Hybrid Off-campus Weekend Program: What do the students prefer?

Statement of the problems

There are growing numbers of the off-campus students (undergraduate and graduate) in the Adult and Career Education programs that are pursuing education in the weekend format. Due to the nature of the format, in which, students meet in three weekends, it appears that students’ class performance are significantly influenced by the class block (i.e. Friday evening, Saturday morning, and Saturday afternoon). The inconsistency of performances has long been noticed by the faculty in this program, however, no scientific study were conducted to understand what can be done and how it should be done differently in their teaching strategy to maximized the students’ learning processes.

The purpose of this study is to understand how students with different demographic backgrounds are affected by the commonly utilized learning strategies in this form of education format. Also important in this study is to understand how the introduction of hybrid courses (a combination of face-to-face and online) can improve students overall performance. The results of this study can be used for the development of more appropriate teaching strategy(ies) for the benefit of the students who preferred this format of education.

Procedures

Population.

Participants of this study were solely selected form three off-campus locations that offered undergraduate and graduate programs in Adult and Career Education. The participants were students in the program and were taking classes in one of the three semesters (Fall 2002, Spring 2003, and Summer 2003) when this study was conducted.

A total of 110 participants involved in this study and no effort was made to group the participants according to the location where they took the classes. The main reasons for not grouping them were: (1) the three off-campus locations were military bases (Albany Marine Base, Kings Bay Naval Base, and Moody Air Force Base); (2) the composition of the participants was the same (military personnel, civilian, adults, the program were conducted and supervised by the same institution; (3) the study was focused on the commonalities of the three locations rather than their differences; and (4) only classes that were supervised and coordinated by the Adult and Career Education Department were included in this study.

Instrument.
A questionnaire was developed based on four studies that were conducted earlier and modifications were made in the questions to suit the needs of this study, program, location and format. Two set of questions were posed to the participants: Questions in Set I asked participants to complete their demographic information; and Questions in Set II asked the participants to complete the questions that addressed their inferential data. A total of 18 questions were posed in Set I and four questions in Set II.

Analysis

Kendall’s Coefficient of Concordance and Chi Square were the statistical analysis tools used for the study. These tools were employed to understand the preferences selected by the participants that would help them maximized their learning process. Kendall’s Coefficient of Concordance was used to analyze the rankings made by the participants and Chi Square was used to determine that the rankings made participants were not related to each other. And, Discrete Multivariate analysis approach was used to show the relationships between the selected factors in demographic data and some of the selected inferential data.

Results

The results of the Kendall W statistic when computed to a Chi Square values were found to be statistically significant. There were strong relationships among the individual participants on their responses. Also, there were significance relationships between the demographic and inferential data on the selected factors.

Some of the important findings and conclusions

- The students ranked discussion as their most preferred medium of class interaction that would contribute and maximized their learning.
- The students considered hand-outs that were given by faculty as important as the textbooks for the classes
- The most preferred teaching delivery was through digital media (i.e. powerpoints and something similar)
- The participants strongly recommended that attendance/participation to be considered for grading purposes.
- About 68% of the students of the program came from the areas which were less than one hour of travel time from where the classes were located
- About 61% of the participants were full-time students despite that they have full-time job and were married.