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?  *My research question is based on student misconceptions about Canadian Identity / History. How can I ensure that students are understanding ideas of BEDI and changing their misconceptions of BEDI in Canada?*  *I often start the course with a game of 4 Corners to identify misconceptions, beliefs, and general understanding of how inclusive Canada is or has been. It’s often easy to spot international students versus domestic students based on their answers and perceptions of Canada. After the course, the idea is that students have a greater understanding of Canada’s multicultural history and how it impacts people today. I’d like to know if the course is changing their perceptions on Canadian BEDI by the end of the term.* |
| **Identify challenge/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.**  Describe the learning in a way that suggests how you might *measure* it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.  *The challenge in this research will be identifying and quantifying student opinion. I will need to find a way to quantitatively and qualitatively collect data. For example, if I start with a 4 Corners exercise, find a way to keep track of how many students agree, disagree, strongly agree, or strongly disagree with statements like “Canada has always been a cultural safe haven”. In the end of the course, I would repeat the same questions and determine if student opinion has changed. It will also be important to collect this data qualitatively through potential assessment design and reflections. I think it will be important for students to reflect in a personal space rather than always in front of their peers.* |
| **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.  *Instead of 4 corners activities to gather student data, I may need an activity that requires less social risk for my students. Often peers end up in the same corners for various reasons. I may make use of a tool like Microsoft Forms to gather student information (this could be anonymously). Forms allows you to rank and scale in your answers, so I could replicate four corners in a private setting. It may also be crucial to allow anonymous responses so that students are answering honestly, and not based on what they believe I want to hear by the end of the course.* |
| **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 comparison year by year may be successful. I often share student reflections year by year in order to enhance the depth of learning about BEDI in Canada. To determine if the understanding is there, and if the course structure and assignments are working, it may be impactful to look both at the data from start of term to end, but also to check in with alumni and ask for reflections on how the course impacts their day-to-day in work, if at all.* |
| **How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?**  *In order to share my ideas, I’d love to speak with other faculty in my program but also through my School of Contemporary Teaching and Learning. It would be helpful to start encouraging faculty to engage in student surveys / reflections that are mirrored in the start of the course and in the end. Through this mirroring, we could gather information on gaps or strengths in teaching and learning. Embedding reflective practice into assessment data might help faculty adapt and grow year to year. I certainly know that in my own experience, I forget to follow up by the end of the semester. It would be exciting to ask the exact same questions in my circle back or review of the course material and see where my students have changed!* |

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

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