An Examination of Instruction Type and Learning Outcomes in Sport Administration Courses

Megan Shreffler, University of Louisville
Jacob Shreffler, University of Louisville
James Weiner, Old Dominion University

Teaching/Learning - Teaching strategies/methods (Other)  Friday, June 8, 2018
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)  10:50 AM
Abstract 2018-183  Room: Sable A

The number of students enrolled in online courses continues to grow as reported by the Babson Survey Research Group. Results of the 2015 Online Report Card: Tracking Online Education in the United States study indicate the number of students taking online courses in the United States grew to 5.8 million nationally, with 28% of higher education students being enrolled in at least one online course (Online Learning Consortium, 2016). Of the 5.8 million students enrolled in online courses, 2.85 million were taking all of their courses online and 2.97 million were taking some, but not all, of their courses online. These figures represent a 3.9% increase in the number of students enrolled in online courses from the previous year (2014). The increase in the number of students enrolled in distance education courses marked the thirteenth consecutive year of growth. The growth in the number of students taking online courses is particularly noteworthy, as there has been a decline in the overall student enrollment numbers in higher education. The discrepancy between the increase in the number of students taking online courses and the decrease in the total number of students in higher education suggests the landscape of higher education is shifting (Online Learning Consortium, 2016).

Many benefits of the online classroom over the traditional classroom have been identified in previous research. Online courses are perceived to be either more difficult or equivalent in terms of difficulty to traditional classroom courses (Glover & Lewis, 2012). This is notable as some have questioned the quality of education provided in the online classroom. Previous research has shown online students expressed greater satisfaction, motivation, and academic autonomy than their counterparts enrolled in traditional classroom courses (Fillion, Limayem, Laferriere, & Mantha, 2009). The online classroom is also advantageous in that it does not require the students and the instructor to be in the same room, while simultaneously providing more consistent instruction and flexibility (Mansour & Mupinga, 2007). Furthermore, students are afforded the freedom to learn practically anytime and from any place regardless of geographic barriers (Angiello, 2010).

While there are clear advantages of the online classroom, there are also disadvantages that must be considered. For example, a study comparing the learning outcomes of an online course and a traditional course found significant differences in that the traditional classroom students received higher grades and had a lower dropout rate (Harris & Parrish, 2006). Furthermore, previous research has suggested that while online learning may be effective in some subject matters, in courses where problem solving is required (e.g., math and science courses), the traditional classroom may be preferred (Quillen, 2010). In another study comparing the outcome of post-test scores of students enrolled in a traditional classroom and those enrolled in an online classroom, students in the online section did not perform as well as students in the traditional classroom (Faux & Black-Hugest, 2000). The amount of work can also vary from the traditional classroom to the online classroom, as research has found online instructors assign more work to make up for the lack of in-person interaction (Glover & Lewis, 2012).

It is undeniable that there has been an increase in the number of students enrolled in online courses, necessitating a better understanding of the online classroom and the manners in which instructors are implementing instructional strategies to meet the learning objectives of their courses. Given the continued growth in the number of students taking online courses, it is important to examine the quality of education provided in the online classroom in terms of learning outcomes. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between instructional delivery method (online vs. traditional classroom) and the learning outcomes and satisfaction of students in selected Sport Administration courses. The following research questions guided this study.

RQ1: How do the motives for the selected class format relate to delivery method?
RQ2: How does delivery method relate to each type of engagement?

RQ3: How does delivery method relate to overall course satisfaction?

RQ4: How does delivery method relate to final grades?

RQ5: How does delivery method relate to Hallmark Assessment Task scores?

RQ6: How does delivery method relate to changes in content knowledge?

The research design for this study was a quasi-experimental design. The two groups within this study are students enrolled in traditional sport administration classes that meet in person and those that are enrolled in online sport administration classes that do not meet in person. The classes chosen for participation in this study include five classes that were offered both online and in-person. A total of ten sections were used. Two research phases will be used in order to analyze the effect of instruction type on course outcomes and satisfaction. The first phase, pre-intervention, included a survey instrument prior to the implementation of the intervention (the teaching of the class) as well as a course content knowledge exam. The second phase, post-intervention, will include a survey instrument following the implementation of the intervention as well as the course content knowledge exam.

Four survey instruments will be used to address the purpose of the study. The pre-test instruments include demographic items, motives for selecting the class format in which the student is enrolled, items to address the learning habits of participants, and a content knowledge test. The post-test instruments include demographic items, the Learning Environment Climate Questionnaire, items to address overall satisfaction with the course, and the same content knowledge exam used in the pre-test.

Although the research is ongoing (Phase II will take place in December 2017), Phase I yielded 250 completed surveys (N = 155 traditional; N = 95 online). Motives for choosing the class format that students chose were addressed through a likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The strongest motives for those enrolled in the online version of the classes included completing course work when convenient (M = 5.50), scheduling conflicts (M = 5.40), and conflicts with a job (M = 5.23). The strongest motives for those in the traditional classroom included learning better face-to-face (M = 5.85), enjoying being on campus (M = 5.32), and enjoying working with others in class (M = 5.00). When describing their learning habits, those enrolled in online classes had a lower mean (M = 4.03) with respect to putting forth the effort, compared to those in the traditional classroom (M = 4.26). Online learners, however, had higher means (M = 3.57; M = 3.66) in staying up on readings and looking over class notes than traditional learners (M = 3.49; M = 3.56). If selected for presentation, the research questions and analyses involved in answering the questions will be discussed in more detail at the conference.