

TLC Retention Study Results

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Having read several articles about retention for college students, I have become interested in the use of a derivative of the pretest. The basis of this study will be the use of a Knowledge Survey and the measure of its usefulness and effectiveness from the perception of students. This concept is explained in a website article by Dr. Ed Nuhfer, Idaho State University as presented at Honolulu Community College August 2005.

The concept of Knowledge Survey is based on the pretest-posttest measures of success. The knowledge survey differs in the pretest phase in that it does not ask for specific answers of the objective questions. Instead each student is asked to assess their own confidence level with respect to each question. Responses for each question are represented with responses such as "I could answer this," "I could find the answer to this in 10 minutes," "I could not answer this," etc... the content of the knowledge survey questions should be the same content for the posttest (such as a quiz, chapters, or a final exam). This may include precisely the same questions on both documents. Or it may use variations in wording of the same content. For this survey I will use precisely the same questions on both documents.

My hope is that this study will assess the effectiveness of knowledge surveys in both effectiveness of teaching as well as the ability of a knowledge survey to help retain students in a given course. The retention issue would be based on the students understanding of what is important and relevant in the course. Thus preventing the student from feeling "lost" in considering it a futile effort. The measure of these objectives will be assessed by surveying the students in their perceptions of the helpfulness and effectiveness of the knowledge survey.

The survey I intend to submit to students would offer questions intended to measure the perceived benefits they gained by use of the knowledge survey. The knowledge survey itself is not limited as a tool to identify specifically what will be learned in the course or coming classes, but also as a study guide and outline of the class content. In this study it will be important to measure the perception of benefit to the student. I believe this tool could act as a sectional outline of the course not unlike the course syllabus. However this knowledge survey tool for the purpose of this study would be limited to just two to three chapters giving the student a better understanding of what to expect in each class. Also, if well written, the survey would be an interactive tool that perks up the students' interest in the course and acts as a path showing the student exactly what will be learned and tested at the conclusion of the section.

Assessment of the effectiveness of the knowledge survey will utilize a forced choice questionnaire. The questionnaire statements will be based on a number five point Likert score and adapted from another research article "Implementing Small-Group Activities

in Large Lecture Classes".¹ Specifically the questionnaire will include the following statements 1) "I used the knowledge survey to help me study for this class." 2) "This survey helped me learn more than I would have without it". 3) "This survey kept me interested in the content of the section/chapter". 4) "This survey helped me identify the key issues and important concepts of the section/chapter". 5) "I would like to have this type of guide for each chapter or section."

Results

The questionnaire results indicate that a disappointing number of students utilize the knowledge survey as a study guide. The knowledge survey was administered to three separate classes of BADM 114 Introduction to Business in the spring of 2008. Each of these three classes was taught by the same instructor and the same survey was presented to each student. Furthermore each student was asked to complete two surveys each covering two chapters discussed in the course (total of four chapters within two surveys). The first survey collected data from 40 students and the second survey collected data from 35 students. It is important to note that the results of the knowledge survey itself in comparison with test score results are not important to this study. The purpose of this study was to determine the students' perception of the helpfulness or effectiveness of the knowledge survey.

Students' perception on usefulness of knowledge survey

Of the 40 students participated in the knowledge survey 27 completed the questionnaire portion. Of those 27 students 33% disagreed with the statement "I use the knowledge survey to help me study for this class". Another 33% were neutral on this statement and the remaining 33% indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

I used the knowledge survey to help me study for this class.	
Count 1s	0
Count 2s	9
Count 3s	9
Count 4s	6
Count 5s	3
	27
Percent Question 1s	0%
Percent Question 2s	33%
Percent Question 3s	33%
Percent Question 4s	22%
Percent Question 5s	11%
	100%

Arguably the individuals that rated this question agreement as neutral could be considered as in agreement because the question is positively phrased. In other words

¹ Ani Yazedjian and Britany Boyle Kolkhorst. "Implementing Small Group Activities in Large Lecture Classes", College Teaching, Volume 55, #4, Fall 2007 page 164 169

the students did not disagree with the fact that they used the knowledge survey to study. Subsequently 66% of the students did use the surveys for study purposes. For consideration of the remainder of the questions, I will look at this population.

Question 2: "The survey helped me learn more than I would have without it"
50% of the students had used the survey as a study tool agreed or strongly agreed that the survey helped the student learn more than they would have without the survey. While only 6% of the students indicated that it did not help them learn more. Remaining 44% identified being neutral on this issue.

Question 3: "The survey kept me interested in the content of the section/chapter"
The results of question three were virtually identical of question 2 in terms of percentages. This may simply show a link between students interested in the content and their ability/willingness to learn.

Question 4: "The survey helped me identify the key issues and important concepts of the section/chapter" question for results indicated 72% indicated either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This particular result is not surprising. Considering that the concept of the knowledge survey is based on the quiz and test material, students are very quick to link these elements. It is also worth noting that 0% of the students that utilize the knowledge survey to help study for the class indicated disagreement. 28% of the respondents indicated neutral on this issue.

Question 5: "I would like to have this type of guide for each chapter or section".
Statement five registered the highest "strongly agree" percentages. 39% strongly agree with this statement. An additional 33% agreed with the statement and while 22% were neutral. It is interesting to point out that 6% disagreed with the statement.

Conclusions

I believe two primary ideas can be concluded from this study. First of all and most importantly students believe that the knowledge survey helped the students identify the key issues of each chapter. It seems students have a difficult time identifying what information they should focus on within a chapter of the textbook. Question for address this issue directly. Results of 72% of the students agreed that the survey helped identify key issues and important concepts would indicate that this tool should be continued to be used.

The second important idea would be that 50% of the students learned more and were more interested in learning the material. Again, indicating that the use of this tool should be continued in the classroom.

Lastly, I think that in a specific course the application of this tool would provide greater usefulness as the semester moves on. As students get familiar with the tool and how the tool will help them study, I think the effectiveness as well as the appreciation of the tool will grow.