AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ORAL PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CASE

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of students' assessment of the oral presentation assessment criteria being used in tutorials in the introductory marketing tutorials in a business school. The criteria contain 14 items of assessment under three headings, namely clarity (5 items), content (6 items) and format and structure (3 items). Three hundred eighteen completed questionnaires from the tutorials were received and analyzed. Factor analysis yielded four groups explaining 63.4% of total variances. ANOVA tests showed significant differences on 8 of the 14 items in relation to gender, age group and home country. Detailed analysis and implications are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Assessments of students' oral presentations have widely been used. Oral presentations are intended to broaden communication skills of students (McDowell 1995). Such skills are required by students in employment and will also influence their career development and will affect employers' views on the appropriateness of the business courses (Hughes and Large 1993; Adrian and Palmer 1999). Assessment criteria have widely been used in tutorials to enhance the quality of student learning in tutorials through the process of peer assessment (Orsmond, Merry and Reiling 2000). Peters (1996) writes that there was a considerable support for ensuring that the criteria by which assessment is undertaken were made public thus sharing the responsibility of assessment with learners. Pond and ul-Haq (1997) reiterated that based on three years of development and study over 150 students the result of the student feedback exercise shows that students considered the exercise to be effective for learning, group work and to have been "useful".

Dochy and McDowell (1997) indicate that while assessment in the past was used as a means to determine measures, today it has provided potential benefits in all stages of the learning process. According to the authors assessment can be in a form of portfolio, self- or peer-assessment. Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans (1999) suggest that assessment should take the form of self-, peer- or co-assessment. Peer assessment, is when groups of individuals rate their peers that may involve rating instruments or checklists designed by others before the peer assessment exercise (Falchikov 1995, Stanier 1997). Dochy, Segers and Sluijsmans (1999) identify a couple of guidelines that can be used for peer assessment. These are (a) peer assessment criteria should be presented in operational terms with which students are familiar, and (b) peer assessment can be used as a tool for summative assessment, in combination with other assessment instruments. Falchikov asserts that the overwhelming view of peer assessment is a useful, reliable and valid exercise perceived by students to be beneficial.

While cautioning in the introduction of innovative forms of summative assessment which involves elements of subjectivity Freeman (1995) suggests that by using past videos one can focus on a best and worst presentation to teach students how to mark more reliably. Although there may be some doubt about peer assessment as a summative form of assessment Orsmond, Merry and Reiling (1996) argue that as a formative assessment the process has some value and clear benefits to the student learning process may be gained from peer assessment. Searby and Ewers (1997) reiterate that peer assessment challenges the belief that the lecturer is necessarily the best person to provide feedback and that the introduction of peer assessment has had the beneficial effect of making students consider the whole learning process and their part in it.

THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study was to gauge students' opinions of the oral presentation assessment criteria being used in tutorial presentations in their introductory marketing unit. In October 1999 a one-page, 14-item questionnaires measuring the items' importance on a 7-point scale were distributed to students in their tutorials to be completed and returned at the end of the tutorial sessions. The items were grouped under three headings, namely, clarity, content, and format and structure. Demographic variables such as course of study, year of study, home country, gender and age were also included in the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 318 returned questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package (version 8) for Windows. Demographic results indicate that while 94% of all respondents are business schools the share of marketing students is 18%. Nine percent of respondents are in their first year of studies, 59% local students, 56% females and 66% are 20 years old or lower. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution.

TABLE 1 RESPONDENTS' PROFILES

Demographic Variables	Percent
Gender (n=312)	
Male	44
Female	56
Age group (n=312; mean age=21.02 years)	
17-20 years	66
21-25 years	23
26+ years	11
Major course of study (n=311)	
Accounting	2
Business Law	2
Economics & Finance	17
Information Systems & Technology	9
Management	14
Marketing	18
Commerce (general)	32
Other	6
Year of study (n=309)	
First year	79
Second year	15
Third year	6
Home country (n=300)	
Australia	59
Indonesia	10
Malaysia	6
Singapore	10
Other Asia	8
Other	7

On a 7-point scale from 1 'least important' to 7 'most important' all 14 items with the exception of item 11 (use of resources other than textbook, mean 4.829) showed a mean score above 5 ranging from 5.041 to 5.937. Item 2 (presenters speak clearly and can easily be heard topped the list with mean score of 5.937 followed by item 14 (overall organization, consistency, flow and effectiveness of presentation) with a mean score of 5.744. Each item score denotes the perceived importance attached to it by respondents for oral presentation assessment. Clearly, respondents perceive clarity of speech and organization, consistency, etc as most important in oral presentation. Conversely, respondents do not consider using resource materials other than textbook as important. The mean scores and ranks of the 14 items were presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2 IMPORTANCE SCORES OF ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Clarity	Mean*	Rank
Confidence, interest and enthusiasm of presenters.	5.58	4
Presenters speak clearly and can easily be heard.	5.94	1
Presentation is well rehearsed, not read from notes.	5.14	10
Presenters maintain eye contact with audience.	5.24	8
Presenters have positive body language.	5.13	12
Content		
Presentation includes a concise introduction and summary of topic	5.38	7
Presenters provide comprehensive answers to questions and support these with relevant theoretical concepts	5.65	3
Presentation includes a clear conclusion.	5.24	8
Presenters able to answer questions raised during and after presentation	5.43	6
Degree of creativity shown in presentation.	5.16	11
Use of resources other than textbook.	4.83	14
Format and structure		
OHP and other visual aids are clear and neat (eg. Large font, WP, etc.)	5.53	5
Time management of presenters.	5.04	13
Overall organization, consistency, flow and effectiveness of presentation.	5.74	2

*On a 7-point scale from 1 'least important to 7 'most important.

