How can teachers motivate students to study theoretical modules in public relations?

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Public relations education has been connected in the literature to industry professionalism. However, many PR students see the field very practically, and consider PR theoretical modules as "boring" and "not important". Therefore, this research aims to investigate how to motivate students to make sense of what they are studying in the PR theoretical modules which the researcher/teacher was teaching through learning-by-doing activities. The research uses an action research process to improve the procedures of learning-by-doing exercises. The researcher/teacher established interactive relationships with the students in the classroom, and observed the learning process in order to acquire in-depth understanding of the findings. The research findings have revealed a significant shift in student engagement and recommend practical actions to motivate students to study PR theoretical modules. The research also shows that there is a positive impact of learning-by-doing activities on increasing student 'want' and 'need', and suggests several factors that can make PR theoretical modules more motivating.

Key words: Public relations, education, action research, learning-by-doing, motivation, theoretical modules

Como pueden los maestros motivar a los estudiantes para estudiar modelos teóricos en Relaciones Públicas

La educación de las Relaciones Públicas ha sido conectada en la literatura con el profesionalismo de la industria. Sin embargo, muchos estudiantes

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de RP ven el campo de manera muy práctica y consideran los módulos teóricos de RP como 'aburridos' y 'no importantes'. Por lo tanto, la presente investigación tiene como objetivo investigar como motivar a los estudiantes para dar sentido a lo que están estudiando en los módulos teóricos de RP que el investigador/profesor enseñó a través de actividades de aprendizaje mediante la práctica. La investigación utiliza el proceso de investigación-acción para mejorar los procedimientos de los ejercicios del aprendizaje mediante la práctica. El investigador/profesor estableció relaciones interactivas con los estudiantes en el aula y observó el proceso de aprendizaje con el fin de adquirir una comprensión en profundidad de los hallazgos. Los resultados de la investigación han puesto de manifiesto un cambio significativo en el compromiso de los estudiantes y recomiendan acciones prácticas para motivar a los estudiantes para el estudio de los módulos teóricos de RP. La investigación también muestra que hay un impacto positivo de las actividades del aprendizaje mediante la práctica, en el aumento de estudiantes que 'quieren' y 'necesitan' y sugiere varios factores para que los módulos teóricos de RP sean más motivadores.

Palabras clave: Relaciones Públicas, Educación, Investigación-Acción, Aprendizaje Mediante la Práctica, Motivación, Módulos Teóricos

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, public relations education has witnessed considerable growth and academic attention. Public relations education has been connected in the literature to the industry professionalism (Pavlik & Salmon, 1984). In other words, it is a core requirement for preparing a professional PR practitioner. Some scholars associated PR professionalism with the beginning of PR education (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996) and emphasised the importance of education to enhance the growth of PR (Newsom, Turk, & Kuruckeberg, 1999). However, many PR students see the field very practically and consider PR theoretical modules as "boring" and "not important". This raises the question: "How can teachers design theoretical courses in a practical field such as public relations?" Based on Grunig and Hunt's study undertaken in 1984, PR courses should provide students with PR management and commu-

nication skills, besides practical experience through using theoretical knowledge in practice. Therefore, this research aims to investigate how to motivate students to make sense of what they are studying in the PR theoretical modules which the researcher/teacher was teaching through learning-by-doing activities. The research uses an action research process to improve the procedures of learning-by-doing exercises.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Public relations education & practice

A study undertaken by Al-Rashid (2004) on PR practitioners in Bahrain ministries found that more than the half of PR practitioners in Bahrain ministries (52%) agreed that experience and intuition are more important than academic theory when solving a PR problem, and (26%) tended to agree. On the other hand, the research also revealed that (48%) of the respondents agreed, and (37%) tended to agree, that theory and research contribute to professionalism in the PR industry (Al-Rashid, 2004). However, there is a gap between theory and practice in public relations raised by Cornelissen's question (2000) of how academic theories can be used in common daily PR practice. This research argues that in order to bridge this gap, we should design PR theoretical modules in a way that would prepare the students to apply them in practice.

