

**OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne**

**June 17th – 20th, 2015**

Submission 131

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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| **Submission 131 for the**  **2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators** |

1. **Title of Proposal:**

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| Measurement Model Backlash and How to Avoid it. |

1. **Abstract:**

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| *Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words).If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*  As long time members of OBTS, we find our participative teaching philosophy threatened by assessment models based on unchallenged assumptions that link ability to achievement, force grading onto normal curves, and separate intended learning outcomes into discrete bits that must be answered individually to accrue enough points to pass without ever relating them to a greater whole.  Based on the work of Biggs and Tang (2007), this session will engage participants in a critique of the current measurement model and learning about an alternative that constructively aligns intended learning outcomes with in-class activities and assignments linked to consistent observable standards. |

1. **Keywords:**

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| *Use three or four keywords to describe your session.*  Teaching philosophy  Constructive Engagement  Formative Assessment  Assurance of Learning |

1. **Format**

Activity or exercise

(also acceptable) Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)

X General discussion session

1. **Time Requested:**

30 Minutes

X 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)

90 Minutes

1. **Planning Details:**

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| *Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?*  Round tables for discussion or a circle of chairs. |

1. **Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:**

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| *What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?*  Participants will be able to:  1. Contrast the measurement model with the constructive alignment model.  2. Recognize how the measurement model, which drives their choices of teaching/learning activities and assessment behavior, can cause cognitive dissonance with good teaching practice.  3. Make a case for incorporating constructive alignment as part of their teaching practice in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance recognized above. |

1. **Management or Teaching Topics:**

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| *Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*  Biggs and Tang (2007, p 275-6) argue that good teaching requires balancing the negative impacts of administrator driven teaching versus the positive effects of education driven teaching. What works best for administrators, they argue, are the following practices:   1. Assume that students (and faculty) are not to be trusted. 2. Establish a Theory X climate in which everything must be measured, verified and quantified in a fixed time. 3. Reduce complex issues to units that can be handled independently, and weighted equally. 4. Curriculum becomes a collection of independent competencies, basic skills, facts, and procedures. 5. Passing becomes a matter of accruing sufficient independent correct answers. 6. A particular problem is the misapplication of the measurement model of assessment driven toward a normal curve, in standardized conditions, graded on the curve.   What works best for good teaching, the argue, are the following practices:   1. Assume that students and faculty can be trusted. 2. Establish a Theory Y climate in which the focus is on the qualities that best support learning rather than on administrative procedures. 3. Recognize that good education teaches students to deal with complex issues by becoming deeper learners. 4. Curriculum becomes a way to deepen learning and extend it. 5. Passing is about learning holistic structures that cannot be reduced to units of equal importance. 6. A good measurement task makes everyone successful, produces change, under conditions that best reveal the individual’s learning in ways that a standardized test does not show, and encourages teachers to grade everyone according to the same standard.   Constructive alignment is a teaching method for quality learning at universities that connects what works best for learning with teaching activities and how we assess intended learning objectives.  According to Biggs and Tang (2007), constructive alignment means that intended learning outcomes are mirrored in teaching and learning activities, assignment prompts, and assessment tools. Constructive alignment, they argue, is the means of enhancing teaching and learning in order to bring students who start with a surface approach to learning into deeper and deeper levels of engagement. It is based on the principles of constructivism in learning because “learners use their own activity to construct their knowledge or other outcome” (Biggs and Tang, 2007, p. 52). Alignment reflects the fact that the “learning activity in the intended outcomes, expressed as a verb, needs to be activated in the teaching if the outcome is to be achieved and in the assessment task to verify that the outcome has in fact been achieved”(Biggs and Tang, 2007, p. 52). Focusing on what and how students are to learn, rather than on what topics the teacher is to teach, and paying greater attention what students are supposed to do with outcome and how they are to learn it (Biggs and Tang, 2007, p.52).  Based on empirical observation of exemplary teachers, Biggs and Tang (2007) developed five hierarchical levels of learning: pre-structural, uni-structural, multi-structural, relational, and extended abstract. They argue that learning activities should be designed based on where students are in this hierarchy. They call this hierarchy the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO). SOLO provides a systematic way of describing how a learner’s performance grows in complexity when mastering many academic tasks. It can be used to define course intended learning objectives that describe where a student should be operating and to describe where they actually are operating (p. 76). Alignment and SOLO are what make this approach to outcome assessment unique and more effective than other approaches. |
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1. **Session Description and Plan:**