Factor Analysis

Kaiser-Myer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) statistic of .837, $\chi 2$=1400.79, df=91 (sig. 000) and Cronbach's alpha of .85 with factor loading of .30 were referenced to determine factorability of the items. According to Hair, et. al. 1998; Coakes and Steed 1999; Lehmann, Gupta and Steckel 1998 the MSA and Cronbach's alpha obtained were more than adequate for factor analysis. Four factors emerged - comprehension, visual aids, body language, and confidence. Sixty-three percent of total variances were explained by the four factors. The first factor, comprehension, with 4 items accounted for 34.9% of the variance. Factor 2, visual aids, with 4 items accounted for 12.4% of the variances. Factor 3, body language and Factor 4, confidence, with 3 items, each

accounted for 8.2% and 7.8% of the variances (Table 3).

TABLE 3 FACTOR LOADINGS

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Presenters provide comprehensive answers to questions and support these with relevant theoretical concepts Presentation includes a clear conclusion Presentation includes a concise introduction and summary of topic Presenters are able to answer questions raised during and after presentation	.668 .655 .615 .511			
OHP and other visual aids are clear and neat (eg. large font, WP). Time management of presenters Use of resources other than textbook Degree of creativity shown in presentation		.623 .614 .576 .411		
Presenters maintain eye contact with audience Presenters have positive body language Presentation is well rehearsed, not read from notes			.834 .676 .436	
Confidence, interest and enthusiasm of presenters Presenters speak clearly and can easily be heard. Overall organization, consistency, flow and effectiveness of presentation				.789 .584 .473
Eigenvalue	4.89	1.73	1.15	1.10
Variance explained (%)	34.93	12.36	8.24	7.83
Cumulative variance explained (%)	34.93	47.29	55.53	65.36
Cronbach's alpha	.75	.71	.77	.70

Assessment Items and Demographic Variables

ANOVA tests were run to determine statistically significant differences between demographic groups. Nine of the 14 items showed significant differences in relation to gender, age groups and home countries. Female respondents perceived importance of items 4, 13 and 14 were all higher than their male counterparts with higher mean scores on the 3 items.

The perceived importance of items 5,10 and 13 was less to 17-20 year-olds compared with other age group. The 21-25 year-olds perceive item 12's importance less than other age groups. While item 5 was less important to local students, students from Indonesia perceive items 6 and 7 less than the rest of respondents. Students from countries other than Australia or Asia give less importance to items 11 and 13. The F-values and significant levels are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4 SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BY DEMOGRAPHICS (F-value, significance)

Items	Gender	Age group	Home country
4. Presenters maintain eye contact with audience	6.974 (.009)		
5. Presenters have positive body language		3.859 (.022)	4.026 (.002)
6. Presentation includes a concise introduction and summary of topic			2.276 (.047)
7. Presenters provide comprehensive answers to questions and support these with relevant theoretical concepts			2.601 (.025)
10. Degree of creativity shown in presentation		4.168 (.016)	
11. Use of resources other than textbook			4.284 (.001)
12. OHP and other visual aids are clear and neat (eg. large font, WP, etc.)		4.597 (.011)	
13. Time management of presenters	3.981 (.047)	4.034 (.019)	2.583 (.026)
14. Overall organization, consistency, flow and effectiveness of presentation	4.996 (.026)		

Significant values are in parentheses.

Factors and Demographic Variables

ANOVA test revealed that all four factors recorded significant differences in relation to major course of study, age group and home country. Information Systems students' scores were significantly lower for Factor 4 (Confidence) compared with other students. The mean scores of 17-20 year-olds were significantly lower for Factor 2 (visual aids). On the other hand, respondents from Indonesia consistently recorded lower mean scores on Factors 1-3 compared with students from elsewhere on each of the three factors (Table 5).

TABLE 5 SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BY DEMOGRAPHICS (F-value, significance)

Factors	Mean scores ^	Course of study	Age group	Home country
Factor 1 (Comprehension)	5.43			2.491 (.031)
Factor 2 (Visual aids)	5.14		4.319 (.014)	2.706 (.021)
Factor 3 (Body language)	5.16			3.208 (.008)
Factor 4 (Confidence)	5.75	2.276 (.028)		

Significant values are in parentheses. *On a 7-point scale from 1 'least important to 7 'most important.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that students find the current assessment criteria important. All the 14 items were scored favorably, the least being "use of resources other than textbook". Statistically significant differences shown in 9 of the 14 items in relation to gender, age group and home country need attention. Attention should also be given to the factors that showed significant differences in relation to major course of study, age group and home country. Special attention should be given to the age group and home country demographics as these two variables repeatedly showed significant differences on both individual items as well as on factors. Students' rating of use of additional resources was low. The challenge to unit controllers and tutors would be to teach first year students the value of researching more sources than sticking to the recommended text.

While the result shows students' positive perception of the assessment criteria, caution should be exercised in the interpretation of results because of limited sample size. Further longitudinal survey of students from different years of study may produce more accurate information about students' perception of assessment criteria.

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