



BUILDING CRITICAL THINKING AND TOLERANCE THROUGH QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY SUBJECT

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ABSTRACT

Using the methods of autoethnography and phenomenology, this study describes the teaching of the qualitative research methodology at the Islamic Educational Management (IEM) department within UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau and its impacts on students' academic skills. As literature suggest, research methodology courses can be useful in developing academic skills of students including analytical and critical thinking. Qualitative research courses particularly contribute to students' more open and tolerant attitudes towards differences of social reality. This study confidently reveals such benefits of the course and further found that students experienced through a journey of emotional struggles such as anxiety, stress, and worries and of intellectual shifts to become more independent, open-minded, critical, and tolerant individuals. This study implies that a more serious commitment both from the system and the lecturer to the teaching of this course would enhance high outcomes to help university students to be better persons fitting the increasingly demanding society.

Keywords:

Qualitative research, Tolerance, Undergraduate teaching, Critical thinking

ABSTRAK

Dengan menggunakan metode autoetnografi dan fenomenologi, penelitian ini menggambarkan model pembelajaran metodologi penelitian kualitatif di Departemen Manajemen Pendidikan Islam (IEM) Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau dan dampaknya terhadap keterampilan akademik mahasiswa. Sebagaimana diketahui bahwa mata kuliah metodologi penelitian dapat bermanfaat dalam mengembangkan keterampilan akademik mahasiswa, termasuk pemikiran analitis dan kritis. Mata kuliah penelitian kualitatif khususnya berkontribusi pada sikap mahasiswa yang lebih terbuka dan toleran terhadap perbedaan realitas sosial. Studi ini secara meyakinkan mengungkapkan manfaat tersebut dan menemukan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami perjalanan perjuangan emosional seperti kecemasan, stres, dan kekhawatiran, serta pergeseran intelektual untuk menjadi individu yang lebih mandiri, terbuka, kritis, dan toleran. Studi ini menyiratkan bahwa komitmen yang lebih serius baik dari sistem maupun dosen dalam pengajaran mata kuliah ini akan meningkatkan hasil yang lebih baik untuk membantu mahasiswa universitas menjadi individu yang lebih baik sesuai dengan tuntutan masyarakat yang semakin tinggi.

Kata Kunci

Penelitian kualitatif, Toleransi, Pengajaran tingkat sarjana, Berpikir kritis

Introduction

This paper describes how a qualitative research methodology subject can have an impact on students' academic skills including particularly note taking, critical thinking, openness or tolerance to differences, and learning commitment at a state Islamic university in Indonesia. Qualitative research methodology is a type of inquiry that emphasises in-depth investigation of phenomena and focuses largely on subjective reality. To a larger extent, qualitative traditions deny the quantitative methodologists' claims of objective reality in social contexts. "By contrast, interpretivist ontology adopts a relativist view that perceives reality through intersubjectivity by considering meaning in research and understanding of

social and experiential aspects. Specifically, reality can only be explained in a socially constructed sense” (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022, p.11). Interpretivism is a paradigm used largely in the qualitative methodology, which is oppositely different from positivism used in the quantitative traditions.

Qualitative methodology as a research approach gained attention since the 17th century when early Western ethnographic works were pivotal to describe non-white *primitive* people (Lockyer, 2008). Since then, it has been widely used as an alternative approach to study social realities and globally taught to university students. In Indonesia, this approach has been slowly accepted in the context of policy studies. When I was first involved as a leading consultant for qualitative research in 2008, it was very hard to seek and select qualified qualitative researchers. In more than one decade, seeking good quality qualitative researchers for conducting commissioned research projects remains challenging. Those who want to hire qualitative researchers must undergo a tight selection process to find suitably expected ones.

However, one promising feature from the current development of research methodology curriculum at Indonesian universities is that qualitative has gained its proper place and received attention from both lecturers and students. Imparting a subject of “research methodology” which includes in its curriculum both quantitative and qualitative approaches used to be a common practice. However, as far as I observe, currently there is a tendency that qualitative methodology curriculum is designed as a separate subject from quantitative one valued at least 2 credits (100 minutes a week of classroom face to face and home assignments). At some departments, it is valued up to 3 credits.

