

## Experiential pedagogies in the online space

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### Abstract

From academic research into the pedagogies of social research methods and from anecdotal evidence, we know that a key component to teaching social research methods is the experience. Research methods instructors in all sorts of contexts set tasks for their learners to experience what it feels like to be surveyed or interviewed, and to critique that process. However, what happens, when the learning environment is not a physical classroom but a virtual one? In this chapter, a research methods instructor collaborates with one of her undergraduate students and two research methods workshop attendees to explore the rationale, experience and impact of research methods course delivery online. They argue that it is still possible to engage with and apply Kolb's experiential learning, and that most classroom-based tasks can be adapted for virtual delivery.

Keywords: creative methods, experiential learning, participatory methods, virtual delivery, adapting teaching, online pedagogy, online experiential learning

### Introduction

Although the often competitive instead of altruistic nature of academic culture tends to value disciplinary and methodological expertise over pedagogical practices (Nind, Kilburn & Luff, 2015), the need for developing research and practice focusing on the pedagogy of research methods is becoming recognised in the social sciences (Garner, Wagner & Kawulich, 2009; Preissle & Roulston, 2009; Wagner, Garner & Kawulich, 2011). Several challenges regarding the pedagogy of research methods in the social sciences have been identified. Whilst research methods are employed in a great array of disciplines and fields, each with its own ontological considerations, theoretical orientations, methodological approaches, terminologies and perspectives (Preissle & Roulston, 2009; Wagner et al., 2011), there is significant emphasis on anglophone Western research traditions. Indigenous and other non-Western modes of inquiry remain less explored (Flores Farfán, Garner & Kawulich, 2009; Preissle & Roulston,

2009; Taylor, 2009). In addition, when it comes to the practices of teaching research methods, the instructors' roles are unidentified (Wagner et al., 2011) and course goals may be unclear, resulting in negative attitudes amongst students (Earley, 2014).

To resolve some of these difficulties when teaching research methods, a pedagogy with a strong focus on praxis is encouraged (Flores Farfán et al., 2009; Roth, 2009; Taylor, 2009). These approaches recognise the need to implement teaching strategies that are student-centred (Peyrefitte & Lazar, 2018), based on reflective, collaborative, experiential and active learning (Earley, 2014; Kilburn, Nind & Wiles, 2014), and that are multi-faceted through the incorporation of different tools, such as video, photography, artistic writing practice, and creative and playful activities (Brown, 2018, 2019; Brown & Leigh, 2018; Nind & Lewthwaite, 2020). Drawing on constructivist pedagogies (Howard & Brady, 2015) instructors encourage learners to construct their learning experiences and critically evaluate the social research methods as a contested field. The consequence is empowerment and inclusivity, the deconstruction of the teacher-student hierarchy, and a revaluation of dominant views (Webb, Walker & Bollis, 2004). This is why research methods instructors in all sorts of contexts tend to set tasks for their learners to experience what it feels like to be surveyed or interviewed, and to critique that process. However, what happens, when the learning environment is not a physical classroom but a virtual one?

For this chapter, we (Nicole Brown, a research methods instructor collaborates with one of her undergraduate students, Chuying (Trista) Wu, and two research methods workshop attendees, Helen Butcher and Belen Febres-Cordero) explore the rationale, experience and impact of research methods delivery online. We argue that it is still possible to engage with and apply experiential learning, and that most classroom-based tasks can be adapted for virtual delivery. We commence with an introduction to experiential learning and considerations of online learning before presenting two different learning contexts as case studies. The first case refers to an undergraduate research methods module, whilst the second learning context is a stand-alone workshop that Nicole delivers on the topic of creative methods for data collection and analysis. After an outline of how experiential learning theory is applied in these settings, Trista, Helen and Belen offer their reflections with Nicole offering a commentary. We conclude with a look ahead at future developments to offer a stimulus for further discussions in this field.

## Experiential learning

In education, terms and terminologies are often in and out of fashion in waves. What is once considered as in vogue suddenly loses credibility and becomes discredited or forgotten. After some time, government guidelines and research resurface older ideas and repackage them as new, innovative or original approaches to teaching. The "flipped classroom" is a good example of that. "Flipping the classroom" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century means to focus on a student-centred learning experience that will require the learners to prepare for specific content-related discussions by independently studying and reading ahead of the in-class event. In reality, this is not so different from teaching medicine in Victorian times, where students were required to internalise particular course materials before they were allowed to attend a dissection. In that respect, experiential learning is no different.

Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory began as a development of previously existing theories and thought experiments brought forward by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Paulo Freire and Lev Vygotsky. The basic principle and foundation of experiential learning lies with Kolb's (2014) attempt to create an interdisciplinary learning theory that be applicable for as many situations and different learners as possible to address learning and educational issues. To this end, Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory is intended as a basis for developing instructional designs and curricula in line with how individuals learn. In Kolb's (2014, p. 39) words, learning is a "continuous process grounded in experience" with the educator's role being "not only to implant new ideas but also to dispose of or modify old ones". The famous four-step cycle to learning is then one tool within that broader conceptualisation to support learning. To enable that, the original cycle (Kolb, 1984) has been recreated to Experiencing – Reflecting – Thinking – Acting (Kolb, 2014), a cycle that now includes individuals' orientation and disposition for and in each phase. According to Kolb (2014), each element is very clearly delineated with experiencing being followed on by reflecting about the experience, before moving on to thinking. This thinking phase is characterised by a critical interrogation and exploration of what was experienced and reflected upon. This stage is needed before we are able to act upon that learning.

Whilst Kolb (2014) offers these theoretical foundations and pedagogic-philosophical underpinning for his models of learning, he does not offer a distinct or precise recommendation of or for best practice. Other scholars have sought to bridge that gap in their

work (e.g., Matsuo, 2015; McCarthy, 2016; Beard & Wilson, 2018). Over time, experiential learning has emerged as a framework that is characterised by learners' involvement as active participants in the process of learning, by knowledge being situated in time and place, by learners being exposed to novel experiences, by learning relating to the exploration of specific real-world problems and by critical reflection acting as a mediator of meaningful learning (Morris T., 2020). One of the major issues with Kolb's (2014) four-step cycle is the dualistic split between experience and knowledge, as in practice the lines are much more blurred than the model may suggest (Kuk & Holst, 2018). For example, where exactly does reflecting stop and thinking start? How easy is it to separate the experiencing from the reflecting? How can this link between experience and knowledge be tapped into, when the classroom is a more superficial learning context than actual learning in real-life? And finally, how can experiential learning theory be applied in an online context?

### **Considerations of online learning**

There is no universally agreed definition of "online learning" (O'Brien, 2020; Bates, 2016), and the term is often used interchangeably with a range of differentially defined concepts in the literature including remote learning (Barbour, LaBonte & Kelly, 2020), educational or desktop videoconferencing (Lawson et al, 2010; Serhan, 2020), distance learning (Garrison & Shale, 1987; Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020), digital learning, virtual learning, e-learning (Uzunboylu, 2006) to describe educational courses that deliberately provide instruction using technology and via the internet (Anwar & Adnan, 2020; Kennesaw State University, 2021) in either synchronous or asynchronous modes (Khan, 2006, Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020, Pfister & Oehl, 2008). In practice, there is a continuum of online learning and blended approaches (Wang, Huang & Quek, 2018; Bates, 2016) between these extremes creating a "third space" of knowledge and discourse for learning experiences (Moje et al, 2004). Online education has often been stigmatised as a watered-down, inferior and lower quality option compared to traditional classroom learning (Knipe & Lee, 2002; Hodges et al., 2020; Solanke, 2020; Yang & Chen, 2007). Yet, following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an explosion of online courses (e.g. Kim & Asbury, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Joia & Lorenzo, 2021). Online learning incorporating videoconferencing is becoming the "new normal" (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020; Joia & Lorenzo, 2021) and can facilitate art workshops (Skregelid, 2021; Ross, Newstrom & Coleman, 2021), the development of clinical skills (Fatehi et al., 2014), language learning (Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020; Husu, 2000), the

promotion of reflective learning, deliberation and discussion (Solanke, 2020), and problem solving (Hu et al., 2000). The effectiveness of online platforms, such as Zoom has also been highlighted in facilitating small group work (Morris B., 2020, Lawson et al., 2010) mirroring traditional face-to-face interaction (Hannan et al., 2021).

Of course, online learning is not without its challenges and disadvantages. Although research suggests that online tools are generally stable nowadays (Tsarapkina, 2020; Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020), technical issues and breakdowns do obstruct participation (Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020; Tsarapkina, 2020). Unstable or poor connectivity (Demuyakor, 2020; de Oliveira et al., 2020; Dharma, Asmarani & Dewi, 2017; Wang et al., 2018), the requirement for digital literacy (Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020), and the digital divide (O'Brien, 2020) represent the greatest obstacles to online learning. Literature also makes reference to organisational challenges (Pitcher, Davidson & Goldfinch, 2000), initial teacher discomfort performing in front of the camera (Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020), the lack of technical competence (Tsarapkina, 2020; Badia, Martín & Gomez, 2019; i Solé & Hopkins, 2007) and requiring technical support (Ross et al., 2021) as disadvantages.

A number of studies suggest a teacher's mastery of technology, their teaching style (Solanke, 2020) and their attitude towards interactive learning play a key role in the success of online learning (Joia & Lorenzo, 2021; Bhuasiri et al., 2012; Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020). Another key issue is the absence of non-verbal cues which can lead to misinterpretations and disengagement (Wiederhold, 2019; Qui & McDouglass, 2013; McKenny et al., 2021). For teachers, therefore, online courses require higher levels of preparation and more engagement in holding students' full attention (Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020). Forward planning using a variety of activities and employing a range of multimedia materials, images and gamification and the like can help to increase motivation and participation (Morris B., 2020; Badia et al., 2019; Solanke, 2020). Ultimately, it remains the instructors' role and responsibility to share learning materials, support step-by step learning, monitor student engagement and intervene when students become demotivated, distracted, or fail to participate.

### **Experiential learning in online environments in practice**

In early 2020, the move to teaching research methods online was not natural and planned, but a result of continuing to offer education and training during the Covid-19 pandemic. In many

ways, consistency in education offers provided relief from the upheavals, uncertainties and anxieties instructors and learners experienced at the time. As such, many instructors focussed on maintaining a sense of normality by trying to recreate experiential learning opportunities in the online space. Additionally, it became evident very quickly that researchers needed to adapt to the new situation, develop different approaches to carrying out fieldwork, as the pandemic would not be resolved any time soon. That, in turn, meant that courses exploring research methods online would allow for a form of modelling and exemplification of approaches that learners could adapt for their own contexts and research projects. It is against this backdrop that the following two case studies need to be read.

## Context

### *Researching Education and Society: Qualitative Methods*

The module Research Education and Society: Qualitative Methods is taught over ten weeks at the start of the second year of an education studies degree programme in the UK. The module aims to introduce undergraduate students to the role of qualitative research in educational contexts and the social sciences more broadly by focussing on expanding students' theoretical as well as practical understanding. Students on the course are offered opportunities to methodically evaluate benefits and drawbacks of particular methods and approaches to research as well as to critically reflect on key concepts relating to social science research and how they relate to education and society.

The course follows a traditional structure of weekly lectures of 90 minutes in length followed by one-hour-long seminars in seminars of approximately 15 to 20 students per group. As the module is compulsory, the cohort tends to consist of 120 to 160 home and international students, most of whom have no experience with qualitative research. Many students will have participated in surveys or completed questionnaires, but never been interviewed as part of a research project themselves. The content of the course is therefore organised around philosophical frameworks and the basics of qualitative research, as well as theoretical and practical elements of what it means to conduct research ethically, systematically, diligently and robustly. And although questionnaires, observations and interviews are a particular focus in this course, students do also get introduced to the principles Indigenous research paradigms and creative approaches to data collection and analysis. The module culminates in two assessment tasks: a presentation and a written essay. For the presentation students begin to

apply thematic analysis on a given data set, and the written essay represents their first coherent research proposal, which students may build on if they select the dissertation module in Year 3.

