, the students provided positive feedback on the literature with comments like: “Nice that it is structured”; “Good that there were always a few assigned to every lecture/seminar that made it less overwhelming”; “Veldig fornøyd. Fin og oversiktig», «I like everything was on the internet, very relevant»

Recommendations from the course leader:

- Change the type of assessment for an emneoppgave and consider having peer-feedback as a seminar
- Consider having more seminars that are compulsory, so the attendance does not compromise the group work
- Keep working in small groups (5-6 students). Dividing the class into small groups from day 1 promoted participation and good discussions as students were together with other students from different personal and academic backgrounds. They worked in these groups in all the seminars which made them feel comfortable, specially about speaking in English and sharing their opinions and experiences with the rest of the class.
- Clarify expectations regarding reading literature
- Consider not having the remix activity or clarifying its aims