2.2 The relationship between PR theory & practice

Although students see a gap between theoretical modules and practice, this study claims that there is an interrelated relationship between theory and practice in PR. The role of the teacher is to enhance this relationship. Theory can be used to solve daily PR problems (the instrumental model), in addition to providing general views when practising public relations (the conceptual model) (Cornelissen, 2000). Thus, this research attempts to study how this relationship can be achieved and facilitated starting from university. Neff and other scholars (1999) found that a PR educational programme should assist PR students to develop an interdisciplinary foundation, communication and

public relations-specific knowledge and skills. It was argued that these skills can be "learned more effectively in a university setting" (Wang, 2003, p. 13). However, Surveys of Professionals and Educators showed that "students are poorly prepared in terms of basic communication skills, which ironically are the very capabilities that are in demand in order to succeed in the 'real world'" (Wang, 2003, p. 11).

2.3 The Ripple Model of Learning

Based on the Ripple Model of Learning presented by Race (2005), there are five factors underpinning successful learning: wanting to learn, needing to learn, learning by doing (practice, trial and repetition), learning through feedback, and making sense of things (Race, 2005). This research seeks to study the role of the teacher to connect these factors and enhance them in the classroom. Race (2005) suggested that if the students lack the want and need to learn, the teacher can start from facilitating learning-by-doing activities, and get the student making sense of what they have been doing. Based on this theoretical model, two key research aims and objectives were developed:

– To investigate how to motivate students to make sense of what they are studying in the PR theoretical modules which the researcher/teacher was teaching through learning-by-doing activities.

– To investigate and improve the effect of using learning-by-doing activities in creating the student "need" and "want" to study PR theoretical modules.

Two key research questions were developed based on these objectives:

– What is the effect of learning-by-doing activities on the student "want" and "need" to learn PR theoretical modules?

– What are the factors that can make these activities more motivating for the students?

3. Methodology

3.1 Why is action research the most appropriate methodological approach?

Very few scholars have studied PR education, and most of these studies are descriptive or historical. Thus, there is a need for new methods in PR research (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The researcher/teacher looks to the teaching/learning process as a reflective, participatory process among participants. Therefore, the researcher/teacher uses action research because it is "the process through which teachers collaborate in evaluating their practice jointly; raise awareness of their personal theory; articulate a shared conception of values; try out new strategies to render the values expressed in their practice more consistent with educational values they espouse; record their work in a form which is readily available to and understandable by other teachers; and thus develop a shared theory of teaching by research practice" (Elliott, 1991).

Kurt Lewin was the first to use the term "action research" as "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (Lewin, 1946, p. 206). Since Lewin's (1946) introduction of the term "action research", many scholars studied it from different dimensions and in diverse disciplines and practices. Therefore, Tripp (2001) argued that "it is unlikely we will ever know when or where the method originated, simply because people have always investigated their practice in order to better improve it". He claimed that "Rogers' (2002) account of John Dewey's (1933) notion of reflection, for instance, shows that it is very similar, and one could also point to the ancient Greek empiricists as using an action research cycle".

Riding, Fowell, and Levy (1995) explained that since the eighties, various action researchers have adopted "a methodical, iterative approach embracing problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection" using more than one cycle to develop their practice (Figure 1). Susman (1983) provided detailed explanation of five phases in each action research cycle that include diagnosing, planning, taking action, evaluation

and specifying learning (Figure 2). In this study, action research compasses two cycles of observation, reflection, action, evaluation, and modification.

Figure1: Action research cycles (Riding, Fowell, & Levy, 1995)

