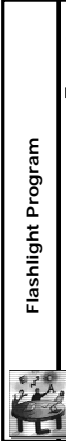




The TLT Group

Evaluating Distance Learning: Primer and Q&A

Stephen C. Ehrmann, Ph.D
<http://www.tltgroup.org/IAMSE.htm>



The TLT Group

- **Help institutions improve teaching and learning with technology**
- **Services/materials include:**
 - ✓ Assessment, evaluation, scholarship of teaching and learning (action research)...("Flashlight")
 - ✓ Course improvement strategies and professional development
 - ✓ Planning, governance, learning space design, ...
- **Tools, materials, online workshops, gatherings of subscribers, consulting...**



The TLT Group

2



Thanks!

- **150+ institutional subscribers to TLT Group services**
- **Spin-off from Annenberg/CPB and the American Association for Higher Education**
- **Washington State Univ., U of Nebraska, Purdue, MIT, Johnson C. Smith University ...**
- **AAC&U, ACRL, EDUCAUSE, HBCU Faculty Development Network, League for Innovation, MERLOT, NISOD, POD, SCUP...**
- **TLT Group Founding Sponsors**
 - ✓ Blackboard, Compaq, Microsoft, SCT, WebCT




The TLT Group

3

Flashlight Program

Outline

- I. **An activity-based approach to formative evaluation**
- II. **Applying the framework to elements of a distance learning program**




The TLT Group

4

Flashlight Program

Survey Results

- **Available on <http://www.tltgroup.org/IAMSE.htm>**




The TLT Group

5

Flashlight Program

How (not) to Evaluate DL

- **Look at the literature to see if DL is better or worse, more expensive or cheaper, than campus learning**
- **Ask students and faculty to 'grade' different elements of the program**
- **Do a study without first asking how each bit of data will help someone make better decisions**




The TLT Group

6

Flashlight Program

Definitions

- **“Technology”** – the facilities people use
- **“Distance Learning”** – student is not on a main campus most of, or all of, the time
- **“Assessment”** – measuring learning
- **“Evaluation”** – information to make decisions about distance learning program
- **Web page of confusors:**
<http://www.tltgroup.org/discussions/Confusors.htm>




The TLT Group


7

Flashlight Program

Computers Aren't Magic; Distance isn't Poison



- **No one has ever done a good study showing that distance makes outcomes better or worse**
- **No one ever will**
- **Ditto for computers**
- **Ditto for classrooms, electricity, and paper**



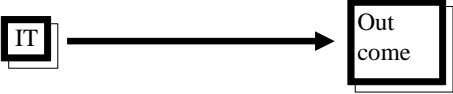

The TLT Group

8

Flashlight Program

I. Research on TLT Effectiveness

- **The technology works!**
 - ✓ **Kulik**

The TLT Group

9

Flashlight Program

I. Research on TLT Effectiveness

- **It's not the technology, stupid!**
✓ Kulik, and Clark

```

graph LR
    IT[IT] --> ECA[Educationally Crucial Activities]
    ECA --> OC[Out comes]
  
```

"You've seen one presentation, you've seen 'em all..."

The TLT Group

10

Flashlight Program

I. Research on TLT Effectiveness

- **It isn't the technology, yet it is...**
✓ Kulik, and Clark, and Kozma

```

graph LR
    IT1[IT1] -.-> ECA[Educationally Crucial Activities]
    IT2[IT2] -.-> ECA
    ECA --> OC[Out comes]
  
```

The TLT Group

11

Flashlight Program

I. Research on TLT Effectiveness

- **It isn't the technology, yet it is...**
✓ Kulik, Clark, Kozma, TLT/Flashlight

```

graph LR
    IT1[IT1] -.-> A1[Activity #1]
    IT1 -.-> A2[Activity #2]
    A1 --> OC1[Out come 1]
    A2 --> OC2[Out come 2]
  
```


The TLT Group

12

Flashlight Program

Which Activities Are Most Important?

