The Measurement of Student Workload

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1. Problem
The workload of students is crucial for the organization and the (international) comparability of curricula. In spite of the existence of corresponding administrative regulations the measurement of workload and the necessary methodological knowledge at German universities is barely existed. Hence, the focus of this pilot study is of methodological nature.

Objectives
- Comparison between measurement via conventional paper diary and the measurement via a smartphone app diary
- Comparison of the measured diary workloads with the prospective and retrospective self assessments of the respondents
- Determine whether short observation periods result in robust workload estimations

2. Approach & Sample
- Population: active students who major in sociology
- Two observations: O1 in July 2014 (exam period) & O2 in November/December 2014
- Duration: 3 weeks per observation (2 weeks per respondent)
- Realized sample: 109 (O1) and 127 (O2)
- Prospective self assessment on first page of the paper diary/after first start of the app
- Retrospective self assessment via online questionnaire after the survey finished (matching via “Token”)
- Incentivation: all participants took part in a raffle (prizes: smartphones and tablets)

3. Descriptive Overview

4. Methodological Findings: Workload
The first two weeks of O1 coincided with the thus the stark differences between the two exam period, explaining the high workload. In O2 the measurements are almost identical. The differences between the average weekly total workloads in non-exam-weeks are strikingly small. It is therefore advisable to refrain from sessions of the participants are surprisingly conducting lengthy (and expensive!) workload close to the values measured via diary. But: the assessments over several months. Measurement respondents knew about the (imminent) survey, which in turn influenced their self assessment. The retrospective self assessment of those who only completed the questionnaire differs significantly from those that did participate in the study of valid cases that used the app in O1 (n=11), dy (†) may also be selection bias.

5. Methodological Findings: Entries
Rule of thumb: diaries with a comparatively crepencies in data quality in O1 are comparable to the number of short entries are usually more ively high. Although the picture isn’t as bad in accurate [1]. Less entries of longer duration hint O2, the data measured with a paper diary are towards technical or usability problems with still of higher quality than the data measured the app. According to this assumption the dis- with the app.

References