In this article, taking an autoethnographic perspective and phenomenological accounts of students, I would like to share my own classroom teaching of the qualitative research methodology and its impact on students’ academic skills. This is a personal experience of imparting such a subject in several classrooms and, therefore, it is in some ways subjective, which does not really matter in the qualitative traditions. I will review briefly research studies on qualitative methodology teachings particularly in its relationship with skills development of students, present data gathered through observations and students’ written reflections, discuss the findings, and draw conclusions.

Research methodology teaching

The importance of research methodology course for university students in almost all disciplines is not debatable in the literature. It is considered as a subject that helps students to learn to be systematic, logic, creative, and problem solver. Austin (2016) outlines several points to argue for the importance for students in the field of education to learn research methods as follows:

- help you find solutions to problems arising in your classroom or school
- underpin professional learning of knowledge, skills and understanding
- connect you with sources of information and networks of professional support
- clarify purposes, processes and priorities when introducing change – for example, to curriculum, pedagogy or assessment
- improve understanding of your professional and policy context, organisationally, locally and nationally, enabling you to teach and lead more strategically and effectively
- develop your agency, influence, self-efficacy and voice within your own school and more widely within the profession

In addition, the research methodology course has an impact to help students in developing academic skills and capacity to become more open to differences, critical to opinions and facts, and truth finders (Motjolopane, 2021). This is particularly true regarding the qualitative research methodology that belongs to interpretive and naturalistic paradigms, which emphasise on subjective, and hence, different realities (Clandinin, 2005; Mansourian, 2007). Students of this course, therefore,

would develop deep critical thinking, open attitudes to different perspectives, and accept other views as existing truths as well.

In the context of teacher education, students' competence in research methods is a major contribution to (future) teachers' professionalism, and a valuable tool for assisting students in understanding the principal research domains (Knipe, Miles & Bottrell, 2018). Scholars therefore unanimously agree with the importance of students who are going to work in an environment where research is an essential component to improve working conditions, find and develop knowledge, and solve problems to learn various approaches of research methodology. As mentioned above, two big traditions of research approaches are quantitative and qualitative, from which learners can benefit for academic and working endeavours. Depending on the nature of the research, one approach may be more appropriate than the other, or a combination of both may be more effective than a single approach.

In teaching research methodology, based on their experiences, there are several methods or approaches recommended by scholars. A group-based research project approach students should actively participate in is considered as highly beneficial for students to experience an application of theories into practices (Ball and Pelco, 2006). Students will develop deeper understanding of how to design and conduct a research project and face challenges, although this approach may require a longer time commitment of teaching. The component of practical application of theories is importantly recommended in the literature to provide a more meaningful experience to students. This includes a research proposal writing, data collection simulations, and classroom discussions of practices (Lundahl, 2008; Saeed et al., 2020).

The incorporation of theory and practice in teaching research methodology suggests that, besides its great benefits and importance, this course is relatively more difficult for students to understand and therefore is more challenging. Nind et al. (2020) explore the perspectives of students of social science research methods from a UK study of their holistic experience of learning during two years of their postgraduate research training/early careers as researchers. They found that participants not only gain benefits from the learning but also be exposed to emotional challenges such as anxiety and stress during learning and doing the research methods. "The research struggle and isolation felt by several of the participants [...] was balanced by the feelings of connection, peer support and belonging offered by peers through the diary circle" (p.807).

Research methods

This is a qualitative research study of students' perspectives and experiences of learning in a qualitative research course I taught in the second semester of 2024. In a way, this is an autoethnography (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017) of my own ways of teaching the qualitative research methodology course. In another way, this is a descriptive phenomenological study (Laverty, 2003; Cresswell, 2002) of students' experiences in learning the course, doing its assignments and dealing with their emotions. This combination of approaches offers an interestingly useful description of a whole course of the qualitative research methodology.

To collect data, I recorded my teaching activities on a diary of teaching. Following the guidelines of the syllabus, after teaching, I usually documented some important aspects of the course deliveries including materials and methods, students' responses and feedback, and classroom situations. It was often hard to follow the time commitment initially designed in the syllabus because of the pace of students' understanding of the topics being taught. The diary serves as an ethnographic source of data I collected through participant observation.

