

Exploring the Relationship Between Self-Directed Learning and Research Competency in Graduate Students

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Abstract

This purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-directed learning and research competency in graduate students. The participants were graduate students studying at the master's degree level in education programs at one institution of higher education. The total number of participants in this study was sixty-five students (N=65). The Self-Directed Learning Rating Scale (SDLRS) developed by Guglielmino (1977, 1991), was used as the main instrument to evaluate graduate students' self-directed learning readiness. Data pertaining to questions related to the students' assessment of their research competencies were also obtained. Analysis of the results showed a moderate correlation ($r = .45$ $p < .01$) between Self-Directed Learning Readiness and Research Competency. The results indicate that higher levels of Self-Directed Learning Readiness have a positive effect on the reported level of research competencies. The results of this study indicate that inclusion of self-directed learning (SDL) approaches for graduate students may have beneficial results in improving their research competency that can also contribute to the overall quality of research conducted by graduate students.

Keywords: self-directed learning (sdl), research competency, graduate students

Introduction

A critical component in the successful completion of graduate studies is the ability to conduct and produce quality research. Graduate students must have the necessary skills and abilities to gather information, apply research methods, and analyze data effectively according to research standards. This research capacity involves being able to select and plan appropriate research using quantitative or qualitative methodology, selection and/or construction of instruments, appropriate data analysis techniques including statistical and non-statistical methods, and the overall ability to evaluate and communicate results in a well-organized and logical manner.

Unlike their undergraduate counterparts, graduate students are expected to demonstrate higher levels of self-sufficiency in their academic endeavors. They have already completed a certain amount of academic work and are expected to demonstrate increased degrees of maturity, experience, confidence and motivation. Working towards a graduate degree demonstrates the individual's conscious decision to apply themselves for further study whether it be for reasons of career enhancement, knowledge attainment or personal ambition.