Teaching Research Methods in the Arab World
AUC, Egypt | 3 February 2023

Workshop Description

Research methods and design is one of the most important and necessary courses for any student regardless of their discipline and the degree they are pursuing. Within social science, this course becomes even critical yet more challenging. Most research methods courses in political science seek to cover a wide range of critical issues from the basics and basis of social science research and types of methods (qualitative, quantitative, and multi/mixed methods) to research design (question(s), hypothesis, and literature review) and some applied exercises and tools.

Both students and faculty are challenged by many factors. The first is that in most political (and social) science departments, the methods course – while mandatory - is offered only once throughout the degree program. This puts tremendous pressure on the faculty to cover a big amount and wide range of theories and approaches as well as provide practical exercises and tools, while expecting the students to end the class with the necessary foundation to develop their research projects. Secondly, there are several practical challenges from the availability of and accessibility to reading materials, computer software and the potential language barrier of such resources, to the usually big number of students per class (especially at public universities). Finally, some faculty members are stuck with teaching relatively outdated research methods courses. This can be due to the slow bureaucratic and centralized mechanism to change these courses and/or the inadequate training of some faculty members who would be more reluctant to change a longstanding class description, readings, and method of delivery.

The 2023 teaching workshop is part of an ongoing interest and exploration of the challenges related to teaching research methods and design in the Arab world. More specifically, how the methodological approaches should adjust to the impact of the securitized public / research spheres, growing inter-disciplinarity of topics, and in some cases challenging access to teaching and research resources among other issues. The workshop brought together about 15 faculty members who are currently teaching undergraduate and/or graduate research methods courses at public or private institutions. The diverse participation (country, language, career level and type of course) will enrich the discussion, help identify common areas of challenges and highlight potential ways to overcome some of them.

Each participant submitted a 1500-word memo sharing personal and critical reflections on challenges, needs and opportunities to teaching research methods and design.

- How do you teach methods/research design? Which methods do you focus on and why? How is the course designed? What are the available resources for teaching and professional development?
- What are the challenges? Institutional, teaching resources, students, language, qualified faculty….
- Are the methods taught relevant to the students' projects and research environment? How do you advise the student on the type of method(s) relevant to their research? What can be done differently to align research questions and methodological approaches?

List of Participants (alphabetical):

1. Ahmed Alowfi, King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia
2. Abeer Abazeed, Cairo University, Egypt
3. Ahmed Elshoura Abouzied, Assiut University, Egypt
4. Abdelkarim Amengay, Doha Institute, Qatar
5. Rabab El Mahdi, American University in Cairo, Egypt
6. Karim El Sayed, Alexandria University, Egypt
7. Abdelilah Essatte, Ibn Zohr University, Morocco
8. Amal Hamada, Cairo University, Egypt
9. Mazen Hassan, Cairo University, Egypt
10. Mostafa Hefni, American University in Cairo, Egypt
11. Zeyad Kilani, Cairo University, Egypt
12. Pascale Menoret, Centre D'etudes Et De Documentation Economiques, Juridiques Et Sociales (CEDEJ), Egypt
13. Ahmed Morsy, Arab Political Science Network (APSN)
14. Ammar Shamaileh, Doha Institute, Qatar