Another way of collecting data is that I specifically chose one class of the Semester 5 cohorts and gave them questions for them to respond in a narrative way. There were 20 students in the class, and all are females. They were given an opportunity to write their answers and submit them through the Dropbox application where I can save for later references. The questions include: 1. What is your

general impression of the qualitative research methodology course? 2. To what extent has the course developed your capacity in critical thinking? (tell us your story of changes in ways of thinking during your participation in this course), and 3. How has this course changed you in accepting differences of opinions and facts? Generally, students spent up to two pages to respond to these questions. They wrote their answers in an elaborative way making it easier to analyse and understand their responses.

I analysed the data through the following generic stages – data reduction, data categorisation, data display, and interpretation/conclusion, yet with a distinctive way of searching for meaning of each of both autoethnographic and phenomenological information (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017; Laverty, 2003; Cresswell, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the former, I searched for events that help students and myself to habituate activities and for cultural and interactional activities. For the latter, I searched from the submitted students' stories of experiences in joining and participating the qualitative methodology course and their changing process during the course.

An autoethnography of teaching the qualitative

I was approached by the Islamic Educational Management (IEM) department secretary in the mid of first semester in 2024 to teach the qualitative research methodology course for Semester 5 students. I did not know who was previously responsible for this course, but I would take three classes from September through December 2024. Each class had up to 20 students. With confidence, I said yes to this invitation considering my long experiences in doing qualitative research projects and becoming an adviser in this research approach for many national educational projects.

I started each of the three classes with introducing the subject and its syllabus and repeatedly motivated students to take more serious approach to this course as it is by nature a difficult subject. From the beginning, I warned them to always take notes during the classes, something which hardly happens normally in other classes. As far as I observed and was also confirmed by some lecturers in my shared office, without instruction, students did not really care to take notes of lectures; they were just listening and rarely asking questions. The course's main topics is outlined as follows: Research paradigms; Concept of qualitative research approach; Types of qualitative research approach; Sampling in qualitative research; Theoretical framework; Interview, observation, and document collection; Data analysis; and Research proposal

The structure of this course consisted of 16 sessions, two of which were dedicated for mid-term and final-term assessments. Therefore, I worked very hard to deliver the materials, while also focusing on students' understanding, in the provided period. The students of this course, unfortunately, never took any research methodology course before. So, they were real beginners who struggled to grasp methodological concepts during the course. To help, I always gave a weekly task of making summary of the next topic with the hope that they comprehended the materials before coming to the class, so that it became a regular routine that I asked what summary they had done and how they had understood the lesson. I sometimes checked their summaries to make sure that everyone did the assignments well. This strategy, however, did not seem effective to everyone, as only a couple of students came up with confident answers to my questions. As a rule to my class, I avoided using an online mode of instruction because in my experience it does not produce an effective teaching process.

I used lecturing, classroom discussions, and question and answer as the main methods of delivery. Students considered that lecturing is quite a rare method used in their classes. As they told, most lecturers use classroom discussion every week in which a group of students write a paper and present it to the class with a few questions from other students. While this method theoretically provides students an ample opportunity to experience an independently collaborative learning and construct their own knowledge and understanding, they said that they hardly learned something through it due to lack of supervision and feedback from lecturers and a heavy copy-and-paste practice in making the paper. Therefore, I could not rely on this method. Instead, every week I prepared power-point slides and, based on these, explained the lessons until I knew that my students had understood through a question-and-answer session.

There was a lot of struggles from both sides – me and my students – to create an easily understood materials and explanations. Indeed, after the course introduction, I explained what research is and what research paradigms are. It took me three weeks to deliver this lesson due its delicate philosophical concepts which cover positivism, post-positivism, and interpretivism, and the students unfortunately never learned about philosophy. I frequently paused for quite some time during my explanation to provide my students an opportunity to digest and consolidate with their own reading and summaries. Of course, I opened a chance for any question and/or clarification to my explanation. Pertinent to mention here, it was delighted to see how their thinking and understanding developed while moving from positivism, post-positivism, to interpretivism. They were made aware of objective and subjective truths, and of how they would see differences across contexts and situations. I really emphasised that qualitative approach sees a reality in a different way, not “black-or-white” like quantitative traditions do. At first, students were seemingly confused with this forcibly changing way of thinking and shifting attitudes imposed by the qualitative tenets, but I provided more real life examples of subjective realities which cannot be seen from one angle, so that they began to understand more the interpretive point of view.

