

Chapter 12

Innovating Teaching Pedagogy Through Teacher– Learner Partnership: The Case of Research Methods

Foong Peng Veronica Ng
Taylor's University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Commonly, research methods module in many disciplines including architecture is taught in a lecture-based setting. However, this approach is often didactic and unable to engage students' learning. This chapter discusses an innovative approach to teaching and learning of research methods designed and implemented for Master of Architecture by coursework that is underpinned by a positive teacher-learner partnership. This approach has been explored since 2018-2019 by applying an integrated mixed method which includes experiential learning, online tools, independent guided learning, and peer and self-assessments. Besides describing the approaches, this chapter analyses students' assessment performance, module evaluation reports and survey for cohorts of student in 2018-2019 to discuss the development and impact of the module delivery as an outcome of teacher-learner partnership. The paper demonstrates how these methods capitalises on different styles of learning and create a dynamic setting for positive learners' engagement in the "classroom."

INTRODUCTION

Many writers on education topics related to Research Methods observed that the teaching of Research Methods module in different disciplines had received little pedagogic attention. Research Methods often involved didactic teaching that provides students with the required theoretical knowledge and is teacher-led. With the wave of student-centered learning trends, innovative strategies have been adopted to develop a Research Methods module from a learner's perspective.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6445-5.ch012

This chapter aims to contribute to the development of a Research Methods module through the intentional involvement of teacher-learner partnership. It discusses the development and implementation of improvements in the teaching practice of Research Methods as a reiterative process, and the impact of the module delivery as an outcome of obtaining feedback by engaging students as partners.

BACKGROUND

Existing Problems in Research Methods Pedagogies

Based on the literature reviewed, there is a limited pedagogic culture in the teaching and learning of Research Methods (Nind & Lewthwaite, 2018). Citing from three pivotal studies (Lewthwaite and Nind, 2016; Kilburn et al., 2014; Earley, 2014), Groessler (2017) pointed out that one of the recommendations relating to the research on teaching Research Methods is to encourage a pedagogic culture (Wagner et al., 2011) through discourse and debate among academics and to share successes and challenges around teaching research methods.

Also, the barriers to Research Methods teaching have been limited by disciplinary boundaries. For example, the study of Wagner, Garner and Kawulich (2011) showed that there have been nine disciplines represented in the literature: education, social work, psychology, political science, geography, criminology, library science, music, and sociology.

Besides that, studies on the pedagogy of Research Methods have also been constrained by methodological boundaries (Wagner, Garner & Kawulich, 2011). From the literature cited, one of the negative issues impacting teaching research is the non-innovative teaching methods. In a recent literature review conducted by Wagner, Garner & Kawulich (2019), it was noted that studies on specific techniques for teaching Research Methods are significant aspects of pedagogical research. Diverse approaches such as problem-based learning, experiential learning and collaborative learning, and having students conduct their projects have the propensity to engage students in learning (Zamorski, 2002; Healey, 2005; Larkin & Pines 2005). Also, Allen & Baughman (2016) emphasized the significance of having activity-based workshops to enhance students' learning in research methods.

In a study conducted by Groessler (2017), common challenges emerged from the change from lecture-based to active and authentic learning strategies. This is reflected in the lack of studies on the teaching strategies used and their effectiveness on students' learning. While the literature posited the shift from a didactic to student-centered learning, there is a lack of empirical studies to verify this slant on Research Methods pedagogy. Earley (2014) mentioned that there is a disconnect of current literature on Research Methods pedagogy as it is limited to the insights from individual instructors, modules, and institutions. The conclusion in Kilburn, Nind and Wiles' (2014) study concluded that although questions on pedagogy were considered, there was a lack of systematic research within a scholarly context.

To foster a pedagogic culture in Research Methods, one of the critical areas is to empower students as partners in the development of effective teaching strategies.

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