

Using critical reflection for student evaluation of teaching in online studies

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Abstract

- This presentation describes an alternative approach to student evaluation of courses that provides formative and summative assessment and focuses on student outcomes. The evaluation method uses the DEAL approach where students reflect critically by describing their learning experiences in an objective and detailed manner, examining them in light of specific learning goals or objectives, and articulating learning, including goals for future action. The approach evaluates effectiveness of teaching as well as student learning. It provides an alternative to problem-ridden standard course evaluations. It responds to a need for evaluation of online teaching.

Word Cloud

- How do you feel about the current approach at your institution for student evaluations of teaching?
- Go to www.menti.com
- Use the code the code I tell you.

Purpose of study

- Develop and test an alternative approach to course evaluation
 - Evaluate effectiveness of teaching as well as student learning
 - Focus on student outcomes
 - Provides formative and summative assessment
- Provide an alternative to problem-ridden standard course evaluations
- Respond to particular need for evaluation of online teaching

Focus on student learning

- Most course evaluation focuses on final outcome. Corrective action comes too late.
- Need for students to reveal the process as well as outcomes of their educational experience.

Problems with standard course evaluations

- Highly subjective, impressionistic.
- May inquire about instructor behaviors that have no reliable correlation to instructional outcomes.
- Rely on student perceptions of learning rather than observable demonstration of learning.
- Sloppy usage of quantitative results
 - Low student returns
 - Outliers have disproportionate impact on means
 - Non-participating students have equal say in results
- Social desirability bias

Alternative approaches

- Reflective Journaling

- Evaluates student learning, but does it also provide course evaluation?
- Serves as a means of communication between student and faculty.
- Students reflect on their experience in the course.
 - Describe what they have learned.
 - Report on their learning experiences.
 - Apply their learning to their lives.
- Both summative and formative evaluation.
- “Reflective journaling is a way of discovering student achievement of objectives as well as a way of determining unstated objectives. It provides a way to assess what students have learned that was not planned” (Russell & Fisher, 2014).

Critical Reflection – the DEAL approach

- **Description** of experiences in an objective and detailed manner;
- **Examination** of those experiences in light of specific learning goals or objectives; and
- **Articulation of Learning**, including goals for future action that can be taken forward into the next experience for improved practice and further refinement of learning (Brooks, Harris, & Clayton, 2010).

DEAL questions

- What did I learn?
- How did I learn it?
- Why does it matter?
- What will I do in light of it?

Methodology

- Students responded to DEAL questions at the end of capstone course in emergency services leadership.
- The number of students responding for the summer term was 20; three were female; 15 were non-traditional students working fulltime in careers as firefighters, police officers or paramedics.
- The number responding during fall was 31; five were female; 20 were non-traditional students.
- Data analysis spiral used to analyze responses (Creswell, 2013, p. 183).
 - Data from student comments was organized and then read. Researchers made notes and memos in the margins.
 - Then a process of describing classifying and interpreting began. This process put the data in context, made comparisons, and categorized the information using codes to identify themes.
 - The themes were combined and reduced in number and, using grounded theory, propositions were developed that connected the phenomena with their contexts.

Table 1. Analysis of student comments

	Summer Semester			Fall Semester		
	Number of comments	Percent of total comments	Percent students N=20	Number of comments	Percent of total comments	Percent students N=31
Teaching strategies						
1. General comments	3	14%	15%	6	12%	19%
2. Readings (including applied reading summaries adopted in the fall)	5	23%	25%	23	47%	74%
3. Discussion forums (including films)	7	32%	35%	9	18%	29%
4. Interview of a leader	3	14%	15%	6	12%	19%
5. Paper analyzing good and bad leaders	1	5%	5%	2	4%	6%
6. Online lectures	2	9%	10%	1	2%	3%
7. Code of ethics	0	0%	0%	2	4%	6%
8. Journal (not used in Fall)	1	5%	5%	0	0%	0%
TOTAL	22	100%	*110%	49	100%	*158%

*Students commented on more than one strategy.

Conclusions

- By adopting a qualitative approach based on an examination of student learning, teachers and learning facilitators can improve their own delivery and focus on student learning outcomes.
- If students are not learning what they should be learning, content and pedagogical approaches can be altered to focus on the desired outcomes.
- This approach is particularly suited to online learning, where student response rates to traditional questionnaires are low.
- Critical reflection can provide a means of determining the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches in student learning, thus, serving as tool in student evaluation of teaching.
- This approach provides an alternative to traditional course evaluation means, that can be particularly effective in assessing online learning strategies.

What can you do?

- Which best describes your situation?
- Go to www.menti.com and use the code I tell you.
- Which best describes your situation?
 - I can change the way I do student evaluations of teaching.
 - I have no choice in how I do student evaluations of teaching.
 - I can supplement the current approach with other means of getting student feedback.