Direct and Indirect Assessment Methods

OUTLINE

- Definition of Key Terms
- Distinctions
- Examples
- Advantages and Disadvantages
- Exercises

Definition of Key Terms

- Assessment Methods
- Direct Methods
- Indirect Methods
- Unobtrusive Measures
- Qualitative versus Quantitative Methods

Definition of Assessment Methods

- Assessment methods (also called techniques or instruments) include both direct and indirect approaches.
- A further distinction that may be made is between quantitative methods that rely on numerical scores or ratings and qualitative methods that rely on descriptions rather than numbers.

Definition of Direct Methods

- Direct evidence of student performance or attainment relies upon direct scrutiny or examination of student performance or attainment - either for individual students or for representative samples of students
- These methods allow you to collect the evidence of student learning or achievement directly from students and the various work they submit to you (assignment, exam, term paper, and etc.)

Examples of Direct Methods

- Faculty-designed comprehensive or capstone examinations and assignments
- Performance on licensing or other external examinations
- Professionally judged performances or demonstrations of abilities in context
- Portfolios of student work compiled over time
- Samples of representative student work generated in response to typical course assignments.

Definition of InDirect Methods

- Indirect evidence of student achievement requires that faculty infer actual student abilities, knowledge, and values rather than observe direct evidence of learning or achievement.
- Indirect methods provide the perspectives of students, faculty or other people who are concerned with the course or program or institution, such as alumni.

Examples of Indirect Methods

- student satisfaction surveys
- job placement rates
- focus groups, or interviews
- graduation rates
- self-reported gains

Definition of Unobtrusive Measures

- These are methods that involve keeping records or the observation of students' use of facilities and services.
- Data from these methods can be correlated with test scores and/or course grades
- Example: Logs maintained by students documenting time spent on course work, interactions with faculty and other students, nature and frequency of library use

Qualitative versus Quantitative Methods

- Qualitative assessment: collects data that does not lend itself to quantitative methods but rather to interpretive criteria
- Quantitative assessment: collects data that can be analyzed using quantitative methods

Advantages

Direct Methods

- Require students to demonstrate knowledge
- Provide data that directly measure achievement of expected outcomes

Indirect Methods

Ask students to reflect on their learning provide clues about what could be assessed directly easy to administer particularly useful for ascertaining values and beliefs

Disadvantages of Indirect Methods

- provide only impressions and opinions, not hard evidence
- returns are usually low
- take time to carry out
- Imited number of respondents
- may tell you what they think you want to hear

A BRAIN-STORMING EXERCISE

- Think about one course you teach or a function you perform, write three expected course outcomes (or functional objectives) for this course or function.
- Example: Finish the following sentence:
- At the end of this course the students should be able to --- or
- The Student Testing Center will expand its computer-based testing service.

Instructions: List and classify as Direct (D) or Indirect (I) the Assessment Methods/Tools that you currently use and then specific outcomes /objectives it is targeted to measure.

| Assessment Methods/Tools | Outcomes Targeted |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Writing Portfolio (D) | Communication Skills |
| | |
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| | |

Summary Examples of Direct and Indirect Methods

| Direct | Indirect |
|---|--|
| Tests, Exams (Final Qualifying, and Comprehensive), Essays, | Surveys, Interviews |
| Presentations, Portfolios Dissertations, Exhibitions, | Student Ratings of Their Knowledge and Skills and Reflections |
| Classroom Assignments | Focus Groups |
| "Capstone" Experiences (Research Projects, Theses,, Oral Defenses, or Performances Scored Using a Rubric) | Placement Rates of Graduates Into Appropriate Career Positions and Starting Salaries |

Summary Examples of Direct and Indirect Methods Continued

Direct

- Scores and pass rates on appropriate licensure/ certification exams (e.g., Praxis, NLN) or other published tests (e.g., Major Field Tests)
- Employer ratings of employee skills
- Summaries/analyses of electronic discussion threads
- Ratings of student skills by field experience supervisors

Indirect

- Quality/reputation of graduate and four-year pro-grams into which alumni are accepted
- Placement rates of graduates into appropriate career positions and starting salaries
- Voluntary gifts from alumni and employers
- Alumni perceptions of their career responsibilities and satisfaction