### *Creative Approaches to Data Collection and Analysis in Qualitative Research*

As part of her work as an independent scholar Nicole regularly delivers workshops and training sessions to delegates who wish to expand on their data collection methods and analytical frameworks. The research methods workshops are taught as stand-alone sessions of six hours of content delivery provided over two mornings. The workshop is suitable for anyone who would like to experience and learn more about alternative and/or complementary methods to collecting and analysing data in qualitative research. It is expected that participants will have some prior experience of and with qualitative research. As a consequence, the cohorts of attendees tend to encompass doctoral students and early career researchers based in higher education as well as more experienced researchers from independent research institutions, organisations and foundations in the third sector. Because Nicole runs these workshops from her Greenwich Meantime time zone, most delegates are from the UK and European or African countries in similar time zones of GMT, GMT±1, GMT±2. Occasionally, delegates join from further afield, such as Belen who joined from GMT-8.

The workshop is intended to provide attendees with theoretical knowledge along with critical awareness of what creativity in qualitative research is and means, and also to equip delegates with practical tools and strategies for collecting, generating and analysing data using creative approaches, and to offer opportunities and scope to explore ethical considerations and the role of the researcher within the contexts of creative, arts-based and participatory research. The sessions are held online via Zoom in smaller groups of a maximum of twenty attendees to ensure the best-possible learning experience for attendees.

### **Pedagogical approaches and learning tasks**

In line with the pedagogical principles of social constructivism, drawing on experiential learning theory and focussing on the best practices of research methods teaching, Nicole always delivers learning contents related to research methods as a mixture of interactive group tasks, discussions and lectures. As per Kolb's (2014) cycle, Nicole's starting point is

that learners need to have space to experience (experiencing) before they are given practical tools to systematically explore (reflecting) and critically interrogate (thinking). In practice, therefore, Nicole creates small-group breakout rooms where learners are commonly set two tasks. At first, learners pretend to be research participants and complete a research task using a particular creative approach (experiencing). Then, after ten minutes, learners use guiding questions to systematically explore ethical considerations, advantages and drawbacks of the approach just experienced (reflecting) for another ten minutes. The critical interrogation (thinking) phase then happens as a plenary discussion with Nicole supporting the process by introducing theories, frameworks and references to relevant literature. In the case of the undergraduate course, Kolb's final stage of "acting" is assigned as post-session tasks that scaffold the creation of the assignments. In the case of the one-off standalone workshops, delegates are expected to implement any learnings in their own contexts independently.

At this stage we would like to exemplify this process using one activity from the creative methods workshop. Learners are introduced to the concept of generating data with research participants using sorting activities. In this case, the materials stem from research related to students' understanding of plagiarism (see Figure 1). Initially, the task was developed for in-person situations, but was then adapted for the online research setting. Learners are provided with a PowerPoint slide containing categorisations and descriptions. In breakout groups learners are then asked to pretend to be research participants to complete the task. The task itself is to create a logical structure of categorisations and descriptions by moving the boxes of information around on the screen (Figure 1). There are no specific rules or guidelines around how groups complete the task and which logical structure is created by dragging and dropping the boxes. This is because in the original research task participants were also not constrained in any way so that the researchers were able to observe and identify students'



thought processes, understanding and misconceptions around plagiarism.

