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On the Possibility of Visualizing and Minimizing Student Disappointment

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Content :

In recent years student satisfaction surveys have become increasingly popular in universities. Whether this gain in popularity is because students themselves know best when they are learning, or whether it is because universities merely wish to ensure that they have satisfied customers, is still a matter of debate. Nevertheless, the importance of student satisfaction surveys in universities is undeniable, and consequently it is of interest to understand the most important contributing factors to student satisfaction, or equivalently to student disappointment. By induction, based on our own teaching experience, we have made the following bold postulate: Students will be least disappointed in courses where they perform equally well in all aspects of the course that are assessed. Conversely, students will be most disappointed in courses where they perform very differently in two or more assessments of the course. In science courses, for example, there are typically four different assessments: a practical, three or four assignments, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Although the above hypothesis remains untested in this preliminary work, some of its consequences will be explored through the visualisation of assessment data gathered at the University of Victoria, Canada. In this talk a new way of visualizing and understanding the various components of the assessment data will be presented. The visualisation is constructed to be consistent with the above hypothesis. A concrete example of how the visualization may be used in a modern university setting, the problem of adjusting marks is considered. Such mark adjustments are apparently necessary to increase throughput rates. In this case it is shown that the visualization may be used to achieve an optimized adjustment which both increases the throughput rate and at the same time minimizes student disappointment, assuming the hypothesis is correct.

Level (Hons, MSc, PhD, other)? :

other

Consider for a student award (Yes / No)? :

no

Short Paper :

Yes

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