Conceptual Interview

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In today’s pressure filled educational system it especially important for students to actively taken part in their education. It is not enough for students to passively absorb information presented to them by instructors and then regurgitate it back on tests or quizzes. In order to help find a way to make learning more interactive I am studying the effectiveness of Immediate Feedback Devices (IFDs) on both student achievement and motivation. As one of methods of assessing student motivation, I will be conducting interviews with students. As practice for the “real” interviews that will come at the end of my research period, I interview two of my students about different types of review activities.

Both students, S and J, were asked about previous science coursework experience and then what types of review activities their previous science teachers have used to prepare for tests. Both students have taken both biology and earth science prior to chemistry so their responses were quite often very similar. Both J and S have used various forms of review sheets, Jeopardy like review games, study guides and flashcards. The differences that did occur were in their opinions of the various review activities used in science classes.

S thought that the Jeopardy type games were the most fun, while J thought that the clickers (IFDs) were the most fun. S said that Jeopardy provided a way to “to test your knowledge against other kids in the same environment and be able to see the results of that.” For him he liked the competitive nature of review Jeopardy and other Jeopardy like review activities, because he said that it motivated him to know the material. At the same time he said that “my favorite I would think is the Jeopardy activity, but I believe the most productive one is the review sheets.” When asked why he said that when doing
a review sheet he is “accountable to himself only and not a group.” What made the review sheets work better for S was the process that he had to go through in order to complete the activity. He described the process that he goes through to answer a question as the following:

First I would go to my notes or my warm-ups and I would read you know, off the sections on the plum pudding model and it was written by Thomson and the answer’s usually written in the notes somewhere. If its not then I would open a book and then find the answer in the book there. For some of the other questions where it involves the elements and atomic numbers and elements and orbitals I would use the periodic table.

This part of the interview was encouraging because it means that S is showing some improvement in his study habits from the beginning of the year.

J, on the other hand, felt that the clickers were the both the most fun and the most productive. When he was asked why he felt this way he responded with:

Instead of the typical jeopardy where you get into a group and find the answer and then you tell the answer, you’re testing yourself. You think about it yourself. You aren’t getting answers form other people. It’s your input instead of others input.

As is evident from the above quote J feels that the individual accountability is more important and beneficial for him than the group focus of Jeopardy activities. Even when he does review sheets, which could hold individual accountability, he would “ask the person next to [him] first” when he comes across a difficult question. This, I believe, is one of the reasons that he likes the clickers. He not only has the individual accountability, but also finds the correct answer immediately, which allows him to “later on look it up and see why [he] made that mistake.”
Overall it was rather interesting to see how these students who are typical chemistry students, like to review. While both, chose different favorite review activities, they both highlighted the same reason for choosing them.