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| *What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you’d like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session’s goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.*  Opening: Set the context for the discussion by polling participants on POLL EVERYWHERE using 3 mini-cases, each with a set of multiple-choice questions. 5 minutes.  Analysis: Examine the poll results.  Discussion questions: How many participants chose “other?” To what degree were the choices offered biased toward a particular set of priorities? Are those priorities consistent with good teaching?  Mini-lecture Outline: Backwash of the Measurement Model (10 minutes)   1. Assumptions of the measurement model of assessment    1. Knowledge can be quantified    2. Percentages are a universal currency    3. Educational tests should be clearly designed to separate the high and low scores.    4. Quantitative approaches to assessment are scientific, precise, and objective.    5. University education is selective. 2. Grading on the curve    1. Assumes that a few should extremely well, most should do middling, and a few should do poorly.    2. Appeals to administrators because it suggests that the standards are being upheld at the appropriate level across all disciplines.    3. Assumes that ability determines learning outcomes and that ability must be normally distributed.    4. Precludes assessments in which everyone who meets the criterion gets the same score.    5. Allows the best answer of the day to set the bar for an “excellent” answer-the “A” grade.[[1]](#footnote-1) 3. Assessment separated from teaching.    1. Assessment is treated as a stand-alone activity separate from teaching.    2. Emphasis on de-contextualized assessment tasks to measure *declarative* knowledge (facts and theories in isolation) not *functional* knowledge (knowledge in use).    3. Summative assessment, especially from standardized tests, is seldom aligned with what is taught, unless you teach to the test. 4. Affects of backwash from the measurement model    1. Demotivating both for students and for faculty.    2. Students see that trees are more important than the forest to maximize grades.    3. Verbatim responses get better grades, not thinking for yourself.    4. Success or failure is due to factors beyond the student’s control such as the competition and what questions get on the test.    5. Teaching and assessment are out of alignment.   Discussion question 1: Have you experienced a feeling of cognitive dissonance with any of these assumptions of the measurement model? (10 minutes)  Mini-lecture 2 (10 minutes). How does Constructive Alignment contribute to good teaching?   1. Definition of Constructive Alignment. 2. Assumptions of Constructive Alignment 3. How Constructive Alignment differs from the measurement model. 4. Implications for teaching using the Constructive Alignment Model.    1. Frees the teacher from monitoring and grading students’ reading, participation, paper length or other input measures.    2. Encourages teacher to design activities that help the students learn at a deep level.    3. With SOLO hierarchy, provides criteria to differentiated good from excellent answers in assessments in a consistently observable way.   Discussion question 2: How would you change your approach to the 3 cases in the poll based on the principles of constructive alignment?  Final Poll: Multiple choice answers on 3 new cases.  Closing reflections |
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1. **For Activities and Exercises:**

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| *Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.*  N/A |

1. **Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:**

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| *What is the contribution of your session?*  This session will help build a foundation for redesigning courses, program outcomes, and learning activities that align intended learning outcomes with achievable, observable, and measurable results that enhance learning rather than just satisfying administrative demands for quantitative measurements that violate the principles of good teaching practice . |

1. **Application to Conference theme:**

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

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| Constructive alignment is particularly well suited to the OBTC theme this year because it incorporates a critique of the competitive individualistic nature of the measurement model of assessment as implemented at many business schools and replaces it with a set of tools that encourage and enhance learning in community.   1. **Unique Contribution to OBTC:**   *Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*  A related workshop was submitted to the Teaching and Learning Conference at AOM (to be presented in August). That submission is a hands-on exercise rather than a philosophical discussion. The discussion in this session will help to inform and enhance the session at TLC, which was designed for a broader and less sophisticated audience.   |  | | --- | | 1. **References and/or Additional Materials:**   Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2007) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University, 3rd Ed.* Maidenhead, Birkshire, England: Open University Press.  Hativa, N., Barak, R., & Simhi, E., 2001. Exemplary university teachers: Knowledge and beliefs regarding effective teaching dimensions and strategies. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *72*, 6, 699-729.  Lowman, J., 1996. Characteristics of exemplary teachers. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no., 65, 33-40.  Murray, H. G. 1997. Effective teaching behaviors in the college classroom. In R. P. Perry & J. C. Smart (Eds.), Effective teaching in higher education: Research and practice (pp 171-203). New York: Agathan. | |

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| Reprints for the session:  First set of cases for polling:  Case 2 Grading on the Curve  Case 3 Matter of Length  Case 4 Exam Strategy  Second set of cases for polling:  Case 1 Misunderstanding the question  Case 5 Interfering with internal affairs  Case 6 What is the true estimate of student learning  (Biggs and Tang, 2007, 165-168) |

1. Even if you grade on percentages, if you don’t have a preset standard, then you have to read all the papers first before you know what the best possible answer is that your students are capable of. This is not the same as setting consistent expectations and communicating it to students up front. We risk letting them set the bar for us. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)