



Contribution ID: 430

Type: Oral Presentation

Tests that promote physics learning

Friday, 8 July 2016 10:00 (20 minutes)

Abstract content (Max 300 words) **Formatting & Special chars**

This paper reports on work that has been done in the Physics Department at University of the Western Cape (UWC). The mainstream mechanics physics first year module centers its focus on improving students' success by giving them epistemological access to the study of the physics. Central to the module teaching philosophy and pedagogy is the socio-cultural perspectives on learning in the sciences. This has guided the development of our intervention strategies to direct students' learning toward gaining access to the ways of knowing of the discipline. Such perspectives suggest that an exclusively individual or cognitivist approach may need to be complemented by those that recognize the social contexts in which science learning takes place, and which place a greater emphasis on learning as participation and identity development. This paper reports on the two-stage tests used to promote physics learning. The two-stage exam is a way to engage students' to participate and reflect on their learning by providing immediate formative and summative assessment of their learning. An overview of the mainstream mechanics physics first year module teaching and learning approach as well as the results of a survey of students' experiences of the two-stage test will be presented and discussed.

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Session Classification: Physics Education

Track Classification: Track E - Physics Education