After delivering the topics of “types of qualitative research approach”, I asked my students to think of a possible topic for their own research project. Two weeks after, I gave each of them a time to explain the topic to the class, and other students (if any) and I commented on it and provided feedback on how to improve. Then, they started to develop further the early part of proposal incorporating the suitable research questions. I explained the topic of research questions as part of the larger topic of types of qualitative research. On Week 8, we had an interview mid-term exam on which each of the students came up with the unfinished proposal. I asked several questions to assess their understanding of what they had written and of all delivered lessons. I felt quite satisfied with their progress, although some of them were found to have copied ideas from online students’ proposals or theses. While this was a severe breach to academic integrity, I gave them a chance to fix this mistake and made myself focused more on their understanding of the lessons.

I still used an interview method for the final-term exam to continue my assessment over students’ research proposal and their understanding of both its content and the course’s lessons. Generally, they came up with interesting topics on educational or school management and leadership; some of which brought a new topic as a result of feedback I gave during the mid-term exam and afterward consultations. Once the exam was completed, they looked happy and complacent as they had accomplished a huge struggle to participate in this course and finish all the requirements. They wanted me to join them for a family photo in which they were holding their proposals showing to the world that they had passed through a tremendous semester. Of course, I was very happy to see their excitement and encouraged them to continue revising the proposal and submit it to the department as a final project proposal. To my later knowledge, most of them did so and received successful results at the proposal defence.

Description of students’ experiences

As mentioned previously, there are four questions students had to respond and wrote in a narrative method. After analysing their responses, I drew several themes related to academic skills and attitudes they developed through the participation in the qualitative methodology course. These themes are as follows: dedicated and optimistic learning, independent and collaborative learning, critical thinking, open-minded, and bravery to accept differences.

Dedicated and (gradually) optimistic learning

Participation in the qualitative research methodology course for many students of the class was a must but posed a great challenge. Students, in their narrative, informed that they heard a lot from senior students that this course would be difficult and suggested them to be more serious in learning. This information created anxiety and stress on the students at the beginning, and I felt the tension when first coming to the class. Perhaps, my reputation as a strict professor who does not tolerate any

indiscipline behaviours added to the image of this course. How they were anxious is described in one of the narratives below, which is by Lesti.

Awalnya, mata kuliah Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif ini terasa seperti monster besar yang siap menghantui semester kelima saya. Sebelum perkuliahan dimulai bagaimana kalau tugas-tugasnya benar-benar memeras otak, seperti yang diceritakan oleh kakak tingkat?" Semua itu membuat saya merasa ciut bahkan sebelum melangkah ke ruang kelas. [Initially, this Qualitative Research Methodology course was felt like a huge monster ready to haunt my fifth semester. Before the lecture starts, I was worrying of what if the assignments are really brain-squeaking, as told by the senior?" All of that made me feel shrinking even before stepping into the classroom].

Many students admitted that at the beginning this course was very difficult for them to understand. This may be because the first topics were dealing with philosophical concepts of the research paradigms. One of the students said that she was shocked and overwhelmed, others said: "confused", "worried for not understanding", and "stressed" because of striving to digest difficult concepts and terms.

The confusion and anxiety had gradually faded away as the students tried to work and study harder at home. The weekly summary assignment was proved to be helpful. I always reminded them to not just summarizing without comprehension, but instead they had to understand first and summarise. By dedicating their time and commitment more, they had gradually built optimism that they would survive in such a challenging course. The students started to understand each lesson more easily after their serious dedication in learning at home. I remember that I ever said to them: "I would like that my 'frequency' and your 'frequency' are not far separated, but they should be close so that you all can easily understand my lessons. You need to learn seriously at home before class!".

