UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Research and Assessment Methods in Developmental Psychology

2627-1-F5113P004

Learning area

Methodological competences and clinical techniques.

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- Core issues and methodological approaches in developmental psychology.
- Suitable research alternatives.
- Principles of systematic observation.
- Methodological aspects of direct and indirect observational techniques.

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Critical analysis and correct planning of developmental research.
- Design and implementation of developmental assessment programs.
- Correct use of observation in developmental domains.

Making judgements

- Promoting independent judgment in the critical evaluation of research reports in developmental psychology, identifying strengths and limitations.
- Acquiring the ability to independently make appropriate decisions in choosing measurement tools for different areas of development and to make proper judgments based on the data collected.

Communication skills

- Acquiring the ability to clearly and effectively communicate research and evaluation results across various developmental domains, emphasizing the practical implications of the findings and tailoring the message to meet the specific needs and understanding of the intended audience.

Learning skills

- Promoting the ability to update one's knowledge, autonomously and critically assimilating the evidence of national and international scientific research in the relevant disciplines, and acquiring new information from the experience of specialists and practitioners in the field and/or other related disciplines.
- Fostering the analytical, investigative, and critical thinking skills required for higher education courses.

Contents

The research methods used in the study of development will be analyzed, highlighting their strengths and limitations in relation to the discipline’s overall objectives. The main issues concerning the design and implementation of studies on the analysis of change will also be discussed. Moreover, direct and indirect observational techniques will be examined, and some assessment instruments will be explained in terms of their limitations and usefulness.

Detailed program

- Research goals in developmental psychology.
- Main phases of the research process.
- Research designs for investigating the relationships between variables: experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational designs.
- Research designs for comparing different age groups: longitudinal and cross-sectional designs.
- Observation process planning (choice of context, timing and observation procedures).
- Characteristics of observational grids.
- Recording strategies, behavioral coding and measures.
- Assessment of the observational data reliability.
- Indirect observation.
- Use of observational techniques in developmental research.

Prerequisites

A good knowledge of the fundamentals of Developmental Psychology enables a more aware use of the course contents.

Teaching methods

The course is held in Italian. In addition to classroom lectures (22 lessons, 2 hours each), part of the teaching activity will be interactive, including the analysis and group discussion on the methodological aspects of some developmental psychology studies; practical activities aimed at applying systematic observation, using audio-visual

material, will also be planned (practical classes: 6 lessons, 2 hours each). These teaching methods aim to make the course contents more usable and to involve students, facilitating the acquisition of specific knowledge and methodological skills that characterise research and assessment in developmental psychology. All lessons will be held in person. The material (slides of the lectures, any scientific articles, and observational protocols) will be available on the e-learning site of the course, so that it can also be used by non-attending students.

Assessment methods

Written test including both open questions and exercises. The questions are aimed at ascertaining the effective acquisition of theoretical knowledge; the exercises are directed to evaluating the skills acquired in the analysis of research designs and in the application of observational techniques. The evaluation criteria are: correctness and exhaustiveness of the answers, linguistic form, and property of language.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- D'Odorico L. (1996). *Sperimentazione e alternative di ricerca*. Milano: Cortina (capp. 1 e 2).
- Cassibba R., Salerni N. (2023). *L'osservazione nei contesti educativi. Tecniche e strumenti.* Roma: Carocci.
- Integrative documentation provided by the teacher.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION