ECDE7008 Combating Prejudice and Discrimination in the Classroom

Research Proposal Template. (Assessment 2)

Word Count = 4, 104

Project Theme: Prepare a 4,000 word practical research proposal to develop and evaluate an intervention designed to reduce prejudice and discrimination in an educational setting for either initial teacher education or continued professional learning.

Name of Applicant: Alan Morgan - 1903081

Project Title:

Research Project Proposal aimed towards reducing prejudice and discrimination in an Irish Third Level University faculty by the introduction of continuous professional development with the recognition award of a Digital Badge.

Introduction to Project

In my role as an academic leader over the past 8 years across three different third level settings and now in my current role as Programme Director at one of Irelands largest public Universities, I have had several incidences and experiences of classroom prejudice & discrimination from academics. This is almost always highlighted by a student complaint, which, by nature of the seriousness of the incidence, is normally too late for any form of an intervention. Ireland, and particularly Dublin, its capital, has a hugely diverse multicultural society. The Irish Times described Dublin as *'The Global Village,* the most multicultural part of Ireland' (Freyne, 2018). For two years as Academic Course Director for Marketing at Irelands largest private college based in Dublin City Centre, I witnessed the most horrible incidences of prejudice and discrimination. This was mainly due to the diverse multicultural and multi-ethnic student population from all corners of the globe being taught mainly by white Europeans, teaching and interacting with students from different religion, cultural and race with no experience or training in how to professionally address this audience correctly, both from a pedagogical & human perspective. It was during this academic leadership role when I had my first experience of dealing with a student complaint regarding discrimination by a lecturer.

Following my first experience of dealing with a complaint of this nature, it occurred to me that if I was able to learn more about how this student population would like to learn and interact pedagogically, then the incidences of prejudice and discrimination could be avoided. This was the spark that stared my interest to research this area in more detail with the particular focus of the research on how academic teaching staff could better understand how prejudice and discriminative behaviour could be understood in the first instance and then halted in the second.

The ultimate outcome from this research would be to develop a formative assessed training day based on the continuous professional development for academic teaching staff which would ultimately award a 'Digital Badge'. The Digital Badge would be recognised by the third level teaching community and the students that the training has been undertaken and that the academic now has a better understanding of the concept of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom. In my current role as Programme Director for Entrepreneurial Education at UCD, both my colleagues and I are dealing with a large multicultural student population and therefore the setting for the rollout of this research and ultimately the intervention is correct and required.

The attainment of digital badges in the academic world is now well recognised and in some environments expected. According to (Gamrat, Zimmerman, Dudek, & Peck, 2014) digital badges are online representations of learning experiences and activities that tell a story about the learner's education and skills. Students see digital badges as an instant recognition of a teachers qualification due to their internet focused modus operandum. Digital badges give the potential to be a highly effective pedagogical tool that can positively impact on the overall learning experience (Dowling-Hetherington & Glowatz, 2017).

Literature review

Introduction

For many years, there has been a focus on the study of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom (Howarth, 2004) and the negative impact of prejudice and discrimination on students has been largely documented (Crozier, 2009; Howarth, 2004). Exploring some of the early evidence, (Allport, 1979) recognised prejudice as an undeniable aspect of social relations and a lingering societal problem. Allport proposed that prejudice must include two critical elements; the attitude of favour or disfavour and the inclusion of an overgeneralized, erroneous belief. Exploring (Whitley & Kite, 2005) who take a more focused stand by separating beliefs, or stereotypes, from evaluating the belief and from the behaviour toward members of the groups about which the belief is held. Based on my own classroom experience over the last 8 years, the issue of race and discrimination is a very real problem. According to (Tannock, 2008) there is much research and literature on discrimination in education, but in general, the issue of education-based discrimination in its own right has been widely ignored (Tannock, 2008). Tannock expands by stating that in a world where education is recognised to stop inequality, why does it then continue to appear again and again and is now the 'elephant in the room'. Unless there is some kind of practical intervention and strategies implemented then this 'Elephant' will continue to exist.

