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Method to their Madness: Analyzing Students' Writings Against the RSD Framework

Method to their madness:
Analyzing students' writings against Research Development Skill (RSD) Framework

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Conceptual Framework

➢ **Research Skill Development (RSD) Framework** as a conceptual model

➢ The RSD includes six facets of inquiry: that the students

1. "embark on inquiry and so determine a need for knowledge/ understanding;

2. find/generate needed information/data using appropriate methodology;

3. critically evaluate information/data and the process to find / generate them;

4. organise information collected/generated;

5. synthesise and analyse new knowledge;

6. communicate knowledge and understanding and the processes used to generate them"

(Willison & O'Regan, 2007 p. 400).

Educational Structure in Pakistan

School education

➢ Chiefly inspired by the British system.

➢ The average age of students at the time of admission in the primary level is five.

(Bughio, 2013)

➢ Primary level education: five years
➢ Middle level education: three years
➢ Secondary school education: two years
➢ Higher secondary education: two years

➢ By the time students are 18, they may enrol in degree colleges/universities for further education.

Educational Structure in Pakistan

University education

➢ The undergraduate/Bachelor program,

       Bachelor: a two-year degree,

       Bachelor (Honours): a three-year degree,

       Bachelor degree: Four year

       Some Bachelor degrees e.g., Bachelor in Architecture and

       medicine require five years.

Research deficit in the educational system of Pakistan

- ➢ No formal research training during their school years

- ➢ No research-specific courses in the first 3 years of university education

- ➢ Some knowledge of research design, principles and methods during four and five-year bachelor degrees

- ➢ Thesis as a pre-requisite in a four or five year university degree

(Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2015)

Research at university education in Pakistan

➢ An upward trend for the promotion of research culture

    ➢ 1000 research publications in 2009-10

    ➢ 5300 publications in 2013-14

➢ These publications are which included faculty members and research students.

(Higher Education Commission, 2013)

English as a Medium of Instruction in University

- Pakistan - a complex country in terms of languages.

- English: official language
- Urdu: national language
- Seven major languages

- The English language was introduced by the British Empire to strengthen their rule in the sub-continent.

(Rahman, 1997)

- English - a language of the elite, with little or no functional value

(Shamim, 2008)

- English - a language of court proceedings and/or in official (mainly written) correspondence hardly any social interaction.

Methods

➤ Qualitative analysis

➤ Secondary data

➤ Three students of Semester 2, Bachelor of English linguistics

➤ Each student-five essays as one document

➤ Essays analysed: 15

➤ Five topics of the essays:
- linguistic imperialism in Pakistan,
- gender discrimination,
- social problems in Pakistan,
- internet addiction,
- the downfall of the education system because of private or government institutions.

Methods

- No research-related subject studied

- Gaining access to students' essays

  - Gathered secondary data

  - Approached 15 students for their consent

  - Essays were already assessed and marked

  - The results of the essays were finalised

  - This analysis would have no impact on the students' result

  - Anonymity of participants was ensured

Methods

➢ Essays were analysed in line with the RSD framework

➢ One author took lead in this procedure and incorporated the other authors' opinion/coding as well as part of the analysis.

➢ The process of analysing essays took about two months, with regular team meetings between the authors.

Findings

Facets of research		St 1	St 2	St 3	Total
a	Embark & clarify	0	0	0	**0**
b	Find & generate	4	16	7	**27**
c	Evaluate & reflect	12	21	11	**44**
d	Organize & manage	5	10	4	**19**
e	Analyse & synthesise	11	17	3	**31**
f	Communicate & apply	4	9	2	**15**
		36	**73**	**27**	**136**

Findings and Discussion

➢ All students practiced five facets of research without being formally taught these facets through any courses during their Bachelor degree.

➢ The students used *evaluative and reflective* facets the most, followed by facets related to *analysing and synthesising*, then *finding and generating*.

Findings and Discussion

- *The t*able shows a difference in frequency for all facets among the three students.

    - Frequency of research facets for student 2 is the highest

    - Student 1 is next

    - Student 3 employed the lowest frequency of research skills.

- This suggests that individual differences also play a role in the employment of research facets in students' essays.

Findings and Discussion

➢ Students were able to employ the research facets without being formally exposed to them

➢ Students do pick up these facets on their own

➢ It will be interesting for future research to determine how these skills are acquired

Findings and Discussion

- We hypothesise that students have always been encouraged to approach such topics in an evaluative and critical manner

- They might also have developed these skills while learning how to write and compose essays, reports, debates and speeches during their study at the school and university.

- It is also likely that they have uniquely developed this writing style of evaluating and analysing topics in this way

Limitations

➢ Small sample size

➢ The authors could not gather information from the participants on how and why the students wrote these essays in this way that is using all these skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

➢ Students research skills can be enhanced by introducing the Research Skill Development (RSD) Framework through detailed workshops.

➢ The RSD framework can provide an opportunity for creating conditions where learning can be more systematic and organised by building on students' previous knowledge through specially-arranged workshops.

(Willison and O'Regan 2007)

Conclusion and Recommendations

➢ A thorough understanding of the RSD framework can result in developing, refining, and recording the progress of the students' research skills at all levels

➢ Employing this framework can improve students' research skills and help them learn better.

➢ Write-ups generated after the RSD framework is formally introduced will yield better results.

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