

An Analysis of Student Learning Outcomes in Multi-Sections of a Microsoft Office Software Application Course Using Instructor Team Assessments

Purpose of the Study

- To find best practices for assessing achievement
- To assess methods of instruction for effectiveness
- To determine if similar learning outcomes were achieved across multi-sections of the course taught by different instructors
- To assist other instructors to identify best practices for assessing student achievement and for determining teacher effectiveness

Literature Review

Team Assessment/Collaborative Assessment

- Blythe, T, Allen, D and Powell, B S (1999) indicate that many instructors, who examine student work together, want to learn about their effectiveness as instructors and to better understand students' learning and development. They also indicate that by working together, instructors can develop more effective curriculum and assessment, and create ways to motivate students to create higher quality work.
- *The Instructional Improvement Through Inquiry and Collaboration (IITIC)* project, funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Southern Maine Partnership and the CES Northwest Center, worked with three schools to assess and improve classroom instruction. It was stated that,
 - Action research, examining student work, and peer observation and coaching are the centerpieces of the project.
 - In addition, one of the objectives was to pilot strategies, tools, and resources which will enable teachers to assess and improve their instructional strategies both individually and as an entire faculty.

Methods of Teaching

- Instructors have various teaching styles and familiarity with the content. Such factors often lead to inconsistent presentation of content, style, and scope of presentation (Passerini & Granger, 1998).
- Greater learning was found to occur when instruction was carried out using varied media and interactive applications.
- In a research study conducted by Dunsworth, Martin and Igo (2004) consisting of 329 students and 11 instructors, the
 - **Top instructional tools preferred by students were**
 - classes taught using hands-on projects,
 - in-class activities used to develop practical skills,
 - handouts for activities and projects
 - **Tools found to be least helpful**
 - Reading from textbook
 - On-line discussions

- Pre-designed *PowerPoint* presentations could be used to make the information covered in multiple sections more consistent across sections
- Wiggs & Huter (1998) state that students benefit when they are exposed to a variety of teaching methodologies and learning environments such as
 - independent work
 - small groups
 - cooperative learning activities
- Dunsworth et. al. state that
 - problem-solving skills should be taught along with the course content in the advanced course.
 - Use of peer tutors working with classmates help to develop and sharpen problem-solving skills.
- Davis (1999) found that students
 - learn more when they are allowed to work in labs together or when
 - informal peer tutoring and support are available.
- Smith & Tarkow (1998) found that learners
 - prefer to customize learning at their own pace.

Strategies for Teaching African-American Students

- Many African American students respond highly to cooperative learning. Consider small group assignments and projects.
- Many African Americans' discussion style is simultaneous talk instead of alternating talk.
- Many African American students prefer to study while music or conversation occurs in the room
- Efforts should be made to increase minority students' motivation and interest in testing by helping them feel comfortable and at ease.
- Many African American students prefer more kinesthetic/ tactile learning.
- Many African American students prefer subdued lighting rather than bright light.
- Many African American students rely heavily on visual input rather than auditory input.
- Many African American students react intensely to being praised or criticized. They respond better to rewards such as praise, smiles, pats on the back, and the like.
- Many African American students avert their eyes while being confronted about their behavior; teachers may misinterpret their lack of eye contact as indicating insincerity and guilt.
- Whenever possible select texts and readings whose language is gender-neutral and free of stereotypes.

Suggestions/Recommendations

- Keep track of teaching strategies used each semester and adjust/change as needed
- Use pre/post tests to discern student knowledge
- Give more timed graded performance exercises
- Discuss objective test items during class and require students to take practice tests