

Using an Online Forum for a Collaborative Construction Task: The Case of a Graduate Course on Qualitative Research Methods (Poster)

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Abstract

Planning and executing qualitative research is a challenging task but *teaching* how to plan and execute qualitative research is even more challenging. One of the teaching challenges is how to teach students to design and manage an interview (Seidman, 1998). The students, should first be taught how to design the interview, and then how to manage the interview itself – maintaining the interview flow, interpreting interviewees' body language, managing their own body language, and finally, students must learn how to analyze the interview and integrate their findings with the other research findings. To overcome these challenges, we illustrate one task that we give to the students in our qualitative research methods course at the beginning of the 6th week of the semester (see Table 1). In this task, *all* students enrolled in the course collaboratively design an interview in the online forum of Moodle, the Technion's learning management system.

Table 1: The interview task

Using this forum, you will construct, conduct and analyze an interview, as part of a research described as follows:

Research topic: *Conceptions about qualitative research*

Research objective: *To describe students' conceptions about qualitative research in the middle of a course on qualitative research methods.*

Research question: *What are students' conceptions about qualitative research in the middle of the course?*

Research population: *You – the students in the course*

Stage 1: *Construct an interview based on collaborative work and discussions conducted on this forum.*

Stage 2 & 3: *At the end of the construction process, each of you will interview one other student enrolled in the course and, based on the interview analysis, will report to the forum on at least three observations. The observations will be illustrated by excerpts from the interview.*

Full grade will be given for (a) contributing to the interview design process, (b) your report on who you interviewed, and (c) a description of at least three facts that partially answer the research question, which you revealed during the interview analysis.

Data collected in two courses taught in the Winter semesters of 2010 and 2011 to 10 and 13 students, respectively, revealed that although all students

had to participate in the discussion, student participation level in the two classes differed significantly: in the 2010 class (10 students), 28 messages were posted (average: 2.8, median: 2) and the total number of words was 3414 (average: 341; median: 215); in the 2011 class (13 students), 196 messages were posted (15 message in average, median: 7) and the total number of words was 20,857 (an average of 1604 words per student, median: 1488).

Keywords: qualitative research, collaborative learning, online forum, higher education, teaching principals.

References

Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in Education and social sciences*. Teachers College Press.