
Certificate of Accomplishment in Teaching Program
Workshop Reflection Assignment #2
FIT: Fundamentals in Teaching – Classroom Assessment Techniques

Part I: Describe

Title of the Workshop/Event: FIT: Classroom Assessment Techniques

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this online workshop was to discuss, practice, and share a variety of approaches for assessing students' learning, which are referred to as Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT's).

Lead Presenter(s): Online Workshop, Directed by Dr. Barbi Honeycutt

Date(s)/Location of the Event: 10/24/2011-10/28/2011, Online Moodle Workshop

Approximate Number of People Who Attended the Workshop: 20 (My Group)

Brief Description:

This online workshop was a mostly self-paced interactive seminar where CAT's were presented in the forms of articles and videos. After reading about CAT's in several articles, we were given the chance watch a video of a teacher in a dance class, and discuss his use of CAT's (or lack thereof). We were then provided the opportunity to discuss our thoughts on the video and how the teacher could improve his class with others attending the workshop in an interactive online forum.

Part II: Analyze

1. Why did you choose to attend this workshop? What were you hoping to learn?

I attended this workshop for several reasons, the most important being that in teaching engineering courses which are math intensive, I find I have a tendency to stand in front of the class and lecture for extended periods at times. Then, when I attempt to interact with the class, they show little to no interest. Perhaps it is because the class is at 8:00 in the morning, or perhaps I can find a way to engage the students and help them learn. Dr. Honeycutt mentioned this workshop during the introduction to teaching workshop I attended two months ago, and I planned on taking it as soon as I heard about it. I was hoping to learn about the different types of CAT's, how to use them, and the appropriate time to use them. I was also hoping to be introduced to some CAT's that are effective for engineering students in math intensive classes in particular, since I seem to have a harder time engaging these types of students. I believe this is because engineers are inherently by-the-book and not always fond of group discussions and projects.

2. What assumptions did you have before participating in this workshop?

Prior to attending the workshop, I knew that it would be an online seminar, and assumed it would have several sections to help me understand CAT's through different types of learning. I was prepared to listen, do some reading, and interact with other students and learn their thoughts on CAT's. I was counting on having several resources for CAT ideas and examples given to me

during the duration of the online workshop. I assumed that there would be some sort of interactive group activity related to CAT's because that type of activity is in and of itself a CAT for this online workshop! I also assumed that most of the people taking the workshop would be graduate students like myself who are already teaching and were looking for a way to better engage their students just like I was.

3. Were your assumptions correct or incorrect? Explain how your thinking was either supported (meaning your assumptions were validated) or how your thinking was changed (meaning your assumptions were incorrect)

My ideas about what the workshop would be were mostly correct, and many of my preconceived notions about what I would get out of the workshop were confirmed as I worked my way through the online seminar. We were provided with several platforms from which to learn about CAT's including a video explanation from a professor who is an expert in the area and a number of articles and printed resources that address CAT's. However, my thinking about CAT's changed significantly from what I initially thought at the beginning of the seminar. I had the notion that CAT's were simply a technique for engaging the class and that I would be given a number of example CAT's for different scenarios and learning styles. I did not expect that there was significant theory behind the development of CAT's, such as the four dimensions of learning, and the different types of assessment. Also, it had not occurred to me that letting the students know I am giving them an informal assessment of their knowledge that will not have an impact on their grade would help me understand where they are truly not understanding the material. I never would have thought to discuss CAT's with the class, and let them know the results and how I plan to address them. My ideas about the types of students attending this workshop were mostly correct, however my discussion of the video was with an undergraduate student who was just starting out in a teaching curriculum, and it was interesting to study her perspective. I expected to be provided with a number of resources on CAT's, and sure enough there were several articles and even a handbook on CAT's that I was able to download and keep for future reference. Lastly, I expected to encounter some sort of CAT during the workshop so that Dr. Honeycutt would have a way of assessing whether or not we learned anything during the workshop. Of course, there was an interactive discussion of a teaching video where the professor certainly needed some pointers on how to better connect with his class. This technology driven CAT was an interesting example and I am considering creating a moodle page for my undergraduate class and having them do small discussion assignments so that I can track their knowledge of the material.

4. What information was most meaningful for you? Be specific.

There was a great deal of information presented and given in the form of printed resources during this online workshop. I found the video on CAT's given by the professor at UC Irvine to be particularly valuable because it allowed me to digest a number of new concepts quickly, and it gave me a foundation from which to build when acquiring new knowledge about CAT's. I had never heard of the four dimensions of learning or the alternative types of assessment. The articles that were posted (both required reading and not) were also an excellent resource for getting ideas about what kinds of CAT's are most effective and ideas for how to implement them in a classroom environment. It was also meaningful to watch a video of a teacher who was clearly out of touch with his students and did not use a single CAT throughout the entire course. Not surprisingly, none of the students could pass the final. Although it was an extreme case, reading posts from other students and responding to one of the posts allowed me to understand how important it is to test using the dimensions of learning that you, as an instructor, teach to.

5. How do you think you will use this information? Be specific.

Since I am participating in the PTP program, I am teaching half of the classes in a senior level industrial engineering course this semester and all of the classes next semester. The information I learned about CAT's will be put to immediate use in the classroom this semester. Prior to teaching the class, the only assessments I had were homework's and exams. Since I have been the TA, we have added a class project, and since I became the part time instructor, we added in-class quizzes and assignments. However, all of these are graded and the students know that all of these have an effect on their grade. I am beginning to formulate a plan to use formative assessment at least once per class period. This is an interesting challenge for me, since I teach a software program that requires students to watch and learn how to use the software and follow along on their own. Thus, I have my own challenge in creating some class-specific CAT's for my lab-based class. Additionally, all of the printed resources given to me will be read over the course of a few weeks, and I am hoping the information I gain from those resources will assist me in being able to design effective CAT's for my current class and other classes I may teach in the future.

6. What information do you still need to learn related to this workshop? What is your plan for learning more about this topic?

One thing I am still somewhat concerned about is what to do if students simply do not participate in formative CAT's. For example, I have seen instructors attempt to use the "think-pair-share" CAT, but none of the students in the class will talk to each other, not even students who are friends. Also, when it comes time to share, no one has anything of substance to say! How do you handle this situation? You have attempted to use a CAT, it fails, and the entire class now knows it. In a way they have undermined your authority by not participating, but it is supposed to be a formative assignment. So, since there are no grades, how do you handle this situation appropriately? Being the person I am, I would be tempted to dismiss the class and hold them responsible for the material that was supposed to be covered that day. However, that does not seem like the best way to get the students to learn. Thus, I need to seek out information on how to handle students who will not participate in CAT's. This is important because if other students see one student not participating, they will feel empowered to do the same (based on my experience). I feel discussing this with professors or teachers who have had the same problem would provide valuable insight into how to handle this issue, so seeking out advice from people with experience is my first plan of action. Past that, there may be some information in the printed resources that can help with ideas for addressing this issue.