

Reporting on experiments with research integration in teaching

Name
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Course Name
HFMK03504U FM, Research Design and Empirical Methods - Seminar B: Digital Communication and Media Culture: Fantastic scandals and how to research them. https://kurser.ku.dk/course/hfmk03504u/2022-2023
Study Board
Film and Media Study Board
Level and class size
22 MA 1 st year students
Description of the experiment
<p>The experiment “360° Research and Popular Science Communication” had two parts:</p> <p>(1) The experiment integrated research into teaching by conducting supervised empirical research projects with students, which were intertwined with the development of a research application in the Media Section at KOMM. The research projects were designed and conducted by the students within confined thematic boundaries. This allowed the students to learn and apply methods in an authentic research context with a high level of responsibility for the quality and management of the research. (2) The second part created an opportunity for students to produce and publish popular science communication for a broader audience. At the end of the course, students presented their work to their fellow students, guests, and colleagues from the department in a public poster session (https://comm.ku.dk/research/media-studies/news/poster-session-in-film-and-media/). Additionally, a group of three engaged students have been paid to produce a Podcast in which they present the course and interview some of their fellow students about their research projects and findings. This phase is still in progress but the group is cooperating with Uniradioen where the Podcast will be aired. The Podcast will also be published on the Media Section website with a summarizing blog post.</p>
Outcome for the students
<p>The course focused on empirical research and the experiment educated students first and foremost in methods and popular science communication. Hence, students were introduced to a relevant current media problem, deepened their academic knowledge and skills to design and conduct empirical projects, and finally were scaffolded to communicate their insights; all central elements of the course’s Intended Learning Outcomes. The students engaged in an authentic research experience that allowed them to further develop their academic identity. The students learned academic and project management skills, including academic writing in English, methods, poster/Podcast production, and popular science communication.</p>
Outcome for the research
<p>The application in development benefitted greatly from the experiment. The different projects of the students gave an overview of possible cases and dynamics a funded project could take into consideration. One of the topics explored by the students initiated follow-up research potentially adding to the larger project and publications.</p>
Interaction between teaching, research and exams
<p>Students’ projects functioned as a first explorative empirical phase and the “360° Research” meant that the eight groups implemented unique research designs, yet explored the shared topic of socio-mediated scandals from many different angles. By developing their projects themselves, the students became researchers who conducted and presented their own research. This was guided by the course’s topic, predefined by the project application in development. Both the explorative cases and the poster presentation of the findings informed the project application and further research in the Media Section. The exams were also based on the research reports and the poster presentations allowed students to practice for their oral exam.</p>

Joint publication between teachers and students
The students authored their research reports (as part of the exam) and posters (as one of the assignments). The same is true for the Podcast and the blogpost. Students get full credit for all their work as authors. I acted as an editor guiding and supporting the poster and Podcast production and as a curator of the poster session.
Adapting of the experiment
The experiment was implemented successfully as proposed regarding the empirical projects and their presentation in a public poster session. The production of the Podcast posed a challenge as only three students took part in this part. The Podcast had to be produced after the regular course ended, which means this part relies on the willingness of students to do the extracurricular work (even though they are paid for it). An alternative schedule and different media production processes, possibly parallel to the course, are necessary to make it work.
Strengths and weaknesses
The strength of the experiment lies in the high amount of practical sessions in which students work hands-on with their projects and develop important skills. While this is necessary to conduct the ambitious empirical projects in one semester, it also comes with the weakness of too little time for more formal teaching of advanced theory and methodology. Finding the right balance will be key in future iterations.
Experienced challenges
The biggest challenge for the teacher was to adhere to the many goals of the course, such as introducing a topic, repeating basic methodology, learning about advanced/new digital methods, and applying them in a research project; which is a lot for one semester. For the students, the biggest challenge was to embrace the unpredictability of research, which meant that the teacher had to reassure them that this is a normal part of research and they will be successful in the end.
The most important experience
Students grow when they are given a lot of responsibility. Taking their work seriously by giving them a public platform shows respect and makes them proud of their accomplishment. Especially the poster session creates a sense of ownership immensely adding to students' academic identity.
Will the experiment be conducted again?
The empirical projects and the poster session will be a reoccurring element of the course. The Podcast element has to be changed and implemented differently to become a useful addition.