

Chapter 32

Predictors of Instructional Strategy Use of Faculty in Career and Technical Education Programs: Signature Pedagogies of the Field

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to identify potential signature pedagogies in the field of CTE as well as specific disciplines within CTE, and to explain instructional strategy use by faculty's demographic characteristics, course delivery modes, and academic discipline. Based on a national survey of CTE faculty teaching at the postsecondary level, this study found faculty which teach in family and consumer sciences education are significantly more likely to use authentic reflective assessments; Engineering and technology education faculty are significantly more likely to implement knowledge acquisition activities; career and workforce education faculty are significantly more likely to infuse online activities in their courses; and business and/or marketing education faculty are significantly more likely to integrate research, group and discussion-based, knowledge acquisition, and online activities. Findings point to a need for faculty to continue considering alternatives pedagogies which create more engaged courses and maximize student learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Similar to other academic fields, academicians in the field of career and technical education as well as the more specific disciplines within the field (for example, business education), are charged with responsibilities to engage in teaching, research, and service, especially for those seeking to be promoted and tenured. Increasingly, institutes of higher education are prioritizing research to be of utmost importance given its connection to prominence and prestige of universities' as well as faculty's reputations within their professions. Despite this trend, Boyer (1990) published a book entitled *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, which discussed a need to re-establish university priorities with the premise that both teaching and research should be given equal recognition and reward. His notion of academic work was to divide scholarship into four domains: the scholarship of teaching, the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of integration. In this vein, scholarship would be perceived as not only faculty's expertise in their field, but would also extend to how students learn and connect with content. Johnson (1998) wrote, "teaching, according to Boyer, was not simply a matter of dissemination but of scholarship, transforming and extending knowledge by a process of classroom debate and a continual examination and challenging of both content and pedagogy" (p. 253).

Some research studies have commenced with the goal of uncovering the black box of teaching and learning in higher education courses with regard to examining the instructional strategies faculty use in various academic fields and disciplines (Donald, 1985, 2002). Along this line, a national survey of instructional methods used in teaching undergraduate economic courses (Watts & Becker, 2008) and a study of teaching techniques used across disciplines in university classrooms (Lammers & Murphy, 2002) are perhaps the best illustrative examples of such studies. Since Shulman's (2005) introduction of the term "signature pedagogies" (the unique pedagogies associated with specific academic fields), there is increasing interest in the identification of these signature pedagogies in various academic sectors such as humanities, fine arts, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics (Gurung, Chick, Haynie, & Ciccone, 2009).

However, limited studies have examined the pedagogical approaches CTE faculty, including CTE teacher educators, prefer to use within their individual classrooms (McCaslin & Parks, 2001). In addition, many different reasons underlie faculty members' selection of specific instructional strategies. For example, several instructional strategies are better suited for courses with small numbers of students enrolled, while other instructional strategies can be equally effective in courses with large number of students. Similarly, several strategies might be better suited for introductory courses, while other strategies might be used more productively to teach advanced undergraduate courses. There are, however, only a few studies that have examined these issues.

Csapo and Wilson's (2001) research with 90 faculty members who teach undergraduate business courses explored the factors that influence faculty members' decisions to select specific instructional strategies for the classes they teach. Their findings suggest the most important factors influencing their selection of instructional strategies include (1) subject matter (30%), (2) class size (21%), and (3) amount of material to be covered (19%). Only a few of the faculty surveyed expressed the view that they select instructional methods to best serve students' interests (12%). Another study attempting to identify the predictors of faculty use of active learning is a national survey of 162 public relations instructors by Lubbers and Gorcyca (1997). They investigated participants' demographic characteristics as potential predictors for the use of active learning strategies. The demographic characteristics investigated in their study included age, gender, highest academic degree, years of college-level teaching, and academic

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