Plan for a SoTL Project

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| **Research Question**  What are you curious about?  What would you like to know about strategies that might hinder and/or help students to learn, in your course?  Do you want to know if an activity, assignment, or teaching strategy “works?”  Do you have a question about how to help your students learn a particular skill?    [Publicdomainpicturs.com](https://r.search.yahoo.com/_ylt=AwrEoBlYEjpkBLcKc5D2FAx.;_ylu=c2VjA2ZwLWF0dHJpYgRzbGsDcnVybA--/RV=2/RE=1681556184/RO=11/RU=https%3a%2f%2fwww.publicdomainpictures.net%2fen%2fview-image.php%3fimage%3d291943%26picture%3dpeople-chatting/RK=2/RS=KfUCMPal5WdRNM2Fxcdh50WEPJI-)  I am currently teaching a communication course that relies heavily on students working together to develop different scenarios to demonstrate their ability to communicate clearly, concisely, and convincingly with clients.  Many of the presentations are performed during class time in small groups where students are encouraged to give feedback to each other. The challenge is to have them agree to follow the process first, then have them make specific recommendations or suggestions instead of just saying, “Great work!”. It is hard to have them participate and write helpful feedback.  Research Question:  How can I help motivate my students to participate in giving peer-to-peer feedback comfortably, actively, and enthusiastically as an effective tool for collaborative learning to enhance their overall learning experience? |
| **Identify challenge/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.**  Dscribe the learning in a way that suggests how you might *measure* it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.  Challenges to students:   * Students are reluctant to participate in a more meaningful way. * Students tend to “whitewash” their evaluations. * Students don’t make the effort to think about specific recommendations and suggestions. * Students fear the negative consequences of giving honest feedback.   Questions to research:   * Should students always use a rubric or a checklist to evaluate their peers? * Would it help if such feedback is given only to members of the group and not in the presence of the teacher? * Can they assign part of the total project’s marks based on their feedback and evaluation of one another? * What is the maximum percentage of the total marks they can assign based on their feedback?   Research Outcomes:   * Can students improve their feedback skills by following a specific standard evaluative matrix and taking part in evaluating each other in all courses? * Does peer-to-peer feedback and evaluation help develop the student’s critical thinking and reflection skills?   Challenges to research:   * The challenge with this research question is how to assess a positive contribution to a student’s learning outcomes. * Limited research and references currently exist in this knowledge area.   Quantitative   * Compare the before and after to gauge the improvement offered by implementing the new approach of peer-to-peer feedback.   Qualitative   * Through a questionnaire probe with the students, their observations and experiences using peer-to-peer feedback. * Examine the student’s perceived value of peer-to-peer feedback. * Probe the student’s conclusions and strategies to incorporate peer-to-peer feedback into their learning strategies.   Considerations of Ethical Concerns:   * Participation is voluntary. * The questionnaire is anonymous to keep respondents’ identities private. |
| **Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote student learning on the outcome you identified.**  SoTL projects might investigate the impact of a *modification* to an existing strategy or assignment. Describe how the new approach differs from the old approach and why this modification might change student learning on this outcome.  Instructional Activity/Teaching Strategy:   * Implementing a student-centred approach to provide peer-to-peer feedback as an effective tool for collaborative learning. * The new approach is well-designed and structured in a way to help the students participate in peer-to-peer feedback much more comfortably by learning to give positive and constructive feedback. |
| **Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.**  Describe the evidence you would need to collect to answer questions about the impact or value of this teaching strategy. How would you convince others that this approach is better than other approaches? What comparisons should you make? Examine students; skill before and after the assignment? Compare students who complete the learning activity to another group of students – what comparisons would be meaningful?  Evidence for Improvement:   * Compare students’ performance, comfort level and participation in peer-to-peer feedback before and after implementing the new approach. * Examine the accuracy and quality of peer-to-peer feedback provided when following the new approach. * Observe students’ interactions and level of participation and gauge improvement level when using the new approach. |
| **How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?**   * Summarize the results * Review with the student participants to confirm the findings * Present to colleagues in the same program of study * Engage other faculty for examination of findings and peer collaboration * Share results with Course Guide and Program Manager for their input * Share with the larger college community, perhaps other college communities as well.   The findings could be presented at teaching conferences, published in teaching journals, and disseminated through professional networks and online platforms. |

Adapted from: C. J. Stanny, E. M. El-Sheikh, & H-M. Chung (2009) ***Getting Started with a SoTL Project***

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