Journal Article Review 1

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Introduction to Education

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Abstract

This article concentrates on student and instructor perspectives on the quality of the same online course.
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One of my main educational interests is distance education and methods of improving the delivery and quality of online courses so that students get the same assistance and guidance from the online course that they do from a face-to-face course. This article concentrates on student and instructor perspectives on the quality of the same online course. The authors’ main idea is that instructors and students approach online courses differently, so each group’s perception of the quality of a course may be different.

Supporting Facts

One important point the authors make is that instructors need to change their “pedagogical approach” to accommodate the online environment. The authors state that instructors must transition from their role as “a knowledge transmitter” to their role as “a knowledge facilitator” (Shieh, Gummer, & Niess, 2008, p. 62). This puts the responsibility for learning the material on the student, while encouraging instructors to present materials in a way that facilitates learning. Another key point the authors stress is that online courses require more instructor time, interaction, and commitment “particularly in the areas of interacting online with students and assessing students’ learning outcomes” (Shieh, Gummer, & Niess, 2008, p. 62). As a result, instructors in an online environment need to set achievable expectations for themselves and their students and stick to those expectations (Shieh, Gummer, & Niess, 2008, p. 66). Another mention-worthy point in the article is the distinction between the “instructor’s intentional and actual teaching perspectives” and how a student’s experience in an online environment can drastically differ from the instructor’s experience. For this reason, course evaluations are essential for instructors who wish to continually implement changes that will assist students in understanding and assimilation of course materials.
Textbook Support or Other Readings

Chapter 11 of *Teaching today: An introduction to education* supports the idea of the teacher as a facilitator instead of “as a primary source of information” (Armstrong, Henson, & Savage, 2009, p. 290). The text also confirms that incorporating technology into the classroom takes countless hours (Armstrong, Henson, & Savage, 2009, p. 301), which supports the article’s assertion that online classes require an increased time commitment on the part of the instructor (Shieh, Gummer, & Niess, 2008, p. 62).

Bias, Faulty Reasoning, and/or Research Flaws

Although the article does present some interesting student feedback, because the class size was so small the number of respondents was also small, only four of nine students in the class participated in the research (Shieh, Gummer, & Niess, 2008, p. 63). The results could have been more conclusive if the authors had studied multiple classes with a larger sample of students. This may have been accomplished over several semesters rather than just one. It would have also been interesting to examine results from another instructor’s section of the course.

New Terms or Concepts

One term in this article that was confusing was “social constructionism”. The author’s mentioned that “The overarching theoretical stance for this research was social constructionism, which guided the identification of the research questions and the emerging perspectives of the instructor and students” (Shieh, Gummer, & Niess, 2008, p. 63). According to Dictionary.com this is a term used in sociology to describe “a school of thought pertaining to the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, and made into tradition by humans.” Another confusing term was “qualitative data.” According to BusinessDictionary.com qualitative data is “‘Soft’ data that approximates but does not measure the attributes, characteristics, properties, etc.,
of a thing or phenomenon. Qualitative data describes whereas quantitative data defines.”

**Recommendations**

This article would be useful for any instructor currently teaching or planning to teach a fully online or partially online course. The contrast between the instructor’s and students’ opinions can be enlightening and can assist instructors in organizing material for an online class. For education students who are interested in the practice of online education, this article would be useful in conveying the pitfalls that may be common in this type of instruction.
References