▪ In 1986, Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson were asked, “What do decades of educational research tell us about how to improve learning?”



The TLT Group

13

Flashlight Program


1987: “7 Principles”

Educationally
Crucial
Activities

→

Out
comes

1. Faculty-student interaction
2. Student-student collaboration
3. Active Learning
4. Prompt Feedback
5. Time on Task
6. Higher Expectations
7. Value diverse ways of learning



The TLT Group

14

Flashlight Program


1992: What Works?

Computers,
Other I.T.

→

Educationally
Crucial
Activities

1. Project-based active learning
2. Collaborative learning
3. Faculty-student interaction
4. More flexible pace for learning
5. Other activities attracting time on task
6. Enhanced feedback
7. Continual improvement of student work



The TLT Group

15

Flashlight Program

1993: Aha!!

```

    graph LR
      A[Computers, Other I.T.] -.-> B[Educationally Crucial Activities]
      B --> C[Out comes]
  
```

1. Faculty-student interaction
2. Student-student collaboration
3. Active Learning
4. Prompt Feedback
5. Time on Task
6. Higher Expectations
7. Value diverse ways of learning

The TLT Group

16

Flashlight Program

Applications of 7 Principles to Evaluation of Distance Learning

- **If these activities increase, outcomes usually improve**
- **Enables comparison, pooling of data across dissimilar courses, programs (including on- and off-campus based study)**

The TLT Group

17

Flashlight Program

Types of Study

1. **Tracking activities; benchmarking**
2. **How appropriate is the technology for this activity?**
3. **Diagnostic-removing barriers that have prevented 100% success**
4. **Course research techniques**
5. **Studying costs, stresses**


The TLT Group

18

Flashlight Program

Tracking and Benchmarking

- **“The instructor was able to respond to the individual needs of learners in this course.”**
- **“I learned from comments made by the instructor on my assignments and/or examinations for this course.”**
- **“Studying with one or more other students is an effective way to learn in this course.”**
- **“When I don’t understand something, I can quickly get help.”**




19

Flashlight Program

Appropriate IT (Facilities)?

- **“Because of the way this course uses threaded discussion, my comments are more thoughtful than they would be in a course that met in a classroom and had no online discussion.”**
- **“It’s easy to learn to use the technology in this program. You don’t waste time being confused about what to do.”**




20

Flashlight Program

Diagnosing Barriers

- **Which of these issues make it difficult for you to participate fully in online discussion or online teamwork in this course?**
 - ✓ I don’t have a computer to use at the times when I need to be online in this course.
 - ✓ Students in this course don’t know me well enough to realize how much I could contribute.
 - ✓ It’s hard to discuss a web page or document because I can’t point to the part of the page that I’m talking about.
 - ✓ Some people in the course don’t do their share and there’s nothing I can do about that.




21

Flashlight Program

Course Research

- **The “Dorbolo Design”**
 - ✓ List all the topics and tasks and ask which ones were interesting, and which ones were useful.
 - ✓ Any patterns in how students respond?




The TLT Group

22

Flashlight Program

Cost Studies

- **Same logic: activities drive costs**
- **Revenue theory of costs (Bowen’s Law): programs raise all the money they can, spend all they get, and spend in ways dictated mainly by local history of spending**
- **Goal of cost studies: reduce stress (especially burdensome uses of time, inappropriate budgets) while improving outcomes if possible.**




The TLT Group

23

Flashlight Program

Flashlight Online

- **Web-based survey system shared by 100 colleges and universities**
- **Designed and hosted for The TLT Group by Washington State University**
- **Any author can make a survey or item bank available for use or modification by any other author at any other institution**
- **<http://www.tltgroup.org>**



The TLT Group

24

Questions? Suggestions?

- **To reach me personally, send e-mail to ehrmann@tltgroup.org**
- **Thanks!**