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Research and Teaching – correlated or co-related?

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Abstract Template

Research Methods Teaching: Effective Learning through a Discipline Embedded Approach

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Theme: Developing student research skills

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Abstract:

Although the Roberts agenda has highlighted the need for promoting effective opportunities for students at all levels to develop research skills, we have seen a move towards a reinforcement of the *exclusivity* of research methods teaching. The recognized importance of research methods seems to have led to more specialized teaching of research methods, resulting in particular in courses that tend to promote quantitative studies and that do not necessarily engage students in learning the research skills that we need to promote. An effective teaching of research methods at undergraduate level needs to be embedded in the discipline in order to be effective.

A case study of a highly successful module research methods core module taught to second year politics students will demonstrate how students are taught how to engage with the process of developing research, rather than seeking to make students experts on specific research techniques. Engagement with the whole of the research process (from planning to application) helps students to develop a wider range of transferable skills in research which they can then apply to varied contexts. The paper will show how a teaching strategy that views the methods as a *means* towards an end works best in engaging students with the research process. We will explain why the teaching strategy works (reviewing some of its innovative teaching techniques such as the preparation of tasks specific to each student's research idea or the way eLearning is used to engage students), as well as identifying its main challenges. This module has run for six years now with very good feedback from students and resulting in excellent assessed work, some of it close to publishable. The module has also been identified as good practice by External Examiners, and selected as a good practice case study in a HEA supported project on Linking Teaching and Disciplinary Research. The paper will show that this approach can be applicable to other disciplines and of potential use for anyone teaching research methods whatever their discipline.