Problem Recognition

A vast majority of 3rd level lecturers in Ireland are not formally trained in teaching and learning. According to (Hunt, 2011) academics are experts in their subject area, but there is also a need to know and understand how best to

teach that subject, including an understanding of learning theories and how best to put these theories into practice. Academics need to appreciate what teaching and learning approaches work best for different students in different situations. This approach includes the ability to teach and deal with a diverse audience of different needs, from different backgrounds, language, culture, and race. These students are vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination without academic staff being given the proper training. (Hunt, 2011) explains that there have been significant advances in teaching and learning in Irish higher education, in particular the development of centres for teaching & Learning focused on educational development and academic practice, but these centres are not consistent nor structured across all higher education. The challenge therefore is to convert best practice into standard practice for all. (Hunt, 2011) citing (Huber & Morreale, 2002), state that it is now more important than ever, due to the increasing diversity of students, to have academics who can implement teaching and assessment methods that will enable students from a range of backgrounds to learn in a more professional environment so as they can build on their strengths without the lack of confidence or fear of failure that their diversity sometimes brings.

With the changing student landscape in Irish Higher Education, it could be argued that the concept of teacher expectations may be an issue when it comes to academic staff delivering to a multicultural audience, which could be an opportunity for teachers being upskilled. This is mainly due to this staff cohort having a lack of experience in the classroom with such a diverse bunch of students, which in turn, without training could lead to the possibility of prejudice and discrimination. Exploring the theory behind this (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016) define teacher expectations as beliefs teachers hold about their students' academic ability and achievement capabilities. These expectations are thought to be generally influenced by a number of factors such as students' ethnicity, gender and social class (Rubie-Davies, 2015). Research by (Strand, 2014) discovered different aspects including the students name, personality and overall friendliness. (Saracho, 2006) states that teachers have different expectations from students with different backgrounds and this is often noted as a reflection of their perception of these pupils. According to (Südkamp, Kaiser, & Möller, 2014) in the classroom, first impressions last and a teachers' perceptions of a students' performance, including their judgments for the students' future performance are generally valid and as this prejudice is set, the teachers' expectations tend not to change.

Taking a view to the ethnic background argument around teachers expectations, the study by (Van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010) explored students from ethnic minority backgrounds and demonstrated that these students in general have a higher propensity to negative teacher expectations. There is empirical evidence showing that there is a need for more teacher training and intervention beyond subject discipline, for example (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2012) comment that culturally focused teacher-training has a positive effect on academics and teachers' way of thinking about their teaching practice and their students ability to learn. (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2012) citing (Gran, 2006) comments on a Swedish study of 1,100 academics from six different

higher education institutions. This research focused on their experiences of a national compulsory cultural teacher-training programme on teacher / learner enhancement. The overall reaction to this programme was positive with the participants confirming the value of training. According to (Gran, 2006) if both policy and practice wish to enhance academic learning environment for students, then based on this research it is clearly beneficial to organise this kind of cultural teacher training. There is evidence that intervention is required at a teacher training level to enhance and create psychological safety in classroom learning. According to (Glock & Karbach, 2015) teacher training programmes that focus on how to identify and reject discriminatory thoughts by teachers and academics are required. These programmes could be helpful in reducing the potential negative impact this kind of behaviour has on students and their outcomes.

Based on the above theories from the literature together with the researchers experience, this research proposal is advocating **the intervention of an Academic Staff Training Day on Diversity and inclusion in the classroom with all participants achieving a Digital Badge at the completion of this training.**

According to (Gamrat et al., 2014) "*digital badges are online representations of learning experiences and activities that tell a story about the learner's education and skills".* (Dowling-Hetherington & Glowatz, 2017) propose that these digital badges are used in Higher Education to recognise the students' participation in a learning activity, to help them explicitly and visually capture progress and to recognise the achievement of skills and competencies. Ultimately, Digital Badges are now used to serve as a means of certifying achievements which are instantly recognisable as they are used on communications such as email signatures. According to (Dowling-Hetherington & Glowatz, 2017) the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education has developed a digital badge recognition process for continuous professional development in the area of teaching and learning of higher education teaching staff.

A recent example of the Digital Badge concept in action comes from AHEAD together with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning jointly delivered the Digital Badge for Universal Design in Teaching and Learning. The implementation of Universal Design principles in Teaching & Learning promotes inclusivity and equity while also 'future-proofing' ones teaching. According to (AHEAD.ie, 2020) our classrooms and lecture theatres become increasingly diverse, our practices must also adapt to reflect the changing landscape of higher education.

