

Reporting on experiments with research integration in teaching

Name
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Course Name
<i>Moderne teoretiske og metodiske perspektiver https://kurser.ku.dk/course/hrtk03561u/2021-2022</i>
Study Board
<i>Department of Communication</i>
Level and class size
<i>MA, 1st year 31 students</i>
Description of the experiment
<p>Archive work and presentations of work-in-progress: <i>The students were introduced to an archive of material of the Danish anti-nuclear organization (OOA) and guided in sampling their own materials of analysis (https://www.atomkraftnejtak.dk) using the course literature to unpack it.</i></p> <p>Finding materials of analysis, designing a research project, peer feedback: <i>Throughout the semester we all looked for current instantiations of the OOA's famous smiling sun logo and made our own mini archive of this. Kristine introduced her work-in-progress on the logo and the students gave feedback on this. The students were guided throughout the semester in designing their own mini research project through supervision and peer feedback from initial idea to final project description.</i></p> <p>Collaboration with practitioners: <i>We had a visit from two OOA activists who brought material, that is not part of the online archive and shared aspects of their activist work, that is not so apparent in the online archive or part of the organization's "official" narrative. The students were responsible for facilitating the meeting and they had made a list of questions for the guests, including some focusing on what aspects of the activist work the activists themselves would like to have examined by rhetorical scholars. A couple of students chose to write their exam paper on elements of the OOA and they conducted interviews with the activists in connection with the visit. We had a similar visit from a young climate activist, which followed much the same pattern.</i></p> <p>Collaboration across disciplines: <i>The course included visits from two scholars from other disciplines working on activism. The students were asked to reflect on overlaps and differences in approaches.</i></p> <p>Research communication: <i>We facilitated a workshop with the students and our assistant responsible for creating a website, where we all brainstormed on ways to communicate our knowledge and perspectives to a wider audience. Most activities throughout the semester ended with students working in groups to produce texts about the course content aimed at a wider audience. See website here: https://www.retoriskarena.dk/mtmp/?et_fb=1&PageSpeed=off</i></p> <p>Conference presentations and peer feedback:</p>

<i>The course ended with two mini conferences where students presented their exam project-in-progress and received feedback from both teachers and fellow students.</i>
Outcome for the students
<p><i>Product outcome in form of website: https://www.retoriskarena.dk/mtmp/?et_fb=1&PageSpeed=off</i></p> <p><i>Exam papers as mini research projects.</i></p> <p><i>Feeling of increased “maturity” as scholars of rhetoric.</i></p> <p><i>Overall positive assessment, but no more or less than other semesters. Students felt inspired and taken seriously and gained knowledge of new methodological and theoretical perspectives. One difference from previous years’ assessment of the course was that many students felt overwhelmed with work, even though there wasn’t more work than usual. I don’t know if this is a post-pandemic phenomenon or if framing students as co-researchers and their projects as mini research projects made it feel larger to them than usual.</i></p>
Outcome for the research
<i>The students helped collect materials that will be used in the research. Sometimes it made it possible to prepare for teaching AND do research at the same time – reading texts, preparing interviews, making contact with relevant colleagues, potential research collaborators, to have them guest the course.</i>
Interaction between teaching, research and exams
<p><i>The exam form of the course is a “fri hjemmeopgave 21-25 sider”, which meant the students were able to use the training and material from the course when designing and carrying out their own analysis of either OOA or other forms of activism.</i></p> <p><i>One challenge was to decide whether to ask the students specifically to use the OOA archive in their exam papers. We decided against this because we find it important to support the students in finding their own projects based on their own interests. Some students decided to use the archive, many used the work we had done on it as a comparative perspective.</i></p>
Adapting of the experiment
<i>The experiment was carried out pretty much like we envisioned it. If we were to do it again, it might be an idea to look over the workload for the students as many found it a bit overwhelming, or perhaps make it more apparent from the beginning how the students could use the texts they wrote throughout the semester in their exam papers. This would work well if the exam was a portfolio instead.</i>
Strengths and weaknesses
<p><i>Strength: The students were guided and supported in finding their own projects and felt taken seriously as “real scholars” and colleagues to their teachers.</i></p> <p><i>Weakness: Many students found it extra demanding. The research communication part wasn’t directly aligned with the exam which made it feel as “extra work” from some students.</i></p>
Experienced challenges
<i>See “weakness” above.</i>
The most important experience

Many of the activities were the same as other semesters, but we were more focused on pointing out explicitly how it was research-teaching-integration. This made room for other types of questions from the students such as: "How does the peer review process function?", "What is BFI?", "How do I know if a journal is respected?", "How do scholars/researchers collaborate with practitioners?"

Framing the students as researchers/ scholars is motivating for some students and overwhelming for some and feels irrelevant for others.

Will the experiment be conducted again?

Parts of it, yes.