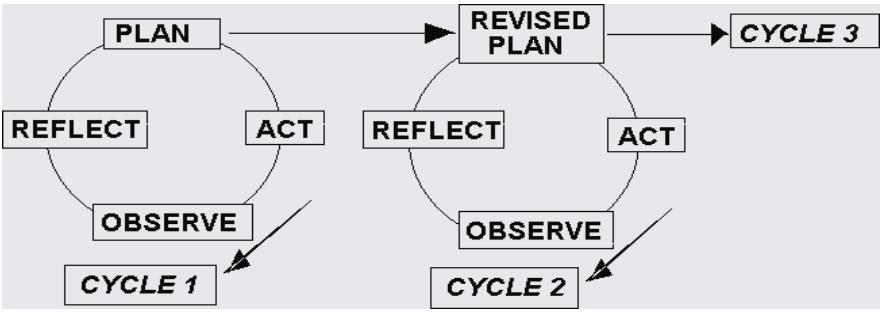
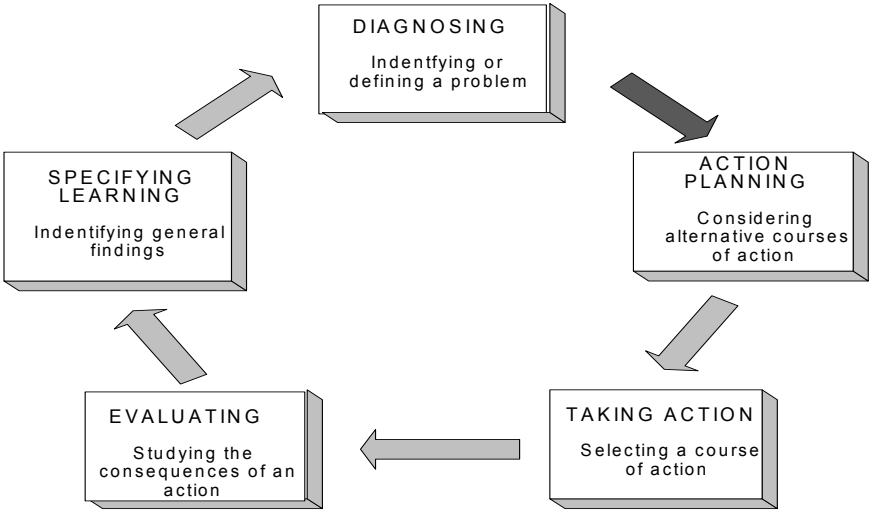


Figure 2: Detailed Action Research Model (adapted from Susman, 1983)



Beaulieu (2013) defined action research as the process that involves achieving various aims such as "improving the quality of human life, acquiring knowledge to become better practitioners, and developing strategies to address problems". Various scholars defined action research as a process that

requires participation among participants (such as Hall, 1992; Park, 1992; Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007). Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003, p. 13) argued that "Action research rejects the notion of an objective, value-free approach to knowledge generation in favour of an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice". Therefore, the use of action research in this study aims at facilitating participation among the participants to enhance the learning process and relate theoretical modules to practice in their own cultural context.

3.2 Relationship between researcher and participants

Action research is based on collaboration between the researcher and the research participants (Avison, Baskerville, & Myers, 2001). Therefore, the researcher/teacher has adopted the constructivist paradigm that assumes that "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 207). The researcher/teacher established interactive relationships with the students in the classroom and observed the learning process in order to acquire in-depth understanding of the findings. The students were active participants in designing course objectives and improving learning-by-doing activities. The researcher's role in this interpersonal relationship is to "construct" new realities based on the realities initially held by the research participants. The co-operation with the research participants helped the researcher to conduct rich empirical research.

3.3 Sampling

This research used a purposeful sample of the PR students in two core theoretical modules: "Introduction to Public Relations" and "Public Relations Management" that are taught in the Department of Mass Communication in the University of Bahrain. These two modules were selected because they were classified by the Department as theoretical modules in public relations. Thirty-six students took part in the research (18 students in each class). This small sample made it easier for the participants to participate and share ideas and recommendations.

3.4 Data gathering techniques

This research used two key data gathering methods: observation of the student involvement in the activities, and questionnaire given to the students. To begin with, observation was used to record systemically "events, behaviour, and artefact (objects) in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 107). Observation allowed the researcher to be involved in the process of learning through using field notes.

As for the questionnaire, few questions were closed, whilst most of the questions were open-ended for several reasons. Qualitative questionnaires were more appropriate to collect valuable findings as the small samples make it difficult to get reliable quantitative data. Besides, the open-question questionnaire is related to the research objectives and questions.

Moreover, there is an instant need for further qualitative research in public relations to provide in-depth data (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). There are several advantages of open-ended questions as they are less likely to guide the answer than closed questions and allow participants to express their ideas spontaneously (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005, p. 26). The questionnaire was used because it enabled the students to express their views more frankly than in other methods such as personal interviews.