Proposed methodology

The intervention

Research Title: Research Project Proposal aimed towards Reducing prejudice and discrimination in an Irish Third Level University faculty by the introduction of continuous professional development with the recognition award of a Digital Badge.

Research Question:

1) Will the introduction of awareness training for academics help in the reduction of prejudice & discrimination in the classroom?
2) Will the awarding of a Digital Badge for prejudice & discrimination awareness training be recognised and appreciated by students and academics alike?

Target population and participant recruitment strategy

Research Approach

In general terms research can be conducted with the following approaches, qualitative research approach, a quantitative approach or indeed a mix of the two which is referred to as a mixed methods approach. For the purpose of this research project a quantitative approach will be employed. (Babbie, 2010) states that quantitative methods can have an objective focus on data collection primarily using numerical measurements. Quantitative approaches typically involve data collection through questionnaires or surveys. Quantitative research focuses on gathering data across groups of people to explain a particular phenomenon. Typically, a quantitative study will either be experimental or descriptive in nature which in turn will give an understanding of how the data collection will be undertaken and analysed. If a descriptive study is used the research area (people) are measured once so as the association between variables can be established although the research may include many hundreds to create a valid estimation of the relationship variables (Black, 1999). On the other hand, an experimental research approach will include a before and after measurement technique and there may be a relatively small sample population chosen. The approach of this research project will be a descriptive study due to the student base being researched can be a representative sample of the student population of UCD students and academic staff.

Research Design

In a quantitative research study, the process can be used to observe phenomena or occurrences affecting individuals in a particular situation, for example, in the case of this research project, the students and staff with their understanding of training and digital badges. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is a knowledge generating

process which creates a general understanding of the social world. Quantitative research design involves focus on a particular target group which are referred to as the sample population and relies on data collected in a scientific way which measures the sample population, which in the case of this research project is a sample of the student and staff population of UCD.

Target population and participant recruitment strategy

As a means of testing, a Pilot Survey will be sent to a test population of approx. 36 students using the convenience sampling method. These students will be easily accessible as they will be participating in the researchers class. The same test procedure will take place with academic staff using the researchers department colleagues as a sample population (27 in total). The relevance of this pilot survey will be focused on testing the clarity of the research instructions. If a large proportion of each population sample (approx. 90%) understands the research instructions on the questionnaire (measured by clear respondent answers) then the survey will be administered to the larger sample size.

Students

The questionnaire will be sent to a random selection of 1st and 3rd year students at four different schools at UCD using a Google Form survey method through the student email data base. The email system used will allow for total anonymity due to the use of the UCDconnect email address each student has which has no name attached to the email address which allows for all GDPR issues to be adhered to. The survey will be sent to students in the following faculties:

a. UCD School of Physics
b. UCD School of Computer Science
c. UCD School of Medicine
d. UCD School of Earth Sciences

The above faculties have been chosen as these typically house the most international students in the college.

The total population sample will be approximately 150 students per faculty which will give a total sample population of 600 students. It is expected that the response rate for will be approx. 50%. response rates are calculated by dividing the number of usable responses returned by the total number eligible in the sample chosen and in most research projects a response rate of approx. 60% should be the goal of researchers (Fincham, 2008).

Academic Staff

The academic staff for each of the schools that are being targeted with the student survey will also be surveyed so as a balanced response can be achieved. The four schools have a staff population across a number of categories including academic teaching staff, research staff and post doctorate staff. For the purpose of this research the target population will be Academic Teaching Staff. Across the four schools the total number of teaching staff amounts to 150 personnel.

a. UCD School of Physics
b. UCD School of Computer Science
c. UCD School of Economics
d. UCD School of Earth Sciences

Questionnaire Design

According to (Kember & Leung, 2008), social science research uses the questionnaire method of data collection and in particular, academia uses this approach to understand opinions from various stakeholders such as students and staff. In higher education, this data collection method is used extensively for course evaluation questionnaires and module and programme development.

