

REACTION INSTRUCTOR TO STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Course: Selected Quantitative Methods (25.0503)

Program: MSR

Period: 1

The course introduced students to structural equation models and fixed effects panel models, using STATA's SEM and XT programs. Stata's SEM replaced the LISREL software that was used in earlier courses. The instruction concentrated on a single example of dynamic data: the relationship between work ethics and level of occupation on the OSA panel data. I chose these topics because models for longitudinal data are likely to be important in future research of these students. I chose the Stata software in order to make (all) student familiar with these generally useful statistical package, which is more advanced than SPSS.

Participants were 5 MSR students and 2 PhD students. 1 MSR student left the course prematurely because he continued his studies elsewhere. Students worked on their own laptops in the classroom.

In one lecture I was replaced by Ineke Nagel, who introduced the students to multi-level analysis

Apart from instructions and assignment, I asked all students to submit every week an "interesting question", which I answered in writing (Q&A). All instruction materials are available on <http://www.harryganzeboom.nl/Teaching/SQM/index.htm>.

Using the Stata software for SEM models turned out to be something of a disappointment – it was frustratingly time-consuming to make the models work and I could not always solve the problems that students had when estimating models that worked for me, but not for them (this turned out to be computer dependent). This was the main reason why the five assignments were effectively reduced to three.

The evaluations by the students are on average satisfactory – one major complaint is that students think that the subject of the course was not broad enough. I do not really know what to make of this. This is why the course is called Selected Quantitative Methods. In the Q&A part, I answered a lot of question outside the topic of the course.

My own evaluation on the course is that I should have prepared the instruction materials (such as the handout how to operate Stata's SEM) somewhat more elaborately – equivalent to the F5 instruction material that I have prepared on using LISREL in the past. These types of materials tend to grow while teaching a course repeatedly. Unfortunately, this was the one and only occasion that the course will be taught, as the MSR program is abolished. However, there might be similar courses or tutorials in the future and I will use these to prepare more elaborate materials.