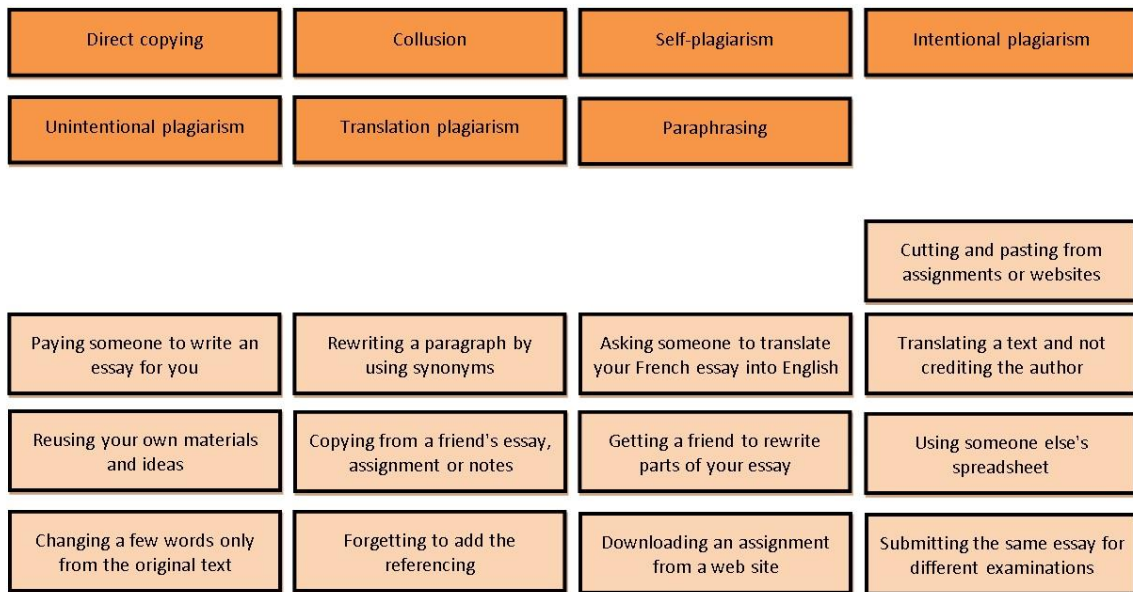


Figure 1: Online worksheet - Plagiarism activity

Workshop delegates are given sufficient time to engage with the task playing the role of research participants, although in most cases they do not complete it entirely. In practice, the members of the breakout groups organise themselves quickly and start moving some of the darker orange boxes onto the lighter orange ones. However, there are some categories, such as "unintentional plagiarism" and "intentional plagiarism", which would fit to several descriptions. Some groups duplicate these terms, other groups only assign them ones, and others leave these terms undone altogether. At this stage, it does not matter whether or not the groups have created and finalised an entire structure. The important factor is the experience of what it means to engage with a task in a focus group with strangers, as this replicates the typical focus group situation. After approximately ten minutes, learners are asked to use four guiding questions to reflect on the task they have just engaged with. The four guiding questions are: 1) What is the data? 2) How can we record that data? 3) What are the ethical and practical implications of this task? and 4) What are the advantages and drawbacks of this approach?

Once learners have had time to reflect on these four questions in the breakout groups, they are moved back into the main room, where a plenary discussion ensues. To begin with, one breakout group is asked to initiate the discussion by responding to the first question, before

the other breakout groups are asked to respond to the second, third and fourth question. In effect, each breakout group only responds to one question but members from all groups have an opportunity to add thoughts, additional discussion points or raise questions. In the case of the plagiarism activity, the conversation relating to the data revolves around opinions, understanding, knowledge and thought processes.

It is at this point that as workshop instructor modifies learners' understanding by highlighting how thought processes may be shaped by the fact that the activity is a focus group activity rather than a one-on-one situation. The subsequent open discussion enables learners to reconsider the impact of focus groups more broadly. When it comes to discussing practical and ethical implications, the conversations include details of data handling and data storage as well as the practicalities of dealing with a particular file format. Advantages and drawbacks elicited highlight that no one method ever is perfect, that any approach a researcher takes is flawed and that it is the researcher's role to consider and potentially offset any limitations. Once this activity is completed, learners are asked to repeat the same stages with other course materials relating to a different data collection approach. Because of the repeated elements of the set tasks and the four guiding questions learners focus in greater depth on advantages and concerns of particular approaches, whilst also experiencing first-hand as research participants the benefits and frustrations of such tasks. Next, we hear from the learners themselves:

### *Trista's reflections*

I am a student in Nicole's research methods module for undergraduate students. The structure and activities in the module enabled us students to gradually build on our research skills throughout the term. The module is designed to prepare us for our final research projects through the weekly topic, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires or analysis. Each week, we needed to finish a mini-task that is tailored to the weekly topic. In this way, the learning that occurs in the module is no longer for reaching a definitive end but more of a process to gain skills. We had many opportunities to confront disruptions of our prior experiences and were constantly modifying our knowledge to new information. The online readings, pre-recorded lectures, and extra video materials laid down the theoretical foundation to learn new research skills before entering our hands-on practice, the weekly mini-task. In the seminars, tutors offered guidance on completing the weekly mini-task, after

which students had a week to reflect on our theoretical understanding and weave it in with our practice. The research practices are largely adapted to the online environment by using Google Forms to create e-questionnaires and by using the online video-conferencing platform Zoom to conduct interviews. In the following week, general feedback was provided by tutors to the seminar group to allow critical reflection on the completed mini-task and further modification of theoretical understandings.

