

Study on Assessment of College Students

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Abstract

Assessment is a critical component of the educational process in college. It is used to measure student learning outcomes, evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods, and provide feedback to both students and educators. While assessment has many benefits, such as promoting learning and providing accountability, it also has potential drawbacks, such as inducing stress and limiting creativity. To mitigate the potential drawbacks of assessment, educators must balance the benefits and drawbacks of assessments and use them in conjunction with other learning activities. Additionally, educators can incorporate a variety of assessment types to provide a comprehensive measure of student learning outcomes. By doing so, educators can promote deeper and more meaningful learning and help students to achieve their full potential.

Keywords

Assessment; College students; Learning outcomes; Teaching methods; Feedback.

1. Introduction

Assessment is a crucial component of the educational process, and it plays an important role in measuring student learning outcomes and determining the effectiveness of teaching methods. Assessment is particularly vital in college, where students are expected to engage in higher-level thinking and more complex tasks than in previous educational levels. In this essay, we will explore the different types of assessments used in college, their benefits and drawbacks, and their impact on student learning and success.

Purposes of Assessments

2. Purposes of Assessments

The primary purpose of assessments in college is to evaluate student learning and provide feedback to help students improve. Assessments are used to measure knowledge and skills, as well as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. They are also used to determine a student's readiness for higher-level coursework and their ability to succeed in their chosen career.

Another purpose of assessments in college is to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods. By measuring student learning outcomes, educators can determine which teaching methods are most effective and make changes to improve student learning. Assessments can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs and to ensure that they are meeting the needs of students.

3. Types of Assessments

There are various types of assessments used in college, ranging from simple multiple-choice questions to complex performance-based assessments [1]. Each type of assessment has its own strengths and weaknesses, and educators must select the most appropriate assessment type for their specific learning objectives.

One commonly used assessment type in college is the multiple-choice exam. Multiple-choice exams are relatively easy to administer and grade, making them a popular choice among educators. However, they have some drawbacks. For instance, multiple-choice exams do not accurately measure higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving [2]. Therefore, educators must ensure that they use multiple-choice exams in conjunction with other assessment types that measure higher-order thinking skills.

Multiple-choice tests are prevalent in college classes because they are efficient to grade for large class sizes. Computerized scanning can score hundreds of multiple-choice exams quickly, allowing professors to evaluate students' knowledge and dedicate time to other important teaching duties. However, multiple-choice questions by design limit students to selecting from prescribed responses rather than constructing a unique answer. Even when designed thoughtfully, multiple-choice cannot measure skills like forming original arguments, analyzing conflicting perspectives, developing creative solutions, or conveying complex ideas in writing. Relying solely on multiple-choice could fail to assess students' deeper understanding of course material. Therefore, a balanced assessment plan combines multiple-choice to survey breadth of content knowledge with open-ended formats like essays, problem sets, or research projects to evaluate higher-order thinking. Used together, these assessment types provide a more complete picture of students' learning and acquisition of critical skills needed to succeed in college and future careers.

Another assessment type used in college is the essay exam. Essay exams require students to construct responses in their own words, which can provide a better measure of their understanding and critical thinking skills [3]. However, essay exams can be time-consuming to grade, and grading can be subjective, which may lead to inconsistent grading among different educators.

Essay exams allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and analysis of course concepts in an in-depth, nuanced way. Unlike multiple choice tests which limit answers to pre-determined options, essays allow students to explain their reasoning, provide examples, and make connections between ideas. The open-ended nature of essays requires students to organize their thoughts and communicate them clearly in writing. From an instructor's perspective, essay exams reveal not just whether students have retained facts, but whether they comprehend broader themes and can apply what they've learned to new questions or scenarios. However, the benefits of essay exams come with challenges. Grading essays is much more time-intensive than scoring a multiple-choice test. With essays, instructors must carefully read each response, assess the accuracy and coherence of the arguments, and make judgements about the overall quality of the work. Given the effort required, essay exams sometimes comprise a smaller portion of a student's overall grade. Additionally, grading essays involves some level of subjectivity, no matter how analytical the grading rubric. Different graders may weigh components like content, structure, and writing style differently. To reduce inconsistency, many institutions require multiple graders or Normalized grading procedures for essay assessments.

Performance-based assessments are also used in college to measure student learning outcomes. Performance-based assessments require students to apply their knowledge and skills to complete a task or solve a problem [4]. For example, a performance-based assessment in a writing course might require students to write a persuasive essay or a research paper. Performance-based assessments can provide a more accurate measure of students' higher-order thinking skills and their ability to apply their knowledge to real-world situations [5]. However, performance-based assessments can be time-consuming to design and administer, and grading can be subjective, leading to potential inconsistencies among educators.

