

The 'Ineffectiveness' of Teaching Research Methods in Moroccan Higher Education: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract : Although research methods has been an integral part of the curriculum in Moroccan higher education for decades, it seems that the research methods teaching pedagogy that teachers use suffers from a serious absence of a body of literature in the field. Also, the various challenges that both teachers and students of research methods face have received little interest by researchers in comparison to other fields such as applied linguistics. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to remedy to this situation by exploring one of the major issues in teaching research methods – that is, the phenomenon of students' dissatisfaction with the research methods course in higher education in Morocco. The aim is also to understand students' attitudes and perceptions on how to make the research methods course more effective in the future. Three qualitative research questions were used: (1) To what extent are graduate students satisfied with the pedagogies used by the teachers of the research methods course in Moroccan higher education? (2) To what extent are graduate students satisfied with the approach used in assessing research methods in Moroccan higher education? (3) What are students' perceptions on how to make the research methods course more effective in Moroccan higher education? In this study, a qualitative content analysis was adopted to analyze students' views and perspectives about the major factors behind their dissatisfaction with the course at the School of Arts and Humanities – University of Moulay Ismail. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from 14 respondents from two different Master programs. The results show that there is a general consensus among the respondents about the major factors behind the ineffectiveness of the course. These factors include theory-practice gap, heavy reliance on theoretical knowledge at the expense of procedural knowledge, and ineffectiveness of some teachers. The findings also reveal that teaching research methods in Morocco requires more time, better equipment, and more competent teachers. Above all, the findings indicate that today there is an urgent need in Morocco to shift from teacher-centered approaches to learner-centered approaches in teaching the research methods course. These findings, thus, contribute to the existing literature by unraveling the factors that impede the learning process, and by suggesting a set of strategies that can make course more effective.

Keywords : competencies, learner-centered teaching, research methods, student autonomy, pedagogy

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