This research project will use the attitudinal survey questionnaire method (aka - affective surveys) for both student and staff population alike. According to (Lewis & Seymour, 1995) attitudinal surveys are generally noted as being a flexible data collection tool which can provide student data on perceptions, feelings, emotions, and general attitudes of their classroom and overall learning experience. Attitudinal surveys can be administered by various methods, but it must be noted that different questionnaire contemplation should be taken into account for each mode of delivery, e.g., post or email. In relation to this research project, the attitudinal questionnaire will be administered through the college student email system. Each questionnaire will have a series of questions asked in a specific order (4 questions) and students answers will be given through a 3 Point Likert Scale. The questionnaire will be designed and delivered using The Google Forms system. A simple link will be sent in the email to each student which will open the survey document. Once completed, the Form will automatically and anonymously populate a drive folder only accessible to the researcher.

The questionnaire will use duplicate questioning methods to replicate the same questions to both of the target audience. This will give balance and fairness from both sides.

STUDENT QUESTIONAIRE				
	Please tick Male or Female respondent box	Male	Female	Other (please state)
	Questions	I am aware / I agree	I am not aware / I disagree	NEUTRAL
1	Are you aware of any Prejudice and/or Discriminatory behaviour from academic staff towards students in the classroom?			
2	Would you agree that some formal training for academic teaching staff would assist in eradicating prejudice and discriminatory behaviour in the classroom?			
3	If a Digital Badge was awarded to staff for taking the above training – would you agree that this would be beneficial and create a better all-round awareness of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom and help in its eradication?			

ACADEMIC STAFF QUESTIONAIRE				
	Please tick Male or Female respondent box	Male	Female	Other (please state)
	Questions	I am aware / I agree	I am not aware / I disagree	NEUTRAL
1	Are you aware of any Prejudice and/or Discriminatory behaviour from academic staff towards students in the classroom?			
2	Would you agree that some formal training for academic teaching staff would assist in eradicating prejudice and discriminatory behaviour in the classroom?			
3	If a Digital Badge was awarded to staff for taking the above training – would you agree that this would be beneficial and create a better all-round awareness of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom and help in its eradication?			

Data collection, evaluation method and analysis

The collected data for this research project will be analysed using the software package, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). By using this software, with the data inputted, the programme will analyse both questionaries on the basis of answers received. With each questionnaire only having 4 inputs per return, the data should be quickly analysed.

In processing the data, respondents answers will be coded according to answer value and gender. (Kent, 2015) proposes that data analysis software usually requires that the data is given a number that is a code and this code 'stands for' values that are in words. The Data evaluation process will begin with collating the coded questionnaires and entering the values for each question. According to (Kent, 2015) If data is entered incorrectly an untrustworthy analysis will result (Kent, 2015). The data, once correctly entered into SPSS, will then be analysed by the following *measures:*

1) *Student respondent gender breakdown*
2) *Student respondent answer to Q.1 - Are you aware of any Prejudice and/or Discriminatory behaviour from academic staff towards students in the classroom?*
3) *Student respondent answer to Q.2 - Would you agree that some formal training for academic teaching staff would assist in eradicating prejudice and discriminatory behaviour in the classroom?*
4) *Student respondent answer to Q.3 - If a Digital Badge was awarded to staff for taking the above training – would you agree that this would be beneficial and create a better all-round awareness of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom and help in its eradication?*
5) *Academic Staff respondent gender breakdown*
6) *Academic Staff respondent answer to Q.1 - Are you aware of any Prejudice and/or Discriminatory behaviour from academic staff towards students in the classroom?*
7) *Academic Staff respondent answer to Q.2 - Would you agree that some formal training for academic teaching staff would assist in eradicating prejudice and discriminatory behaviour in the classroom?*
8) *Academic Staff respondent answer to Q.3 - If a Digital Badge was awarded to staff for taking the above training – would you agree that this would be beneficial and create a better all-round awareness of prejudice and discrimination in the classroom and help in its eradication?*

Based on the analyses of each category of question within each respondent cohort, it is presumed that the two research questions driving this research project will be answered either positively or negatively with the gender question giving a demographic element to the research which will ensure that the process captures these important variables in the evaluation.

Research Question:

1) Will the introduction of awareness training for academics help in the reduction of prejudice & discrimination in the classroom?
2) Will the awarding of a Digital Badge for prejudice & discrimination awareness training be recognised and appreciated by students and academics alike?

