

The impact of the negotiation module on diploma students – A case study from the Royal University of Bhutan

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DOI: 10.24427/az-2025-0077

Abstract

This action research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Negotiation Skills module for diploma students in Materials and Procurement Management (DMPM) at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study assessed how students' negotiation skills improved after completing the module, drawing on pre- and post-module surveys. The research also gathered faculty members' perspectives on the module's impact and effectiveness. The findings provided valuable insights into how the module contributed to students' negotiation competencies and highlighted areas for improvement.

Keywords

negotiation skills, diploma students, Royal University of Bhutan, mixed-methods approach

Introduction

Negotiation is an indispensable skill for professionals working in Materials and Procurement Management, as it empowers them to secure advantageous terms, effectively manage risks, and foster enduring relationships with suppliers. This action research project was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Negotiation Skills module offered to diploma students in Materials and Procurement Management (DMPM) at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, under the Royal University of Bhutan.

The research aimed to comprehensively evaluate student learning outcomes while also collecting insightful feedback from faculty members involved in the module. By doing so, the study sought to pinpoint specific areas that could benefit from enhancement in both the design and delivery of the course content. The insights

gained from this research will play a crucial role in the ongoing refinement of the module, ensuring that it effectively equips students with the essential negotiation skills they will need to thrive in their future careers. This initiative highlights the commitment to providing students with a robust educational experience that prepares them for the challenges of the professional world.

1. Literature review

Negotiation is essential in procurement and materials management, enabling professionals to secure favorable terms, manage risks, and foster strong supplier relationships [Croom and Williams, 2000; Gadde and Håkansson, 2001]. In today's competitive landscape, effective negotiation skills are invaluable, contributing significantly to an organization's competitive advantage and long-term success [Weber, 2011; Choi and Hartley, 1996]. To teach these skills effectively, educators utilize a range of methods, including interactive and experiential learning techniques such as role-playing, simulations, and case studies [Brett, 2007; Fisher and Ury, 1991; Czerniawska and Szydło, 2021].

Blended learning approaches, which combine traditional lectures with online platforms and simulations, further enhance the learning experience by allowing students to progress at their own pace and receive immediate feedback [Swaffield and Beven, 2012; Lacagnina et al., 2016]. Action research studies conducted by Torna-bene [2017] and Sullivan [2015] have illustrated the effectiveness of iterative feedback and course adjustments in improving student learning outcomes in negotiation skills modules. These studies highlight the importance of ongoing evaluation and refinement of teaching methods to ensure that students successfully develop their negotiation competencies.

2. Methods

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Data were collected from 78 students across two cohorts, as well as from faculty members who taught the Negotiation Skills module. Quantitative data were gathered through pre- and post-module surveys that assessed students' knowledge and skills in negotiation.

Additionally, qualitative data were collected through interviews with faculty to gain insights into their perspectives on student performance and the effectiveness of the module. The data analysis included descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and thematic analysis of the faculty interviews.

3. Research results

The findings of the study showed a significant improvement in students' negotiation skills after completing the Negotiation Skills module. Quantitative analysis, which included pre- and post-module surveys and paired t-tests, indicated a statistically significant increase in students' confidence and understanding of negotiation concepts. This encompassed handling supplier relationships, applying negotiation tactics, and managing stress during negotiations. These results suggest that the module effectively equipped students with the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for successful negotiation in procurement and materials management.

Qualitative analysis of faculty interviews revealed that interactive teaching methods, such as role-playing, case studies, and collaborative discussions, were highly effective in engaging students and enhancing their learning. Faculty members noted an increase in student participation and a deeper understanding of negotiation concepts during these interactive exercises. However, they also identified areas for improvement, particularly the need for more real-world case studies and opportunities for students to apply their negotiation skills in practical settings.

The results showed an increase in students' confidence and understanding of negotiation tactics in (tab.1).

Tab. 1. Paired t-test

Question	Mean (Pre-Survey)	Std. Dev (Pre-Survey)	Mean (Post-Survey)	Std. Dev (Post-Survey)
Confidence negotiating with suppliers	2.8	0.9	4.2	0.7
Understanding of negotiation tactics	3.0	1.0	4.0	0.8
Confidence in handling negotiations under stress	2.5	1.1	4.0	0.8

Source: own elaboration.

The study conducted a paired t-test to assess whether the changes in students' negotiation skills were statistically significant. The test result: $t(77) = -5.23$, $p < 0.01$. This result indicated a statistically significant improvement in students' negotiation skills from pre- to post-survey, with a p-value less than 0.01, confirming the effectiveness of the module.

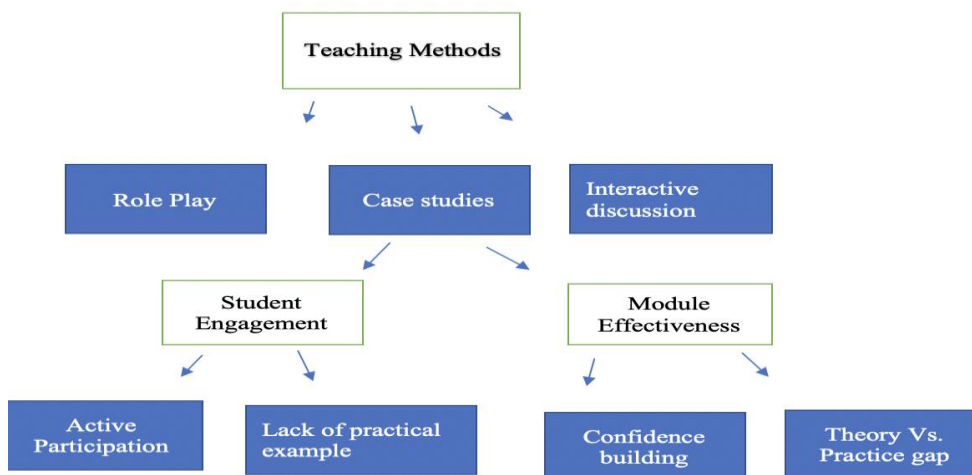


Fig. 1. Thematic Map

Source: own elaboration.

