

Teaching Research Methods at the Graduate Level Utilizing Flipped Classroom Approach; An Action Research Study

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Abstract : This paper discusses a research project carried out with 12 first-year graduate students enrolled in research methods course prior to undertaking a graduate thesis during the academic year 2019. The research was designed for the objective of creating research methods course structure that embraces an individualized and activity-based approach to learning in a highly engaging group environment. This approach targeted innovating the traditional research methods lecture-based, theoretical format where students reported less engagement and limited learning. This study utilized action research methodology in developing a different approach to research methods course instruction where student performance indicators and feedback were periodically collected to assess the new teaching method. Student learning was achieved through utilizing the flipped classroom approach where students learned the material at home and classroom activities were designed to implement and experiment with the newly acquired information, with the guidance of the course instructor. Student learning in class was practiced through a series of activities based on different research methods. With the goal of encouraging student engagement, a wide range of activities was utilized including workshops, role play, mind-mapping, presentations, peer evaluations. Data was collected through an open-ended qualitative questionnaire to establish whether students were engaged in the material they were learning, and to what degree were they engaged, and to test their mastery level of the concepts discussed. Analysis of the data presented positive results as around 91% of the students reported feeling more engaged with the active learning experience and learning research by “actually doing research, not just reading about it”. The students expressed feeling invested in the process of their learning as they saw their research “gradually come to life” through peer learning and practice during workshops. Based on the results of this study, the research methods course structure was successfully remodeled and continues to be delivered.

Keywords : research methods, higher education instruction, flipped classroom, graduate education

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