

USING SECONDARY DIRECT ASSESSMENT MEASURES TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

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Abstract

Many small schools (e.g., less than 50 students in a program) have difficulty collecting assessment data from a large enough sample size to ever have much confidence in their results. Published research on statistical power in assessment studies indicates that for some schools, it could take years to have enough data to make sound decisions (Bacon, 2004). Thus, for these schools, learning from their own measures will come in multi-year cycles, slowing the pace of effective innovation.

To overcome this problem, schools should make greater use of published studies (secondary data). Many business education journals, including *Journal of Marketing Education*, publish studies of student learning using direct measures that show evidence for the use of specific pedagogical techniques or curricular innovations. The only difference between these studies and a school's own assessment studies is that the study took place at a different school. By making better use of published studies, schools can accelerate improvements in business education.

This recommendation is analogous to a movement underway in health care. Rather than expecting doctors and nurses to conduct their own experiments in their own clinics, they are encouraged to become familiar with published studies, with larger samples and better controls, in order to identify and implement evidence-based best practices.

Short Term Activities

A group of business education researchers with strong ties to leading business education journals, including *Journal of Marketing Education*, *Marketing Education Review*, *Journal for the Advancement of Marketing Education*, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, and *Journal of Management Education* is now working on compiling a database of articles that use direct measures of learning. The editors of all these journals strongly support the effort. The database would start as a listing, by category and perhaps with very brief summaries, and article hyperlinks. For example, articles from *JME* would include work on reducing cramming to increase retention of learning (Bacon & Stewart, 2006; McIntyre & Munson, 2008), or papers that show how standardizing the first course in marketing can lead to greater retained knowledge later (Meuter, Chapman, Toy, Wright, & McGowan, 2009). We are hoping the AACSB would host this database on their website and to encourage schools to use these published studies as part of their Assurance of Learning (AoL) program.

Long-Term Opportunities

Medical professional associations (e.g., the Perioperative Nursing Association) often review and synthesize the literature to create "Evidence-Based Guidelines for Best Practice" (EBGBP) for specific situations. Down the road, AACSB, American Marketing Association, Marketing Educators' Association, or *Journal of Marketing Education* (just for some examples) could publish similar guidelines. For example, guidelines might be published for how best to manage student teams, or how best to improve written communication skills. As business education EBGBP's emerge, these guidelines could form the backbone of PhD level courses in teacher training.

Conclusion

As the AACSB now recognizes the importance of pedagogical research explicitly in its guidelines and AACSB has long recognized the importance of using direct measures of learning as evidence for program improvement, it is now time for educators and the AACSB to connect these dots and encourage the use of suitable pedagogical research to improve student learning. By so doing, the quality of business education can be enhanced substantially and the pace of innovation in business education accelerated.

References Available upon Request