3.5 Reduction of the data and analysis

The students preferred to answer the questionnaire in Arabic because they found it difficult to express their opinions in English and it was easier for them to share their feedback using their native language. Then, the researcher/teacher translated the transcripts of the questionnaires from Arabic to English. In this process, the researcher/teacher quoted key statements and reduced them to key themes after discussing them with the students. Based on the observation process, the students participated in developing objectives, ideas and shared their recommendation with the teacher. The researcher/teacher arranged the participants' opinions and discussion under key themes. The results of the two PR theoretical modules were integrated in the findings section because of the many common results and their similar characteristics and activities.

3.6 The students' participation in their cultural context

Somekh and Zeichner (2009, p. 10-11) explained that the philosophy toward teachers and their learning is affected by the participants' culture as "Some communities replicate the hierarchical patterns of authority and the dim view of teachers' capabilities that permeate dominant forms of teacher professional development, while others display a deep respect for teachers and their knowledge and reject typical authority patterns that limit teacher autonomy and control". In this study, the students were involved in the process of designing the learning objectives as a core element of the action research process, as the researcher/teacher assigned time for discussion and sharing thoughts and recommendations.

There were 18 students in each class which made it easier for participation and involvement to take place. To break the participants' cultural fears, the researcher/teacher started the process with introductory discussion and brainstorming sessions and conducted the exercises in groups to establish rapport among the participants. After the first cycle, the students had more courage and confidence in expressing their perspectives and be involved in the "acting" process. The cultural change in the learning process changed the students' typical roles from objective learners to become active social actors in the learning process. This process challenged the cultural teaching "typical authority patterns" and treated the students as active participants in the learning process.

Reason and Bradbury defined action research as "a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment" (2001, p. 1). Therefore, the researcher/teacher encouraged participation and at the same time respected cultural values. For instance, the researcher/teacher provided the students with time and freedom to write their recommendations and criticism openly without mentioning their names in order to respect their cultural values and fears. This goes along with Stringer's (2008) suggestion that the action researcher's role is to "provide people with the support and resources to do things in ways that will fit their own cultural context and their own lifestyles".

3.7 The use of 'learning-by-doing' activities as a participatory process

The core aim of using learning-by-doing activities was to motivate and involve the students in shaping their theoretical courses and relating them to real-life problems and situations. This process started not only when the students were "doing" the exercises but it started when the participants were "choosing", "discussing" and "developing" the activities' objectives and outlines. Kemmis (2009) explained that action research "happens in sayings, doings and relating – both in the conduct of the action research itself and in the justification of action research". This was achieved through providing the students with the choices and alternatives in the first cycle through comparing, discussing and applying theories in real-life situations and challenges. The students were more involved in designing the exercises in the second cycle after they had more confidence in themselves as active participants in the learning process.

One of the key cultural learning challenges was to change the role of the students from doing what the teacher asked them to do to start thinking, relating and being active participants in the learning process. In addition, the researcher/teacher had to give up part of her authority to achieve action research objectives. The teacher was aware that this cultural challenge required the participation of both the teacher and the students. Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003, p. 14) argued that "Working collaboratively with others leads not only to community and organisational changes, but also to personal changes in the action researcher".

3.8 Methods of verification

Several methods were used to ensure the quality of the research. By using more than one data collection technique (observation and questionnaire) and more than one cycle in two modules, "triangulation" was achieved in the research. Yin highlighted that with triangulation, "the potential problems of construct validity also can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" (Yin, 1994, p. 92). Additionally, a systematic procedure of the research was

followed to allow other researchers to follow the same process (Daymon & Holloway, 2002).

Besides, to overcome the researcher's bias, different and sometimes contrary findings were provided (Yin, 1994). Therefore, the researcher did not ignore data that were inconsistent with other findings, but instead they were presented to offer an alternative explanation for the evidence collected. Moreover, the process of re-designing the questionnaire questions is essential to ensure the rigour of findings. In the re-designed questionnaire, more attention was given to meet the research objectives and questions that were discussed and developed with the participants.