It is not difficult to see a dynamic process of knowledge creation in this module due to the constant adaptation to different learning experiences through learning materials, discussions and the hands-on mini-tasks. For learning to be experiential, social interactions are crucial. As part of the course, Slido, an online interactive slide platform, was employed so that we could actively engage in whole-group discussion by typing our opinions and viewing others' responses. Also, we were required to offer peers feedback on each other's presentations. These Moodle forum discussions enabled everyone to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of one's own and others' works. Through these interactive activities, we were not only engaging with the theoretical knowledge and our own works but also with our teachers and peers. And in the final research proposal, we were able to invent ideas that were meaningful for the future development of society. In this way, we were no longer passive receivers or consumers of knowledge but active contributors and creators of knowledge.

### *Helen's reflections*

I had booked this workshop feeling very pleased indeed that it would not include the usual additional time and travel costs of face-to face training. With work, study and family commitments my time is precious, so this aspect was a real bonus for me, even without the Covid-19 restriction considerations. Although I use a discussion board for my distance learning, and working from home using online meetings is now the norm, I was pleasantly surprised by the range of activities and the level of personal interaction and groupwork we were able to achieve through Zoom and using the breakout rooms during this two-day workshop.

Having grown up during a time where creativity was discouraged and learning by rote was the norm, I appreciated our introduction to creativity and to the creative sorting methods, made real for us using the "Plagiarism" and other ranking group activities. For the plagiarism

activity, we worked in small groups in the Zoom breakout rooms, and sorted cards listing different writing activities into categories of whether or not they constituted plagiarism. None of us had met each other previously, but both activities stimulated comfortable dialogue as one person was designated to move the pieces whilst we explored each other's understanding of the different constructs and meanings as each piece was identified and sorted as we negotiated the placing of each item. This experience demonstrated the usefulness of sorting methods as research tools which illuminate decision-making processes and priorities and the reasoning behind them (Niemi, Kumpulainen & Lipponen, 2015).

I have made use of the learning I gained about the sorting tools, which are both research and experiential learning tools (Niemi et al., 2015). So, I have incorporated a set of "research process" cards into the staff training I deliver on designing, implementing, analysing and reporting on a survey questionnaire. This approach helps me to gather data about the level of understanding of participants as well as facilitate group learning. I found the creative research methods workshop interesting and engaging – much more so than the faceless panel discussions of my distance learning course – and also very useful at a practical level, both in my employment and in my studies. There was plenty of variation in activity, which were interspersed with regular breaks which allowed for refreshment, regrouping and reflection.

### *Belen's reflections*

Although it could be thought that online activities do not support the same level of engagement as the ones in person do, often times they actually allow interaction to happen in the first place. That was the case with my participation in this workshop. I only realised that it was being held in the UK when I received a reminder a day before the event. Given that I live in Vancouver, Canada, this meant that the workshop was going to take place from 1:30 am to 5 am in my time zone. Despite this difficult time and even though I was miles away from Nicole and from most attendees, I was able to take part in it and enjoy the same level of participation as everyone else.

One of the activities that I personally liked the most was held in the second day of the workshop, focusing on data analysis. Nicole presented us with a text and divided us in small groups. Then, she asked us to, individually, write a poem with the data of the text she had shared with us. Finally, we were invited to share our poems with other people from the group.

I was truly amazed to feel how my head was working in this activity – despite the fact that it was 4 am in my time zone-, and I loved to see that there was not much difference in the process than when I use other methods or software, such as NVivo, for coding and analysing data. However, the result itself was way more unique and engaging. The poem that I wrote felt extremely personal, as felt all the poems that the other participants created. Although each of our poems was different and unique, through conversation and sharing we realized that our thinking process had not been that opposed, and that we had grasped and represented similar meanings and ideas from the original text.

By attending the workshop and collectively completing the series of tasks, I noticed that the level of engagement that can be created in online spaces is not vastly different from the one that can be fostered in in-person activities. I now consider that, more than the mode of the delivery, the epistemology and methodology behind each activity for teaching social research methods is what turns it into a truly experiential learning opportunity.

