



Group projects: Interfaces between research and social action

(Resource ID: 293)

Erika Melonashi

erika.melonashi(at)uet.edu.al

This teaching resource is allocated to following University:

UET - European University of Tirana

<http://www.sustainicum.at/en/modules/view/293.Group-projects-Interfaces-between-research-and-social-action>



Group work



**Less than 5
students**



up to 1 semester



English, Shqip

Please note: module with excess length - more than 7 lecture units required!



The present teaching resource involves designing a group project, which consists of two components: a mini-scientific study and a practically applied component. Each project is evaluated based on the following indicators: 1. The scientific research part: Sound methodology, analysis and quality of critical discussion 2. The practical activity: Difficulty of Access, Extent of the impact, New Connections formed, and Reflections on theoretical and empirical knowledge. This teaching resource is used in the Developmental Psychology Course. It is a combination of two methods: Focus Group and Field Work.

The present teaching resource is suggested in the context of the Developmental Psychology course. The aim of this course is to provide students with knowledge of the main theories of human development as well as current research in this area; also the course aims to enable students to critically discuss and practically apply the acquired knowledge in the specific Albanian context. The present teaching resource has been designed precisely for this purpose, i.e., allow students to put in to practice what they are learning during the course within the specific socio-cultural context.

This teaching resource is a combination of two methods: Focus Group and Field Work. It has been conceptualized as a group project; hence students are randomly divided into groups (approximately 4 members each). All groups are provided with three different handouts. Handout 1 consists of Broad Topics referring to the major life developmental stages e.g., Childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, old age. Handout 2 consists of Specific Topics, related in some way to the developmental stages; examples include substance abuse, chronic illness, career choice, quality of life, bullying, depression, love, friendship etc. Finally Handout 3 is divided in two parts 1. Mini-research study (discussions on methodology, instruments, participants etc. and Part 2: Practical activity (discussions on the type and setting of the activity, difficulties they might face, etc)

Groups are asked to choose (by providing 3 reasons for their choice) a broad topic (Handout 1) and a specific topic (Handout 2) and come up with a title for their projects (e.g., Depression in old age). Phases 1 and 2 are usually completed in 2 teaching hours, in order to provide enough time for discussion. In Phase 3 groups are asked to discuss the methodology (instruments, participants) they think is most appropriate to investigate the specific topic (e.g., organize interviews or distribute questionnaires into a sample of elderly). In Phase 4 groups are asked to come up with a practical activity concerning their topic (e.g., in the case of the topic 'Depression the old age', contact nursery homes and do voluntary work, such as reading to the elderly, taking them for a walk etc.). Students are told that they might either combine the mini-study + practical activity (e.g., measure the depression level of the elderly in the nursery home, twice: before and after the practical activity) or carry them out separately (in cases the topic makes it difficult to combine).

The time till completion of the projects is 10 weeks; The first 4 weeks are usually used to define the topic, decide on the methodology, and the practical application; the following 3 weeks students report on their

progress and/or difficulties they are facing. Weeks 8, 9, 10 are used for project presentations of the final work (Project Report Form)

Each project is evaluated on the basis of the following indicators (Project Evaluation Form) 1. The scientific research part: Sound methodology, proper use of measuring instruments; correctness of the analysis and quality of critical discussion 2. The practical activity: Access difficulty (E.g., in institutions where several relevant permissions are required), Extent of the impact (how many people?), New Connections formed, and Reflections on theoretical and empirical knowledge.

Teaching Tools & Methods



Mini-project



Written material

Integration of Social Stakeholders

The usual contexts where students conduct the mini-study or the practical activity are usually Kindergartens, primary schools, nursery homes, businesses/enterprises, hospitals etc. Hence, the stakeholders are quite diverse and might involve primary/high school teachers, social workers, psychologists, doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, human resource managers, attorneys etc. Stakeholders will be involved during the whole process, i.e., from the very beginning when students will identify the setting for the mini-research study, until the delivery of results, when students will present stakeholders with outcomes of the project and recommendations they might find helpful.

Strength

This teaching resource provides a great opportunity for students to apply the knowledge acquired during the course in the specific socio-cultural context they are living. This resource stimulates their creativity, critical thinking and social responsibility. Moreover they have the opportunity to test themselves in the aspects of research and methodology, by constructing a mini scientific study. On the other hand, the practical aspects represent a personal growth project in terms of getting to know new people, persisting in the face of difficulties ('No' answers), and ultimately trying to actually make a social impact, however small. Finally,

students will have the chance to explore the future employment context, e.g. meet people who might later help them in this endeavor.

Weakness

Students might be faced with a hostile social context, which makes it difficult for them to complete the practical part of the project. Also some topics might be quite hard to investigate, and thus the scientific part of the study might suffer (e.g., people might refuse to answer questions regarding their sexual lives).

Learning Outcomes

The present teaching resource targets the following:

- Knowledge transfer from theory to practice
- The development of creative and critical thinking
- The increase awareness of the specific socio-cultural context and social actors involved
- The development of interpersonal skills required in approaching new contexts, cooperation with in-group and out-group members

Relevance for Sustainability

The present teaching resource lies in the social dimension of sustainability; its relevance to sustainability becomes evident in project topics e.g., quality of life, health, education, social justice (inclusion), individual lifestyles (food consumption) etc.

Related Teaching Resources

No specific previous knowledge / related resources required

Preparation Efforts

Medium

Preparation Efforts Description

Based on the specific subject where the resource will be used the teacher needs to prepare Handouts 1, 2, and 3, a Project Report Form, and a Project Evaluation Form.

Access

Free

Assessment

Students are assessed through the Project Evaluation Form.

Credit/Certification Description

10% of final mark of the course

Sources and Links

<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/researchproject/weblinks.asp>

<https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/how-to-do-your-research-project/book239551>

<http://eu.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470658207.html>

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