Concept-Based Assignments Used as Study Guides: Facilitating Learners Input into Undergraduate Education

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Introduction

- Students often need assistance in guiding study for exams and a way to tie a vast amount of information together.
- Conceptual learning for the student experience, “is frustrating and overwhelming, fueled by excessive reading assignments, content processing, and memorization” (Giddens & Brady, 2005, p. 65).
Introduction

- Students frequently request homework or study guides
- Lecture and class discussions includes drawing and student interactions, showing them how to complete the assignments (although that is not what is told to them in the process)
- Moving toward learner-centered teaching will lead to greater success for students and increased job satisfaction for teachers (Wright, 2011).
Objectives

To provide a student-centered instructional method to improve understanding of the conceptual approach to teaching and be a self-examination of knowledge obtained through lecture and class-activities.
Materials & Methods

- Four assignments were developed as study guides to be completed during off-class time, and submitted on the day of the exam.
- Using a conceptual approach, assignments were created based on material covered in the units-exemplars of concepts.
- Charts and Venn diagrams were developed as a guide.
Students were required to use all resources to complete diagrams.
Minimal instruction was provided to complete the assignments.
Discussion during class time led to examples of ways to complete assignments.
Completion of assignments became increasingly complicated over the semester.
Survey Questions

- Questions designed to gain a better understanding of students perceptions of the assignments
- Determining usefulness of the assignments
  - Did not intend to continue use if unhelpful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1 Not at all</th>
<th>2 A little bit</th>
<th>3 OK</th>
<th>4 Good</th>
<th>5 Super</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The assignments helped me study for the exams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assignments helped guide me to narrow focus on materials presented in class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assignments helped me clarify topics that were confusing or unclear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing and contrasting helped me differentiate between disease processes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I better understand the exemplars that describe the concepts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assignments were specifically related to the overall concepts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can translate the course information from class into completing the assignment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The details provided on the assignment provided adequate instruction for completion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I appreciate the assignments being calculated into my overall grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be able to utilize information learned from this class into other nursing courses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data & Results

Students were surveyed after completion of at least 3 of the 4 assignments. Data was collected for 2 semesters, Fall 2014 (n=39) and Spring 2015 (n=51).

- An increase from 45% to 59% of the students thought important aspects of the assignment were “super”.
- The 10% drop in the “great” category shifted to the increased receptiveness of the assignment.
- An increase in student clarification is seen through use of the study guides in the Spring, as well as an increased perception in transfer of knowledge to other courses.
Students Assessment on Assignments - Fall 2014

- 7% Not at All
- 3% A Little Bit
- 0.8% OK
- 44% Good
- 45% Super

Students Assessment on Assignments - Spring 2015

- 6% Not at All
- 1% A Little Bit
- 0% OK
- 34% Good
- 59% Super
Conclusion

- Student response to the “study-guide” based assignments was overwhelmingly positive.
- Comments from students reveal better understanding of the student perspectives, applicability in other courses, and help in focusing material to study for exams.
- Guiding students’ studying without being prescriptive creates opportunity for critical thinking and consolidation of important information.
- Open-ended instruction increases generation of knowledge self-assessment.
Implications

- Creating student-centered guides generates more student input and critical thinking.

- Producing a greater understanding of concepts and exemplars and how they fit into a conceptual-based approach to teaching is imperative to student knowledge.

- Encouraging the use of tools in clinical courses can assist in content focus (Giddens, et al., 2008). Concept-based assignments using exemplars can further tie the classroom to clinical experiences.

- Use of concept-based assignments can also tie course together within level of curriculum, adding another dimension of understanding between curriculum courses.
Ideas?

Venn diagrams
Pictures & charts
Concept bingo
Playing HOUSE
WIN, LOSE, or DRAW...
Case studies
Tic-Tac-Concept