Independent and collaborative learning

Difficulties create fighting spirits and creativities. This seems to be applied in many of my students in the class. So, one feature of the students' experiences participating through the qualitative research methodology course is that they habituated both independent and collaborative learning at home. Amanda narrated below:

Ketika memulainya, saya memang merasa kaget dan sedikit kewalahan karena banyak hal yang belum saya pahami. Namun, seiring berjalannya waktu, saya sadar bahwa semua bisa dilalui jika saya serius belajar dan berusaha memahami materi. Kesulitan di awal itu wajar, tetapi dengan tekad dan kerja keras, semuanya menjadi lebih mudah. Selama proses belajar, saya juga menyadari bahwa tidak cukup hanya mengandalkan penjelasan dari dosen di kelas saja. Di kos, saya mencoba belajar mandiri dan apabila saya tidak paham saya akan belajar bersama teman, terkadang setelah kita bertukar pikiran dan membaca kembali materi, serta mencari cara agar lebih paham dengan materi tersebut. Ternyata, metode ini cukup membantu. [When I started, I did feel shocked and a little overwhelmed because there were many things I didn't understand. However, as time went by, I realized that everything could be passed if I was serious about studying and trying to understand the material. The difficulties at the beginning are natural, but with determination and hard work, everything becomes easier. During the learning process, I also realized that it is not enough to just rely on explanations from lecturers in class. In the "kos-kosan", I try to learn independently and if I don't understand I will study with friends, sometimes after we exchange ideas and reread the material, and find ways to understand the material better. As it turns out, this method is quite helpful].

Amanda was not alone to change her habits of learning. Other students admitted that they changed from 'an easy going' style of learning to a more serious style. They learned individually and in groups at home, reading the materials prescribed, strived to understand, and summarised. In classroom, they paid attention seriously to the lessons to confirm, clarify and strengthen their understanding. Nur wrote: "Saya selalu memperhatikan dengan serius apa yang disampaikan dosen. Untungnya, beliau menyampaikan materi dengan santai, menarik, dan banyak memberi contoh, sehingga mudah dipahami". ["I

always pay serious attention to what the lecturer says. Fortunately, he delivered the material in a relaxed manner, interestingly, and gave many examples, so that it was easy to understand”].

Critical thinking

The longest narrative most students wrote in their essay is about how they shifted to adopt to critical thinking. Critical thinking is both skill and competency which requires understanding and drills. By understanding how qualitative approach works in seeing realities, they developed a competence in critically thinking of social facts that can be true in one context but may not in another. I quote here two narratives from Syarifah and Indah to represent and reflect the change process they experienced.

Syarifah’s narrative:

Mata kuliah ini mengajarkan saya untuk lebih kritis dan berpikir secara mendalam. Kita diajak untuk mempertanyakan segala hal yang ingin kita ketahui, mencari tahu alasan di balik suatu kejadian atau fenomena, dan tidak mudah terjebak dalam kesimpulan yang terlalu cepat. Tapi satu hal yang paling penting yaitu dapat menjadikan kita lebih menghargai pendapat orang lain. Dalam penelitian kualitatif itu, suara dari partisipan sangat berharga. Jadi kita harus bisa mendengarkan mereka dengan seksama dan memahami perspektif mereka. Mata kuliah ini bukan cuma sekedar memenuhi syarat tugas kuliah, melainkan juga memberikan banyak manfaat terutama dalam kehidupan saya sehari-hari. Salah satu perubahan terhadap diri saya, yaitu saya merasa jadi lebih terlatih dalam menganalisis informasi, berkomunikasi dengan orang lain, dan tentunya dapat mengembangkan diri saya menjadi pribadi yang lebih baik. [This course taught me to be more critical and think deeply. We are invited to question everything we want to know, find out the reasons behind an event or phenomenon, and not easily get caught up in conclusions that are too hasty. But one of the most important things is that it can make us more appreciative of other people's opinions. In the qualitative research, the votes of the participants are very valuable. So, we have to be able to listen to them carefully and understand their perspectives. This course is not only fulfilling the requirements for college assignments, but also provides many benefits, especially in my daily life. One of the changes in myself is that I feel more trained in analysing information, communicating with others, and of course being able to develop myself into a better person].