3.9 Action research timescale and phases

The research lasted two academic semesters (From mid-September 2008 to mid-April 2009). It has gone through multiple phases using two action research cycles. In each cycle, the researcher started *observing* the problem, *reflecting* and *acting* on it. The *evaluation* process started from the beginning of the semester through observing student engagement. By the end of the first semester (in January 2009), students had given their feedback through the questionnaire. From the questionnaire results, the researcher *modified* the teaching methods in the second semester and then started the second cycle of action research again from February to mid-April 2009.

3.10 Ethical issues

The key ethical issues were addressed in the research. First, the researcher took the approval of the department to conduct the research. Besides, the researcher was aware of the ethical issues regarding interviewing students such as the power inequality between the researcher and participants. The power relationship between the researcher as a teacher and the students might make the students feel it is compulsory to take part in the research even if they do not want to do so. Therefore, the researcher explained to the students the research aims and how the data will be used and took their permission to participate in the research. Moreover, the anonymity of the participants was highly respected and the provided information was confidential and used only

for the purpose of the research. The students should not write their names on the questionnaire, so they can write their opinions frankly.

3.11 The research limitations

There is no methodology without limitations. The first limitation is connected to the time barrier and the ongoing nature of the action research as the researcher had only seven months to conduct this research. To overcome this problem, a new course plan was designed for the researched modules, where there was a lecture or two assigned for learning-by-doing activities after each chapter. Moreover, the time barrier restricted the research to take only two cycles, but the researcher was aware that other cycles should be conducted to develop the research findings. Additionally, the process of translating the data from Arabic to English made it difficult sometimes to transfer the exact, original "expressions" used by the participants. Besides, the researcher depended on the honesty of a small group of participants using their own perspectives. Therefore, conducting this research in more than one module and in two cycles helped to make the research more rigorous.

4. Findings

4.1 The First Cycle: Observation of the problem, reflection & taking action

As discussed earlier, the students in the research thought that PR theoretical modules were boring and useless. They were studying them because they had to in order to get the degree. It was noticed that there was a lack of students' participation, and students focused on memorising theories. In other words, the students lacked the "want" and "need" to study theoretical modules. Therefore, key questions were raised: "How can the teacher make learning PR theoretical modules more motivating?" In order to answer this big question, the term "motivation" should be defined first. There is no one theory of motivation as a number of theories have looked to motivation from different angles. For instance, McClelland (1961, 1985) studied motivation as a personal trait, while Maehr and Braskamp (1986) looked at motivation in re-

sponse to situations or the expectations of the others. Other scholars (Ames, 1986; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) researched motivation in relation to the cognitive processes an individual goes through when he/she is motivated. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are two key motivators to our action: extrinsic (i.e. high grades and money) and intrinsic (i.e. self-esteem) (Jordan, Carlile, & Stack, 2009).

This research looks to motivation as "an outcome of teaching", not "its precondition" as "good teaching makes students want to engage in the tasks" (Biggs, 2003, p. 57). Thus, it is important to look to the motivating factors from the students' points of views, as the teacher can motivate students through designing class activities that address their needs (McMillan & Forsyth, 1991).

After this reflection process, another question was raised: "What actions should be taken to make learning theoretical modules more motivating?" The researcher/teacher assigned one session that lasted 50 minutes in each class to discuss and choose learning objectives that satisfied the students' needs. Based on the students' perspectives, the researcher decided to take the following actions:

- Designing new learning-by-doing activities where students have to apply theories in real cases.
- Doing these activities in groups.
- Giving positive feedback when the students are doing these exercises for the first time.
- Encouraging trial, error and repetition through giving students formative feedback before the final assessment.

4.2 Evaluation: How motivating the students find the class exercises in the theoretical modules

Based on the questionnaire's results, most students found the class exercises "very motivating" and "motivating". Two students who had no opinion about these exercises said: "I prefer individual exercises to group exercises"; 'We don't intentionally apply theories in practice… they're unrealistic'. However,

most of the students explained that these exercises helped them make sense of what they were studying, encourage participation, co-operation and creativity, and change the routine.

4.3 The effect of learning-by-doing activities on the student 'want' and 'need' to learn

In the questionnaire, most of the students thought that class exercises made them "want" to study PR theoretical modules. This was observed in the classroom through the student participation in these exercises.

