Student Learning Objective #3: Research Skills

Marc W. Stephenson

California State University, Northridge
Student Learning Objective (SLO): Research Skills by designing and conducting research ethically and effectively and presenting their findings at a professional level in oral and written forms.

Description of assignment: The assignment was to develop and perform an action research project. For my project I studied the effects of immediate feedback devices on student motivation as well as the effects of immediate feedback devices on student achievement. Upon completion of the project I wrote a paper explaining my reasons for performing this research, my methodologies, my findings and discussion based upon these findings.

Connection to SLO: The action research project was the embodiment of this SLO. In order for me to complete the project I had to design my own project, conduct my own research and the present the findings through a research paper, a poster day, and through in class presentations.

Reflection on learning and teaching: This one assignment probably taught me more about my own learning and teaching than anything else during the masters program. When I began the action research process approximately fourteen months ago, I had just begun the process of analyzing research to decide if it was “good” research. Though I knew what to look for, it wasn’t until I was faced with the task of choosing good research articles for my own literature review that I realized how difficult the challenge ahead of me was. Only through a rigorous process of trial and error was I able to decipher truly good research from research that was not performed properly. Without the hours of reading that I performed I would not know how to read and understand educational research.
There are many ways that performing my own action research affected my teaching. Firstly, the research involved the use of immediate feedback devices (IFDs) which were some new technology that I had just obtained. I was implementing their use for the first time during my study period. The background research I performed for my literature review influenced my implementation of the IFDs, in what I hope was a positive manner. Without the research provided the implementation would have most likely been haphazard at best.

Another way that the research affected my teaching was based upon the findings of my study. Though the research I read provided me with a strong basis for my preliminary implementation of the IFDs. After performing my study I now have a new plan for the future implementation. I was originally trying to use the IFDs mostly as a review tool to prepare students for the end of chapter assessments. In the future I plan to use them as a formative assessment tool to help me understand where my students are having difficulty and to help me focus my re-teaching in appropriate on appropriate material.