Primary and secondary outcome measures

In general terms of research output, the primary outcomes are the outcomes of greatest importance at that time that will initially begin the proposed intervention. With regards to secondary outcomes, this data can be used to evaluate additional effects of intervention into the future with the possibility of further research.

For the purpose of this research project, the primary outcome will be the initial data received from the survey to determine the opinions of both students and academic staff alike on the introduction of staff training to reduce prejudice and discrimination in the classroom together with the potential use of 'Digital Badges' to recognise this training.

Main Ethical considerations *(Guided by the UCD Research Code of Ethics)*

According to the UCD Ethical Guidelines around student research (UCD, 2020), access to UCD Students should be obtained through a submission for full review or a low risk exemption, depending on whether a full ethical review or an exemption is required. All submissions for a full ethical review that include a request to access UCD students will be reviewed by the HREC as part of the ethical review for the study, and applicants who satisfy the requirements of the committee will receive ethical approval and permission to access UCD students in the same HREC Approval Letter. If on the other hand the submission is for exemption from full ethical review with permission to access UCD students, this will be reviewed by the HREC if the researcher is accessing students in more than one school.

In the case of this research project, it is intended to apply for full exemption from a full ethical review as the research will be applying to access students in more than one school, therefore, according to the research guidelines in this case, as a matter of courtesy, the researcher should contact each head of school (s) which is primarily in place to ensure that there is no objection to the researcher recruiting participants from the school. According to the UCD Research Guidelines (UCD, 2020) the following criteria allow for a low risk exemption application from full review: Standard educational practices; standard educational tests; anonymous surveys or interviews that do not involve the collection of identifiable data. Following ethical approval or exemption, The University Student Survey Board (USSB) processes requests to access UCD Students from Internal applicants.

According to the UCD Research committee (UCD, 2020) all researchers accessing UCD students should note the following best practice guidelines:

- *Researchers should respect and protect the welfare and rights of individuals who participate in research;*
- *Researchers should recognise and accept their responsibility for ensuring that research will be conducted ethically and in accordance with UCD Research Ethics Guidelines.*

- *Researchers should note that while they may not require ethical approval for their study - they are obliged to seek exemption from full ethical review.*
- *Researchers must only pursue research questions that are designed to contribute to knowledge, be committed to the pursuit and protection of truth, and rely only on research methods that are appropriate to the discipline for which they are trained.*
- *Researchers should engage in research practices and use only those techniques for which they are trained by qualification, education or experience.*
- *Researchers should strive to ensure and maintain high standards of competence in their work, to recognise the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise.*

What are the expected outputs from this project?

This research project is asking two main research questions, namely;

1) Will the introduction of awareness training for academics help in the reduction of prejudice & discrimination in the classroom?
2) Will the awarding of a Digital Badge for prejudice & discrimination awareness training be recognised and appreciated by students and academics alike?

Based on the micro literature review around prejudice & discrimination in this project, together with the researchers academic experience, it is clear that there is evidence of prejudice & discrimination in higher education settings (Crozier, 2009; Howarth & Eleni, 2015; Van den Bergh et al., 2010; Whitley & Kite, 2005). Based on the implementation of this quantitative survey towards a sample population of UCD students (max n=600) and UCD academic staff (max n=150), it is anticipated that the results of this study will spark the flame to develop a pilot 'One Day Training Programme' for academic staff (piloted in one University school initially) around 'Awareness and Understanding of Prejudice & Discrimination in the Classroom' and the introduction of a Digital Badge for same training with the longer term view of implementing this University wide. Also, the awarding of a Digital Badge will be an important aspect to this project, as this is seen as an appropriate and influential accreditation system.

Timescales for project completion *(not included in the word count)*

TIMELINE (2021)	February	March	April	May	June
TASK					
Questionnaire Design					
Research Approval/Exemption					
Head of School Approval					
Email Questionnaire to Students					
Email Questionnaire to Academic Staff					
Initial Analysis of responses					
Full SPSS Analysis of Responses					
Compilation of Report on Findings					
Full report sent to Head of Schools and student academic council					
Next Steps					

Up to ten key references *(not included in word count)*

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