

Up-gunning Experiential Learning and Research-based Teaching

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A Aim

- To promote a student-centred learning approach through enhanced reconciliation between:
 - a) The 2020-RDDC Strategy (*institutional level*)
 - b) The 2020-Curriculum of the Master's Programme in Military Studies (MMS) (*programme level*)
 - c) The MMS course 'Culture as an Operational Enabler – NATO Mission Iraq' (COE-NMI) (*course level*)

C Background

- The 2020-RDDC Strategy*
- a) Professionalism (strong professional expertise with a unique link to military practice)
 - b) Relevance (relevant up-to-date learning and research matching Danish Defence needs)
- The 2020-MMS Curriculum*
- a) MMS = research-based higher education (lv 7)
 - b) MMS builds on the students' profession-based experiences
- The COE-NMI course (5 ECTS)*
- a) Elective, blended-learning, 17 students
 - b) Participants comprise experienced junior and senior officers, including MMS students (1/4) and deployment-bound staff officers (3/4)

D Problem (in the pre-intervention classroom)

- a) Students' practice-based experiences = underexploited/underexamined
- b) Teaching/learning = research-based only to the extent that it is done by a researcher (me) and is based on research on 'yesterday's practice'

Questions

How can I advance student-centred learning by further reconciling the 2020-RDDC Strategy and the 2020-MMS Curriculum with the COE-NMI course? I.e.: a) How can I build teaching/learning upon my students' practice-based experiences?; b) How can I integrate teaching and research and provide relevant up-to-date learning about military practice?

F Argument

This project argues that student-centred learning may be promoted through interventions enhancing incorporation of experiential learning and research-based teaching/learning into constructively aligned **ILOs**, **TLAs** and **ATs**

B Motivation
'TLHE awakening' to student-centred learning (active learning, learner responsibility, student voice)

E Theories and models

Experiential learning theories
Andresen, Boud and Cohen (2000); Billett (2015); and Kolb and Kolb (2017)

Models for research-based teaching/learning
The UCPH 'staircase model' (UCPH 2021); Healey & Jenkins' model for the nature of undergraduate research/inquiry (Healey & Jenkins 2009); Brew's 'wheel model' for research-based learning decision-making (Brew 2013)

H ILO #1 intervention
New detailed ILOs incl.: 'Apply different analytical concepts on 'our culture' in relation to NMI and other recent or current mission formations incl. those based on your own deployment experiences and/or experiences with mission-specific culture training'

'Our Culture' had clear learning objectives // 'Simon'

I TLA #1 intervention
Syllabus incl. introductions and questions for reflection for each text

'The result enjoyed getting the best parts of the best texts on the subject ... Some texts are a bit old, but you are well aware that no fresh literature is available // 'Arne'

J TLA #2 intervention
Reflection papers encouraging reflection and analysis of one's own experiences

The assigned papers were useful and relevant // 'Hans'

M Conclusions and perspectives

The **interventions** promote student-centered learning in the case of a) experiential learning (activating the students' sharing of and reflection on their practice-based experiences); and b) research-based teaching/learning (activating the students' inquiries into their own experiences and into the problem-based NMI case, both calling for the application of analytical concepts). **Future interventions:** a) the constructive alignment design should be improved to create more/better spaces for sharing student experiences; b) research-based teaching/learning should be integrated into ILOs along the lines of knowledge, skills and competencies, e.g., allowing for introductions to method skills (autoethnography and interview techniques); and c) the question of relevance should be addressed in TLAs enhancing up-to-the-minute insight into practice, e.g. talks given to class by deployed NMI staff, or 'counterpart interviews' conducted individually by NMI-bound students (merits of the latter = hands-on experience with interview skills)

The peer-feedback was a useful tool ... It was interesting ... that we were working together with the [deployment-bound] NMI staff. It was motivating me to make a greater effort // 'Simon'

K AT #1 intervention
Peer-feedback on reflection papers

The peer-feedback was rather brief, to put it mildly. But then again, so was mine // 'Arne'

L AT #2 intervention
Portfolio exam assignment incl. problem-based NMI case

The assignment seemed true to reality. It was motivating me // 'Simon'

The two papers were helpful in creating independent reflection and connections to one's own experiences // 'Arne'

I've loyally answered the [exam] questions but my loyalty made me apply my own experiences with what is important and with what works, and have only made little use of the syllabus // 'Arne'

G Methods and data (evaluation results)

The student evaluations of my interventions rest upon a very small data set:

- a) As few as 6 students* submitted their portfolio exam paper incl. a small section on student self-assessment of one's learning outcome
- b) I designed a post-course evaluation survey specifically targeting my part of the COE-NMI course ('Our Culture'). The survey comprised multiple choice and open ended questions. The course coordinator invited four 'particularly engaged students' to take part in the survey. Three students responded

* Participants were deploying and few were enrolled in the MMS programme

N References

Andresen, Lee, David Boud & Ruth Cohen. 2000. Experience-based learning. *Understanding Adult Education and Training*. 2nd Edition, edited by Griff Foley, 225-239. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin; Billett, Stephen. 2015. *Integrating Practice-based Experience into Higher Education*. Dordrecht: Springer; Brew, Angela. 2013. Understanding the Scope of Undergraduate Research. A Framework for Curricular and Pedagogical Decision-making. In *Higher Education*, 66(5): 603-618; Healey, Mick & Alan Jenkins. 2009. *Developing Undergraduate Research and Inquiry*. York: The Higher Education Academy; Kolb, Alice Y. & David A. Kolb. 2017. *The Experiential Educator: Principles and Practices of Experiential Learning*. Kaunakakai: EBL Press.; University of Copenhagen (UCPH). 2021. What is Research Integration? Retrieved 4th of May 2021, from: <https://fbu.ku.dk/english/about-research-based-education-activities/what-is-research-integration/>

ILOs (intended learning outcomes) // TLAs (teaching/learning activities) // ATs (assessment tasks)

