



Case Studies Can Improve Student Grades, Course Understanding, and Engagement

What is this Research About?

Case studies use relevant and often real-life scenarios to interest students in a particular area of the curriculum. Case studies help students participate in teams and develop reflective, analytical, and problem-solving skills. This teaching method may be particularly useful for core statistics courses offered to students from different disciplines, who may lack confidence and miss the relevancy of the topics to their field. This study evaluated the development and implementation of case studies on student grades in a core accounting statistics course.

What did the Researchers Do?

Case studies were developed in a first-year quantitative methods course, required for students in accounting majors. Each week, 198 students attended a traditional statistics lecture (focused on content delivery) and then split into randomly assigned traditional tutorials (lecture-based practice questions) or case study tutorials. The case study students worked in groups on problems related to their case study and filled out a questionnaire regarding their opinion of the first case study. All students completed computer-based homework assessments related to course material and undertook an individual, open-ended project that required interpretive skills. The researchers compared grades for the students in the traditional and case study tutorials. They also examined the grades for individual and group work in a co-requisite "Professional Skills" course.

What did the Researchers Find?

Students who participated in the case studies gave positive feedback about the experience and exhibited a proactive attitude during sessions. These students were more engaged in the course, having higher submission rates for assignments than the traditional tutorial group. The case study group had significantly higher grades for both the computer-based homework and the project compared to the traditional tutorial group. The impact of the case studies on project grades was more significant for male students than female students. Finally, students who participated in the case studies performed better than the traditional tutorial group in their Professional Skills course, including individual and group work where at least two students had been a part of the case study tutorials.

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➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Case studies are a valuable tool to present real-life scenarios to engage students and better their understanding of a course topic. Instructors may consider using case studies in courses that are taught to students beyond their home department. Instructors may consider recruiting student volunteers from different disciplines to help develop case studies and post-graduate students to act as guides during case study activities. To implement case studies, consider using small groups of 4-5 students, including discussion-based activities and give students ample time over the semester to complete case study activities.

➔ Citation

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➔ Keywords

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