Performance assessments directly test students' ability to use their learning in authentic, real-world scenarios. Rather than memorizing facts or concepts for a test, students must

demonstrate mastery of skills by creating a product or presentation. For example, an engineering student may be tasked with designing a bridge to meet specific weight and durability requirements. Or a music student may be asked to practice and perform a challenging solo composition for their final exam. While time-intensive to develop, performance assessments give instructors a clear picture of how students would apply knowledge in professional settings. The open-ended format allows students to showcase skills in a manner suited to the task, rather than limiting them to preset options like multiple choice. However, the complexity of grading performance assessments can lead to subjectivity and inconsistency. Clear rubrics and structured criteria can help minimize bias, along with training graders to calibrate expectations. Ensuring reliable grading of performance assessments is essential for both students and institutions to have confidence in their value as measures of learning outcomes.

In addition to these assessment types, there are other methods that educators use to assess student learning outcomes in college. For instance, classroom participation and discussions can provide valuable insight into students' understanding and engagement with the material. Group projects and presentations can also provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to work collaboratively and communicate effectively.

4. Benefits and Drawbacks

Assessment has both benefits and drawbacks. One of the benefits of assessment is that it provides feedback to both students and educators. By assessing students' learning outcomes, educators can identify areas where students need additional support and adjust their teaching methods accordingly [6]. Additionally, students can receive feedback on their performance and adjust their study habits and learning strategies to improve their performance [7].

Assessment is a valuable tool for gauging student learning and tailoring instruction. Through various assessment strategies, instructors gain crucial insight into topics or skills that students have not sufficiently grasped. With this data, teachers can revisit difficult concepts using new approaches, provide additional resources for students needing more support, and adjust pacing or activities to ensure learning goals are met. Just as importantly, assessment gives students feedback on their own progress, strengths, and weaknesses. By reviewing graded tests, papers, or projects, students see how effectively they have understood course material and met expectations. They can adjust their study routines, seek help to fill gaps in knowledge, and improve their performance on future assessments. Ongoing assessment enables both teachers and students to make appropriate changes to optimize learning. However, if students become overly anxious or stressed by frequent assessment, it can hamper motivation. Balancing meaningful assessments with adequate preparation time and thoughtful feedback is key to maximizing the benefits of evaluating student progress.

Assessment also helps educators to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methods. By analyzing student performance on assessments, educators can identify areas where they need to improve their teaching methods and adjust their instruction accordingly [8]. This process of continuous improvement can lead to better student learning outcomes and increased student success.

In addition to gauging student progress, assessment provides valuable data for instructors to reflect on their own teaching practices. Evaluating patterns in class-wide strengths and weaknesses on assessments can reveal content areas where students consistently struggle. For example, if an exam question on a key concept is frequently missed, the instructor may need to re-teach the material using a different approach. Reviewing performance trends over time can indicate whether certain instructional strategies are succeeding or need revamping. Individual student scores can also shed light on the effectiveness of the teacher's methods for

differentiated instruction. Just as assessment aims to maximize student learning, it provides teachers with ongoing feedback for continuous improvement. However, utilizing assessment data effectively requires dedicating time to deeply analyze results, identify root causes of issues, and implement thoughtful solutions. When used meaningfully, assessment drives better teaching practices that address students' actual needs and provide the support necessary for their success. The ultimate goal is assessments that demonstrate students have mastered both content knowledge and skills that will serve them beyond the classroom.

However, assessment also has some drawbacks. One of the main drawbacks of assessment is that it can be stressful for students. Students may feel anxious and overwhelmed by the pressure to perform well on assessments, which can negatively impact their learning and well-being [9]. Additionally, assessment can take time away from other learning activities, such as hands-on projects, field trips, and experiential learning.

Another potential drawback of assessment is that it may lead to a narrow focus on testing and test preparation, rather than on broader learning outcomes. Educators may be tempted to "teach to the test," which can result in a narrow and shallow understanding of the material and fail to promote deep and meaningful learning [10].

The last drawback of assessments is that they can be overemphasized, leading educators to focus too much on test scores and not enough on other aspects of student learning. This can lead to a narrow focus on knowledge and skills that are easily measured, rather than on critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills that are more difficult to assess.

To mitigate the potential drawbacks of assessment, educators must balance the benefits and drawbacks of assessments and use them in conjunction with other learning activities. For instance, educators can use assessments as a tool to support student learning, rather than as the sole measure of student success. Additionally, educators can incorporate a variety of assessment types, such as performance-based assessments, group projects, and discussions, to provide a comprehensive measure of student learning outcomes.

5. Conclusion

Assessment is an essential part of education, particularly in college, where assessments are used to evaluate student learning outcomes and determine the effectiveness of teaching methods. There are many different types of assessments used in college, each with its own purpose and benefits and drawbacks. While assessments can be stressful and time-consuming, they provide valuable information about student learning and help educators to improve their teaching methods. By balancing the benefits and drawbacks of assessments, educators can ensure that assessments are used effectively to support student learning and success.

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