

A Comparison of Teacher Self-Perceptions and Observed Classroom Instruction

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Introduction

The AP Challenge Program, under the direction of Drs. Callahan and Hertberg-Davis, is looking for an intervention to increase minority student success on AP exams. One aspect of the study is to evaluate teachers' awareness of their own instructional practice.

Theoretical Framework

■ A study on English classrooms found that there appears to be a discrepancy between what teachers think is happening in their classrooms and what they actually do in practice. (Squire, & Applebee, 1966).

■ Teachers do not have the proper training to evaluate their own classroom behavior (Hook, & Rosenshine, 1979).

■ Koziol and Burns (1986) found a higher agreement between an observer and teacher self-report when teacher self-report was done after instruction, the teachers knew the observational time frame, and the observations had a focus.

■ Teachers do not accurately report how much time they spend on a particular practice such as lecture, group work, and textbook work (Mayer, 1999).

Rationale

■ Since the 1960's the literature has shown a lack of agreement between a teacher's actual instruction and observed instruction.

■ However, past studies focus on general education teachers. One population of teachers has yet to receive much attention: gifted teachers.

■ Due to the need of further research on gifted teachers, this study will look at the self-perceptions of Advanced Placement teachers and compare those perceptions to the observed classroom behavior.

Research Questions

1. What is an AP teacher's self-perception of her instructional output?
2. Furthermore, do these perceptions align with his observed classroom instruction?
3. Are there any differences between the self-perceptions and observed instruction?
4. If there is a discrepancy between perception and observed instruction, how does that impact minority student success in an AP class and on the AP exam?

Methods

Participants

- 24 Advanced Placement high school teachers from an urban school district in a large mid-Atlantic state.
 - 10 male teachers
 - 14 female teachers

- The AP subjects taught:
 - Biology
 - Chemistry
 - English Language
 - English Literature
 - Environmental Science
 - European History
 - Government
 - Human Geography
 - Psychology
 - U.S. History

Procedure

■ Six high schools from the school district were identified as meeting the criteria for significant minority and low income students. Of the six schools, three were randomly assigned the "intervention group".

■ The treatment school principals identified teachers who teach AP courses that attract the largest population of minority and low-income students and invited them to participate.

■ Interested teachers were invited to attend an informational meeting regarding the study. Those who were interested in participating after the informational meeting were given consent forms to be read and signed.

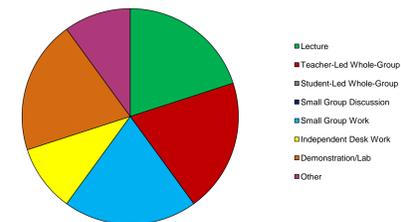
■ During the week-long AP Challenge Summer Program at the University of Virginia, six observers spent the week reporting teacher instruction. We observed approximately 35 hours of instruction.

Measures

- A classroom observation protocol (adapted from Maker & Nielson, 1996)
 - The first part of the protocol involved a description of the classroom setup and the lesson objectives.
 - The second part used classroom observation notes to score learning, content, product, and assessment.
- An online survey was created using Survey Monkey
 - Questions were aligned to observation protocol and asked about teacher's instructional practices and demographics.
 - Teachers identified their AP subject, so they will be looked at as a subject groups rather than individually.

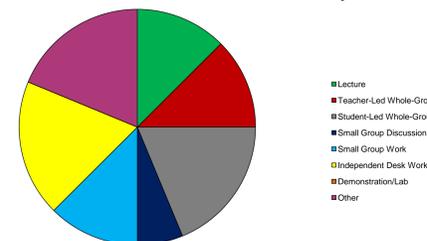
Preliminary Results

Observed Instructional Methods in AP Chemistry/Environmental Science



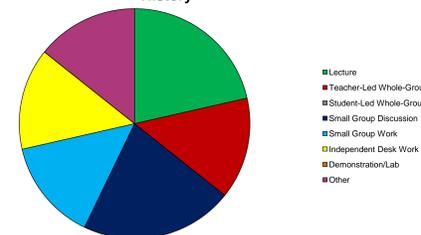
- In the three one-hour long observations AP Chemistry/Environmental Science was observed, lecture, teacher-led whole-group instruction, small group work, and demonstrations were the most used forms of instruction in the classroom.
- Student-led whole-group and small group discussion instruction was not observed, so teachers are expected to rank these as lowest used on the teacher questionnaire.

Observed Instructional Methods in AP U.S. History



- In the three one-hour long observations AP U.S. History was observed, student-led whole-group, independent desk work, and other (presentations, press conference simulation, and Q&A with teachers) were the most used methods of instruction.
- Demonstrations were not observed, so we would expect AP teachers to answer accordingly on the teacher questionnaire.

Observed Instructional Methods in AP European History



- In the three one-hour long observations AP European History was observed, lecture and small group discussion were the most used methods of instruction.
- Demonstrations and student-led whole-group instruction were not observed, so we would expect these AP teachers to rank these two methods as lowest usage in the teacher questionnaire.

Discussion

■ We would expect to find some disagreement between the observer and teacher based on the prior literature on this topic (Squire, & Applebee, 1966; Mayer, 1999)

■ Possible limitations from the investigation include the observation collection process (some AP classes were observed more than others) and the possible differences in observer perspectives of the classroom.

■ As cited by Koziol & Burns (1986), students can also be as accurate, if not even more precise, as observers when it comes to reporting classroom interactions.

■ Future work could involve AP students' reports of their AP teachers' instructional practices which can then be compared to observers' reports.

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