#### *Nicole's commentary*

The learners' reflections highlight how experiential learning in the online space is still relevant and needed, especially when it comes to learning about research methods. For me, the key to successful content delivery in the online space is not necessarily about technical proficiency and the use of what is often derogatively described as "bells and whistles, all-singing, all-dancing" sessions. The success lies with the connections learners can make with the contents, and that these connections happen at the experiencing, reflecting and thinking phases. Experiential learning in the online space is, of course, marred by the usual challenges of online learning, such as issues around time zones, digital literacy, the use of and access to relevant technology, stability of internet connectivity (e.g., Nurieva & Garaeva, 2020; Demuyakor, 2020; de Oliveira et al., 2020). The materials for the activities that Helen and Trista mention, for example, were shared in PowerPoint and PDF formats, as not everyone has Microsoft Office to access PowerPoint files. However, as Helen highlighted in her reflections the plagiarism activity does require learners accessing the PowerPoint version in order to move the categories around on the screen.

Equally, there are assumptions made in relation to the rather intimate and private process of writing and sharing poetry that Belen described. It is absolutely true to say that I have

particular expectations when it comes to attendees, their set-ups and their participation in my online sessions. But in my view, this is no different to me having particular expectations if I saw my learners in in-person contexts.

The expectations may be different, but there will be expectations nonetheless. In effect, all my online sessions are taught in such a way that I can also teach them in in-person settings: instead of moving categories and boxes about on a screen, the in-person plagiarism activity requires attendees to move snippets of paper around; instead of physically sending small groups into breakout rooms, attendees will be required to turn to their neighbours in the café-style layout of the room.

The most important element in bringing experiential learning to life – online or in-person, for that matter – is by scaffolding the stages. I start with a doing-task (experiencing) before I ask learners to reflect on their experiences with a set of guiding questions (reflecting), which then leads into a joint critical interrogation in a plenary discussion (thinking). The only phase that is always difficult to incorporate within the scope of a workshop or module is Kolb's (2014) acting, as it relies on individuals experimenting with and applying what was taught. Helen's reflection is one example of how the ideas discussed with me do live on.

In terms of expectations, I would like to mention here that I have high expectations of myself, too. I expect myself to lead by example and to "walk the walk". And true to my applying experiential learning theory, I never ask my learners to complete a task that I have not tried myself first, as this helps me connect *me* to the course materials and the learning experience.

## **Conclusion and future directions for research methods pedagogy**

Learners' experience of research methods courses has long been reported as being notoriously weak, disappointing and challenging (Spronken-Smith, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Winn, 1995) because of the huge gulf between theoretical teachings in courses and programmes and individuals' attempts to practically apply the learning in real-world research settings. The publications that have addressed experiential learning, active learning, problem-based learning and learning-by-doing highlight how individual approaches and philosophies overlap, become misinterpreted and thereby shift in focus (e.g., Early, 2014; Aguado, 2009; Carlisle & Ibbotson, 2005). Consequently, it becomes more difficult to discern what

experiential learning means and how it can be applied. But if there was very little research regarding the pedagogies of research methods before the Covid-19 pandemic (Lewthwaite & Nind, 2016), then we find ourselves in entirely uncharted waters now. When in the spring of 2020 the UK and indeed the world first experienced the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic, the move to teaching online was naturally rushed. It felt that none of us had sufficient time to carefully plan a coherent syllabus. Instead, our response to moving everything online was that of an emergency. As a consequence, the learners' first experiences of online content and delivery probably were hampered or felt like of lesser quality. As the months wore on, it became clear that it is no longer sufficient to teach research methods per se, the research methods themselves needed to change, from in-person research to remote fieldwork. Again, this shift is significant in the development of research method pedagogy, as many research method instructors had actually not encountered remote fieldwork themselves.

Like online learning is often seen as the weaker version of in-person learning, so is online data collection or remote fieldwork. The question of pedagogy is therefore tied up with a deficiency model, whereby it is the educator's role to drum up enthusiasm for the weaker, lesser, more erroneous approach. With our contribution in this chapter, we show that remote fieldwork and the resulting pedagogy via online learning are equally exciting, offer endless opportunities and can – indeed should – be a conscious choice. After all, engaging online with research participants enables, empowers and offers inclusivity in ways that in-person work does not (e.g., Jacobson, 1999; De Cesarei & Baldaro, 2015; Fox, Morris & Rumsey, 2007; Addeo et al, 2019). The teaching of research methods has taken quite a significant turn, but it is not turn for the worse.

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