



SoTL

Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

Increasing Students Engagement of Assigned Readings using the 3-2-1 Technique

What is this Research About?

An increasing problem that university instructors are facing is a lack of preparedness amongst students. Recent studies found that only 20 to 40% of students read the assigned texts and show up to class ready to participate. Although a simple solution may be to lessen the academic load for students, past studies indicate that high standards and expectations with readings and assignments lead to a deeper understanding of the course and material. Previous solutions have involved incorporating techniques such as weekly quizzes. However, studies have shown that quizzes encourage more surface-level learning rather than deep-rooted understanding and retention of course material. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate new ways to increase students' engagement, specifically their engagement with the assigned reading material.

What did the Researchers Do?

In order to increase engagement of course readings, the researchers incorporated the 3-2-1 Reading Assignment technique into sociology courses. The researchers instructed the students to complete a written assignment consisting of three components. First, they were required to summarize the readings within **three** to five sentences. Next, the students were required to reflect thoughtfully and expand their thoughts on **two** points, (one convincing and one problematic point). Finally, the students were asked to pose **one** question that could be used for classroom discussions. After each assignment was submitted, the professor or teaching assistants provided feedback on the application of critical thinking skills, demonstration of knowledge, and the construction of informative questions. The researchers scored students' 3-2-1 Readings Assignments using a grading rubric, to determine if reading comprehension increased over the course of the semester.

What did the Researchers Find?

Researchers found that students' scores on the 3-2-1 Reading Assignment increased over the course of the semester. These results suggest that prior to completing the 3-2-1 Reading Assignments, the average student had only mediocre reading comprehension and often misdirected their focus on unimportant aspects of the text. Over the course of the semester, students' scores in all 3 areas (i.e., summary, analysis of the material, and generation of discussion questions) improved. Surprisingly, researchers also found that the students had the most problems with the summary section throughout their assignments rather than the analysis section. Problems with the summary section indicate that the biggest problem lies with the understanding of the reading itself, rather than difficulties with the critical thinking aspect.

➔ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Instructors can implement this research in their classrooms by adapting some of their pre-existing lesson plans to incorporate technology where appropriate. Educational videos can be used to explain complex scenarios instead of readings, promoting reflections of class content such as by implementing weekly graded blog activities or self-reflections, and interacting with students anonymously during class to promote activities such as real time polls or live quizzes. Fostering an environment of judgement-free engagement through technology-nested course materials reduces the effort required on a student's part and makes courses more enjoyable. Reflective blogs from the student's perception are especially effective in holding students accountable for relating the course material to their studies.

➔ Citation

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➔ Keywords

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