Short paper on methodological issues for the course on Qualitative Research Methods

Briefly about the project

The subject of my project is social policy changes, with a specific analysis on activation of people with social challenges. Compared to other Nordic countries and regions the Faroes Islands only recently implemented unemployment benefits (1992) and active labour market measures for many years have been part of the social security legislation as rehabilitation or jobs with financial support. As other Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands has experienced a certain pressure due to economic globalization, financial crisis and liberal ideas on public spending (Karlsdóttir et.al, 2018). It has been a reason for adapting policies on labour market activation and social investment. Thus in 2013 new legislation was implemented with the intention of re-establishing job-market relations, upskilling and workability assessment to people marginally attached to the labour market. The focus of the project is on the effects of this recent law on labour enhancement measures, formulated in a three-point research problem. To answer the research questions, four articles will address unique aspects of the research problem, as presented in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Article 1</th>
<th>Article 2</th>
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<td>How is unemployment in the Faroes Islands developing among people with social challenges?</td>
<td>How is policy areas concerning social- and labor market politics developed since 1990’ies regarding social benefits to people in employable age, compared to Denmark and Norway?</td>
<td>What are the effects of Faroese regional labor market differences on labor force demands, and how is industrial structures and mobility affected by this?</td>
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<td>What are the causes of this development?</td>
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<td>What are the effects of current social policy schemes regarding unemployment among people with social challenges?</td>
<td>Article 3</td>
<td>Article 4</td>
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<td>How has interventions focusing on people with social challenges been used regionally, and what are the effects of interventions after the active labor market reform?</td>
<td>How can motivational factors stimulate persons with social challenges into employment, and what are the effects of communication used as stimuli?</td>
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Methodological issues

The project employs a mixed method design, using both quantitative and qualitative data in a deductive and hypothesis driven analysis. In each of the articles, a different set of data is used with different combinations of methods, as shown in this brief overall description of the articles.

The method in the first article is primarily document analysis, combined with quantitative text analysis and descriptive statistics in a comparative case study. In the second article, statistical data on the use of regional social- and labour market benefits combined with statistics on employment and mobility is the source of an indicator to try to identify regional differences. In order to acquire knowledge on business structures, employability and work-mobility elite interviews with company-, political- and labour market representatives is made. Specific knowledge on organizational employability of people with social challenges are gathered from company representatives.

The third article focus on the analysis of effects of the changes in legislation on labour enhancement measures. Data for this article is primarily quantitative, originating from the social services register. As part of the establishment of the database for the analysis, the use of content analysis helps to identify types of interventions recorded I case-journals. Knowledge of understanding differences in implementing interventions is derived by interviewing individual experts representing the social services office and possible focus groups interview of social workers.

For the last article, an experiment is designed to test how communication through behavioural nudging can affect how people in job enhancement measures are motivated to engage in interventions. Surveys is used to measure the effect of the experiment. The experiment need to coordinate with social workers at the social security office. Focus group interviewing of this group of employees is used for observing the experience working with experiments.

Document analysis

It is the ambition to use document as data for analysis of policy developments in the project. The type of primary documents used is parliamentary propositions on changes in legislation, the written statements from political committees in parliament and reports on political issues. It is a content analysis. Looking at social- and labour market policies that fit the different levels of social investment through a theoretical lens of human resource development and employability (Kuitto 2016; Bonoli 2012). Primary documents originate from the Faroese parliament and the online-archive of the Prime Minister (Løgmaður). The selection of documents follows their title and content, in order to find changes of legislation on policy areas over a period from 1990-2017. As secondary data archived descriptions on legislation is collected from the MISSOC archive. The archive have been compiled by government officials from EU or EEC countries since 1998, mapping differences in a wide range of social and labour market policy areas.

What the content of the documents shows, is levels of similarity in policy developments across the past generation, with the intention of demonstrating how similar the Faroese policy development are compared to other Nordic countries (Denmark and Norway).
To investigate the relevance of comparing Faroese policy areas with Danish and Norwegian, a test of references to these areas are using the descriptive sections of the proposals together with speeches performed by the Prime minister at the yearly opening of parliament. In the proposed legislation, a specific reference signifies a legislative relation to the said country. Observing this in a legislative context, would suggest an inspiration from the said country in matters of implementing new or changed legislation. If mentioned in the opening speeches, it would suggest that the government are observant of policy developments that would inspire national legislation. For this type of document analysis, quantitative content analysis is operated, using Faroese keywords with reference to social investment terms and policy areas identified in the first part of the document analysis.

Quantitative content analysis is also used as a method in identifying specific terms in relation to interventions, as part of the analysis of case-journals. The structure of these journals, and the material written herein, would suggest that the mentioning of interventions or ways of facilitating the citizens specific needs, differ from each of the social workers. In this case, the use of key terms as topologies could make it possible to identify references between the use these terms and the decided action to be taken.

In the case of quantifiable content analysis, it is important that the documentation are machine readable as text. The volume of documents need to analysed in order to decide whether electronic readable are available in whole or only in part of the case journals, and whether this might affect the analysis.

Case study
In two articles in the project, case studies are considered relevant in describing and explaining policy developments. In the first article, a comparable case study is describing the policy development, focusing on the national Faroese policy development, compared to developments in Denmark and Norway. This case study reveals how social- and labour market policies have developed in a period of nearly 30 years, transgressing three periods of difference. From a Faroese perspective, this would be the post-crisis development (1990-2000), a period of stability and post-crisis development, with respect of the financial crisis 2008-2010. Policy developments in a Danish and Norwegian perspective have been analysed in several studies. Throughout the analysis of the Faroese development, these countries is used as descriptive references. The comparable case take the shape of a congruence analysis (Blatter et. al, 2012), describing how social- and labour market policies have developed in a Faroese context.

In another article, a set of indicators based on Faroese regions are developed in order to identify regional differences in labour market mobility and social benefits. In this explanatory approach, the case selection is based on a theoretical understanding of the society in a center-periphery structure. Different degrees of urbanization and industrial production are used in designing the indicator, thus resulting in a possibility of measuring differences between regions over time, making the case analysis of a similar kind.

Interviews
How implementation of social policies have changed over the past years is relevant for understanding changes in interventions and different ways of implementing interventions across the Islands. The people
administering and helping recipients of social benefits possess this kind of knowledge. Gaining access to this knowledge might be possible through interviews. The society being small, the number of experts on this area is small compared to other places. However, it might be easier to get access to interviewees in different parts of relevant organisations such as the social security office and other organisations helping or creating job opportunities or working with people with social challenges. Using interview guides with open ended questions should give an option of accessing a broad understanding of the development (Kvale, 1997; Brinkman, 2015).

Acquiring knowledge on how social workers are currently working assessing and implementing interventions towards people with social challenges could be through focus group interviewing. One aspect of the focus group is the apparent possible anonymity of the participants. Getting to express ways of working, without having to be accountable on specific expressed views, could social workers expressing and talking about the way they are working. Working with a focus group could also be a way of discussing how to implement experiments.

In order to get knowledge on regional differences on labour market requirements and mobility a series of semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1997) are conducted with public and private company representatives, political representatives and representatives from labour organisations. The idea is get acquire a general knowledge on the subject and at the same time getting specific knowledge from company representatives on the experiences of employing people with social challenges. Company representatives are selected partly from the pool of companies with experience of employing people with social challenges.

**Literature**