The students explained that the following reasons increased their "want" to learn:

- PR field is mainly practical not theoretical.
- Practical exercises are complementary to theories.
- They develop student skills to apply theories into practice.
- They help students to make sense of what they are studying.
- They facilitate participation, creative thinking and break the routine.

Only one student said that these exercises did not enhance his want to learn, because "students need practical exercises not theory-based exercises".

Furthermore, all the students explained in the questionnaire that they "need" learning-by-doing exercises in PR theoretical modules. This is because of several reasons such as the practical nature of PR, and because these exercises develop their skills and give them confidence. Besides, all the students explained that these exercises gave them the skills they need to practise a PR career. Most of the students recommended giving the same exercises for future students because they have benefited a lot of them.

4.4 The factors that can make these activities more motivating

The second big question of the research is related to the factors that can make class activities more motivating. To answer this question, the students listed first a number of things they liked most in these exercises such as:

- Working with groups, participation and co-operation.
- Thinking creatively out of the box.
- Situation and problem management.
- Developing communication skills.
- Relating students to real-life experience outside the university.

Other students listed few things they did not like, such as some problems caused because of group work, and the fact that various points are sometimes similar and confusing for the students.

Moreover, some students thought that "there was nothing difficult" in these exercises, where others assigned some difficulties such as the need to develop their research skills to do them, and the difficulty of applying theories into practice. Furthermore, many students stated that there was nothing boring in these activities, while others discussed some boring aspects of these exercises such as the fact that they were based on theories and the repetition of the same discussion by different groups.

Finally, students gave the following recommendations to make these exercises more motivating:

- The exercises should be given more time and supervised by the teacher.
- Arranging some individual exercises.
- Doing some exercises off-campus through co-operating with other organisations.
- Arranging more group projects and presentations.
- Making competition between groups in doing these exercises.
- Changing the variety of the exercises constantly.

4.5 The second cycle: Reflection, observation & action

After conducting the first cycle of action research, the researcher observed a considerable increase in student participation in the class. Although there was a positive change in student involvement in the exercises, the researcher

started reflecting based on the student feedback: How can these exercises be developed to be more motivating? How can the researcher/teacher overcome their shortcomings? Thus, the key goal of this cycle is to make sure that class exercises are still having good impact on student "need" and "want" to learn, in addition to improving the factors that can make these exercises more motivating. Based on the student recommendations, the researcher took the following actions as a reflection to improve the exercises in the second cycle:

- Assigning more time for exercises and making them part of the second semester plan.
- Arranging both group and individual exercises.
- Contacting some organisations to arrange for student visits.
- Arranging more presentations, games and competition in the classroom.
- The students have to write a portfolio of the exercises they did with their feedback.

4.6 Evaluation: How motivating do the students find the class exercises in the theoretical modules

The evaluation results of the second cycle of the action research showed a significant increase in the student motivation to study PR theoretical modules. The actions taken as a result of the first cycle had a positive impact on students as will be discussed in this section.

In the second cycle, all the students found the class exercises "very motivating" and "motivating". The students explained the following reasons in the questionnaire:

- Class exercises prepare the students for their future work.
- They help them to think and be active in the learning process.
- They encourage dialogue and break the routine.
- They help students make sense of the module and do better in the exams.

4.7 The effect of learning-by-doing activities on the student "want" and "need" to learn

While in the first cycle one student did not understand the relevance between theory and practice, all the students in the second cycle stated that class exercises made them 'want' to study PR theoretical modules for various reasons. For example, some students explained that these exercises helped them to acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge, to gain more experience and skills to work in PR, and to enhance student understanding of theories.

Furthermore, all the students explained that they "need" learning-by-doing exercises in PR theoretical modules for the following reasons:

- PR mainly is a practical field.
- They enhance the student understanding and help them pass the exam.
- They improve student communication and problem-management skills.
- They give more value and importance to the students.

Moreover, many students related these exercises to their opportunity for employment in PR in the future. Thus, all the students recommended giving these exercises for future students because they found them useful and important.