Indah’s narrative:

Contohnya, ketika mempelajari tentang teori-teori dalam penelitian kualitatif, saya mulai lebih kritis terhadap cara-cara umum dalam memandang suatu masalah. Misalnya, dalam membaca artikel-artikel penelitian, saya tidak lagi hanya menerima hasil penelitian begitu saja, tetapi saya mulai mempertanyakan bagaimana peneliti memilih data dan interpretasinya. Metode seperti wawancara mendalam atau observasi partisipatif, yang merupakan teknik umum dalam penelitian kualitatif, memberi saya perspektif baru tentang bagaimana data dikumpulkan dan bagaimana pengaruh kontekstual dapat mempengaruhi hasil penelitian. Saya jadi lebih sadar bahwa dalam penelitian sosial, kita tidak bisa hanya mengandalkan angka atau statistik saja, pemahaman mendalam terhadap konteks dan pengalaman individu juga sangat penting untuk mendapatkan gambaran yang lebih akurat. [For example, when I learned about theories in qualitative research, I began to be more critical of the general ways of looking at a problem. For example, in reading research articles, I no longer just accept the results of the research for granted, but I begin to question how researchers choose the data and its interpretation. Methods such as in-depth interviews or participatory observations, which are common techniques in qualitative research, have given me a new perspective on how data is collected and how contextual influences can affect research outcomes. I became more aware that in social research, we can't just rely on numbers or statistics, a deep understanding of individual context and experience is also very important to get a more accurate picture].

Students’ admission of such a changing attitude to become more critical to realities and events surprised me because as far as I observed that most students at my department are typically uncritical, inattentive to lessons, and lack of ethos. It seems that the course has successfully triggered such a

significant change in their way of learning and thinking. From their narratives, the students demonstrated a feeling of both happiness and pride regarding this change.

Open minded and bravery to accept differences

Another change following the shift to more critical was that students became more open minded and brave to accept differences. Their understanding of the various research paradigms and how qualitative approach resembles one or two paradigms seemed to be strong in a way that they could apply this understanding during the question/answer sessions. Many students felt surprised that qualitative research is so different from quantitative one. Randa, for example, expressed it like this:

Di awal perkuliahan, saya merasa pelajaran ini seperti membuka kotak yang penuh kejutan. Saya mulai memahami bahwa penelitian kualitatif berfokus pada eksplorasi mendalam terhadap fenomena, pengalaman, atau cerita yang tidak bisa dikuantifikasi dengan angka. Hal ini membuat saya mulai melihat bahwa setiap orang memiliki cerita unik yang layak untuk didengar dan dipahami. [At the beginning of the lecture, I felt that this lesson was like opening a box full of surprises. I began to understand that qualitative research focuses on in-depth exploration of phenomena, experiences, or stories that cannot be quantified with numbers. This made me start to see that everyone has a unique story that deserves to be heard and understood].

The students confirmed that the qualitative methodology course have changed their way in seeing differences. They learned not to accept one opinion or draw a conclusion of one event before knowing the backgrounds, contexts, and other alternative ‘voices’ that may be different from the first one. They realised that social realities are full of surprises and often a truth is a matter of perspective, and therefore they must be brave to accept differences as realities. This change of behaviours and way of thinking was experienced by the students, and nicely narrated by Khairani below:

Pelajaran ini juga mengajarkan saya untuk lebih terbuka terhadap pendapat yang berbeda. Dalam diskusi-diskusi di kelas, saya sering dihadapkan pada pandangan yang bertentangan dengan keyakinan saya sendiri. Awalnya, saya merasa bahwa pendapat saya kadang dikritik atau tidak diterima oleh teman-teman saya, namun seiring berjalannya waktu, saya belajar untuk menghargai sudut pandang orang lain. Misalnya, ketika ada teman yang menyampaikan pandangan berlawanan tentang suatu isu sosial, saya mencoba mendengarkan dengan seksama dan mencari tahu alasan di balik pendapatnya. Hal ini membuat saya menyadari bahwa setiap orang memiliki latar belakang dan pengalaman yang berbeda, yang mempengaruhi cara berpikir mereka. Dengan demikian, saya menjadi lebih toleran dan mampu berdiskusi dengan baik, bahkan dengan orang-orang yang tidak sependapat dengan saya. Secara keseluruhan, pembelajaran metodologi penelitian kualitatif telah mengubah cara saya berpikir dan berinteraksi dengan orang lain. Saya merasa lebih siap menghadapi berbagai pandangan dan siap menjalani proses berpikir yang lebih kritis dan reflektif. [This lesson also taught me to be more open to different opinions. In class discussions, I was often confronted with views that were contrary to my own beliefs. At first, I felt that my opinions were sometimes criticized or rejected by my peers, but as time went on, I learned to respect other people's points of view. For example, when a friend expresses a contrary view on a social issue, I try to listen carefully and find out the reasoning behind his opinion. This made me realize that everyone has different backgrounds and experiences, which affects their way of thinking. As a result, I became more tolerant and able to have good discussions, even with people who didn't agree with me. Overall, learning qualitative research methodologies has changed the way I think and interact with others. I feel more prepared to face various views and ready to undergo a more critical and reflective thought process].

The above narratives show that the qualitative research methodology course has changed students’ perspectives and personality to develop openness and tolerance to differences. Their experiences significantly confirm its importance since openness and tolerance to differences are skills necessary to conduct a successful research project and, more importantly, to survive the postmodern life and society like we are now in.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper is aimed at describing the teaching of the qualitative research methodology course and its impacts on the development of students' academic skills. Situated in one classroom, an autoethnography reveals how the course was being taught. From the description, student-centred approach was rarely used in the classroom as I largely used lecturing and question-and-answer methods, even though this approach was independently implemented by students at home through individual and collaborative learning. This partially confirms the previous research of the usefulness of the student-centred approach in teaching research methodology (Lundahl, 2008; Saeed et al., 2020), but this current research shows that in a context where students tend to be culturally passive in classroom, lecturing followed by a question and answer session seems to be the option. In this research, at home students were 'forced' through assignments to both independently and collaboratively study either to prepare for next lessons or to verify and further comprehend previous ones. Group-based research projects as found in the previous research (Ball and Pelco, 2006) useful to help students' application of theories could not be implemented since the initial students' knowledge and understanding were limited.

It is interesting that this study confirms a change process occurring in students, which involves emotional struggling and intellectual and affective flourishing. Nind et. al. (2020) found that students of the research methodology course experienced emotional challenges such as anxiety and stress during learning and doing the research methods. Although there is a difference in terms of the participants' level of study (postgraduate vs undergraduate), the current study reveals emotional struggles experienced by the student participants. Anxiety, stress, and worries of inabilities were commonly found in the students' narratives particularly during the first few weeks of the course. The students sought peer supports to overcome these difficulties and developed confidence and optimism that they would survive the course with satisfying achievement.

Austin (2016), Motjolopane (2021), Clandinin (2005), and Mansourian (2007) suggest that the research methodology course has several benefits for participating students including intellectual such as critical, analytical, and problem-solving skills. They also argue that this course, particularly qualitative one, helps to develop students' more positive attitudes towards differences. This is because the qualitative methodology teaches students to be aware of subjective realities that cannot be seen from single perspective. It encourages them to analyse several possible explanations of a reality and to open possibilities of multiple truths. Therefore, students of this course should be able to develop more tolerant attitudes to the diversity of perspective and realities regarding not only research projects but also real-life situations. Confidently, this study confirms this set of benefits in that students have changed into becoming more analytical and critical towards information and social phenomena. As they admitted, they did not now draw rush conclusions of facts, but began to think of backgrounds, contexts, and various perspectives.

In conclusion, the course of the qualitative research methodology drives students to change to become more tolerant and open individuals who see the world as subjective realities. They understand that one event should be seen from various perspectives to have a more comprehensive understanding of the social reality being studied. Through intensive lecturing, questions and answers, and guides, this course serves as a catalyst to help develop more critical students for them to survive both their study and this uncertain life. Several recommendations from this research include that the course should be increased to 3 or 4 credits to cater its heavy materials and sophistication. Also, prior to this subject, students need to take an introductory subject of research methodology so that they would have existing insights before coming to the class of qualitative research methodology

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