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Instructors’ Perceptions of Classroom Assessment for Web-Based Instruction

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Classroom Assessment as part of the Teaching Paradigm

Educators at all levels have embraced using online technology as a teaching tool.

The issue of assessment of student learning in an online course has not been thoroughly addressed.

As a mechanism of learning paradigms changes, so should the assessment techniques.
Purpose of the Study

To document and investigate the “process” of how classroom assessment as part of instructional pedagogy is incorporated in web-based classes by investigating the instructors' perceptions.

The research questions:
1. How was the instructional goal(s) set up?
2. How were the instructional objectives measured?
3. What was perceived to be the most important components to obtain and process the information on how long to teach, what to teach, and how effective the teaching results were?
Method

Participants

- Eight instructors from one college of education in a Midwestern urban university
- Participants teach over 50% on-line courses
- Undergraduate and graduate level courses
- Three were male and five female
- Students were indirect participants, whose classroom participation was observed and recorded
Data Sources

- Virtual field notes of on-line classroom observations
- Transcriptions of the on-line interviews of the instructors
- Records of classroom assessment activities
Data Analysis

Grounded Theory

- Transcriptions were categorized and compared separately, then together.
- Open, axial coding, and selective coding
- Concepts or themes with similar properties were grouped together.
Findings

The dynamic of classroom assessment as a “process” in on-line classes produced the following five themes:

- Objective orientation
- Performance-based assessment
- Writing skill
- Collaboration
- Autonomy
Objective Orientation

- More explicit with requirements
- Straightforward with specific course content and objectives
- Most instructors posted evaluation rubrics, specific expectations, self-study quizzes, and on-line tests.
- Instructors created activities which allowed the learner to work creatively, applying concepts to individual circumstances.
Performance-based Assessment

- Fewer biases typical of traditional educational settings
- Learners shared and gave informational feedback to each other.
- Learners learned from each other – incorporating classmates input into projects.
The major, and perhaps, only means of communication in on-line classes

Instructors recognized the importance of writing skill in communicating the progress and growth of students.

Instructors realized that how well a student wrote played an important part on how they were evaluated.
Collaboration

- Instructors believe cyberspace offers more media for communication and interaction.
- There is more interaction between and among students and the teacher in on-line learning.
- Students are more apt to ask questions and participate in threaded discussions.
- Students may participate at their convenience.
- Types of interaction observed:
  - Academic
  - Collaborative
  - Interpersonal
Learner autonomy refers to the extent to which learners make decisions regarding their own learning.

Learner autonomy is regarded as one of the key elements that defines every distance education program.

Learners device what, when, where, and how to learn.

Instructors must nurture and encourage autonomy to achieve constructive learning.
Assessment as a Tool for Educational Improvement

- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning and when it effects change in specific student performance outcomes.
- As an important pedagogical component in the dynamics of teaching and learning, web-based instructors should constantly look for assessments that give students more opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to encourage reflective and critical thinking.
- Educators should take advantage of the new territory being explored in distance learning and provide assessments that reflect the dynamics of the virtual learning community.