This map highlighted how different teaching methods, such as role-playing, case studies, and interactive discussions, contributed to students' active participation. It also showed areas for improvement, such as the lack of practical examples. Ultimately, the map illustrated how the teaching methods directly impacted students' learning outcomes and the module's effectiveness.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the Negotiation Skills module in enhancing students' negotiation abilities. The significant improvement in students' confidence and negotiation skills, as shown by the pre- and post-survey data and supported by paired t-test analysis, indicates that the module successfully met its objectives. This outcome aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of negotiation skills in procurement and materials management [Croom and Williams, 2000; Weber, 2011].

Faculty feedback provided valuable insights into the module's strengths and weaknesses. The emphasis on interactive teaching methods, such as role-playing and case studies, was identified as a key factor in student engagement and learning.

These findings support the broader literature on effective negotiation training, underlining the significance of experiential learning [Brett, 2007; Fisher and Ury, 1991].

However, faculty also pointed out areas for improvement, including the need for more real-world case studies and opportunities for students to apply their negotiation skills in practical scenarios. Incorporating these suggestions will further enhance the module's relevance and effectiveness in preparing students for the challenges of the procurement profession.

Conclusion

This action research aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Negotiation Skills module for diploma students in Materials and Procurement Management at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan. By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the study offered a comprehensive evaluation of the module's impact on students' negotiation abilities and provided valuable insights into areas for improvement.

The findings from the pre-and post-surveys revealed a significant improvement in students' confidence and negotiation skills, particularly in handling supplier relationships, applying negotiation tactics, and managing stress during negotiations. The paired t-test analysis confirmed that the observed changes in students' skills were statistically significant, underscoring the effectiveness of the module in achieving its objectives. These results align with previous studies in the field, which have highlighted the importance of negotiation skills in procurement and materials management [Croom and Williams, 2000; Weber, 2011]. Effective negotiation is essential for procurement professionals to secure favorable terms, build long-term supplier relationships, and navigate complex supply chain dynamics [Gadde and Håkansson, 2001]. The significant improvement in students' negotiation skills suggests that the module successfully prepared them to tackle real-world challenges in procurement.

Faculty feedback gathered through interviews, provided a deeper understanding of how teaching methods influenced student engagement and learning outcomes. Thematic analysis of faculty responses revealed that interactive teaching strategies, such as role-playing, case studies, and collaborative discussions, were particularly effective in engaging students and enhancing their learning experiences. These findings support the broader literature on effective teaching methodologies for negotiation skills, which emphasizes the value of experiential learning and collaborative problem-solving [Brett, 2007; Fisher and Ury, 1991]. Faculty also highlighted areas

for improvement, such as the need for more practical examples and real-world scenarios to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This feedback will be instrumental in refining the module to ensure that it aligns more closely with industry needs and prepares students for the complexities of procurement negotiations.

The study's mixed-methods approach provided a well-rounded perspective on the module's effectiveness, capturing both the quantitative outcomes and the nuanced feedback from faculty. By integrating these insights, the research not only assessed the immediate impact of the Negotiation Skills module but also provided a roadmap for its future development. As the procurement field continues to evolve, educational programs must remain responsive to emerging challenges and equip students with the skills necessary to navigate a rapidly changing global marketplace. The findings of this research will inform the continuous improvement of the Negotiation Skills module, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective in preparing students for successful careers in materials and procurement management.

In summary, this research contributes to the ongoing development of negotiation education within the context of materials and procurement management. It offers practical insights into how negotiation skills can be taught effectively and provides a foundation for further research and curriculum design. By incorporating the feedback from both students and faculty, future iterations of the module will be better equipped to address the evolving needs of the procurement profession, ultimately enhancing the students' readiness for real-world negotiation challenges.

Literature

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Wpływ modułu negocjacji na studentów kończących studia – studium przypadku z Uniwersytetu Królewskiego w Bhutanie

Streszczenie

Celem tego badania była ocena skuteczności modułu umiejętności negocjacyjnych dla studentów kończących proces edukacyjny w zakresie zarządzania materiałami i zamówieniami (DMPM) w Jigme Namgyel Engineering College, Royal University of Bhutan. Wykorzystując podejście mieszane, badanie oceniło, w jaki sposób umiejętności negocjacyjne studentów poprawiły się po ukończeniu modułu, opierając się na ankietach przed i po module. W badaniu zebrano również opinie członków wydziału na temat wpływu i skuteczności modułu.

Wyniki badania dostarczyły cennych informacji na temat tego, w jaki sposób moduł przyczynił się do podniesienia kompetencji negocjacyjnych studentów i podkreśliły obszary wymagające poprawy.

Słowa kluczowe

umiejętności negocjacyjne, studenci kończący studia, Uniwersytet Królewski w Bhutanie, mieszane podejście badawcze