4.8 The factors that can make these activities more motivating

The students explained several aspects they liked most in these exercises, such as developing creative thinking and problem-management, breaking the routine, group work and participation, class presentations, and dealing with realistic situations. Several students stressed the role of these exercises in encouraging dialogue and sharing ideas. However, some students explained that some exercises were difficult, because they required analysis and research or were narrow to one theory. Other students said that it was difficult to apply theories to realistic situations, especially when they were doing them for the first time. Moreover, many students indicated that they found nothing boring in these exercises, while some students talked about some boring

aspects of these exercises, such as doing the complicated exercises that need a lot of writing and the repetition of some exercises.

Finally, students gave the following recommendations to make the exercises more motivating:

- Arranging a variety of exercises to suit student different needs and tendencies.
- Assigning more time to do the exercises after every lesson.
- Using PowerPoint presentation in discussion among groups.
- Conducting more class presentations.
- Summarising theories to make them easier before doing the exercises.
- Arranging field visits for the students off-campus.
- Inviting PR visiting speakers to the classroom.
- Increasing individual exercises to give every student the opportunity to express his/her opinion.

Based on the student feedback, the following actions were taken as a reflection:

- Increasing the number of exercises and the time given for every student.
- Assigning various kinds of exercises to suit all student levels and needs.
- Using PowerPoint in student discussion and presentation among groups.
- Encouraging individual and group presentations in the classroom.
- Summarising theories and clarifying the complicated aspects before doing the exercises.
- Assigning some assessed exercises to be done off-campus with PR specialists.
- Arranging visits for PR organisations and inviting visiting speakers.
- Encouraging peer feedback.
- Giving every student individual feedback after every exercise personally or through emails.

5. Discussion

The research findings have revealed a significant shift in student engagement to be able to recommend practical actions to motivate students to study PR theoretical modules. The research objectives have been achieved through investigating how to motivate students to make sense of what they are studying, and improving the effect of using learning-by-doing activities in creating the student "need" and "want" identified by Race (2005) to study PR theoretical modules. The research also shows that there is a positive impact of learning-by-doing activities on increasing student "want" and "need", and suggests several factors that can make PR theoretical modules more motivating. One of the key motivating factors explained by the participants is satisfying student needs through encouraging participation and dialogue in the classroom besides developing basic skills that will facilitate student opportunity for employment.

The research revealed that the teacher can play a significant role in motivating students starting from their wants and needs. Relating the research findings to the Ripple Model, the teacher can increase the student "want" and "need" to learn, through assigning learning-by-doing activities that would motivate them to make sense of theories and relate them to practice. Hence, motivating students to learn is a challenging, ongoing process that requires constant co-operation between the teacher and the students. Action research facilitates this co-operation through empowering the students to take part in designing their course objectives and activities.

As a teacher, action research was a useful reflective process that helped to improve my teaching methods through student feedback. The researcher benefited a great deal from the research outcomes in deciding which motivating techniques work for the students and which do not and modifying them. Additionally, it enabled the researcher/teacher to understand the student needs, and their objectives of learning and focus on improving the practical skills which will prepare them for employment. Thus, unexpectedly, one of the key outcomes of the research is the important role of learning-by-doing activities in motivating students, through connecting teaching theoretical modules to student employability.

After applying the two cycles, there was a considerable increase in student attendance and participation in the sample classes. The outcomes of this study are useful not only in teaching PR modules, but also provide a helpful framework for motivating students in other theoretical modules related to practical disciplines. Instructors teaching different theoretical modules can motivate their students, through using learning-by-doing activities that would connect theory to practice. Therefore, future research should develop this study further to improve new techniques to provide supportive environment for motivating learning-by-doing activities in different theoretical modules, and explore the similarities and differences related to the nature of every discipline.

Furthermore, the nature of action research that is based on collaboration between the teacher and students empowered the students to reflect on the learning process, express their ideas, argue, and suggest new things. Action research was not only beneficial for the teacher in developing the teaching methods, but also a catalyst in improving mutual communication with the students. Since the time barrier restricted the researcher/teacher to only two cycles, further cycles should be conducted to improve the motivating techniques. One of the different directions for the new cycle is investigating how to develop practical activities to address employability, which was found to be an important need for the students in this research. Future cycle, should aim to enhance the participatory role of students in learning theoretical modules.

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