IS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT AN ADEQUATE INSTRUMENT TO HELP STUDENTS WITH DIFFICULTIES IN LARGE GROUPS? THE CASE OF CIVIL ENGINEERING

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Abstract

In recent years several strategies have been introduced in the department of civil engineering at a technical university to implement continuous assessment in large groups, especially for the subject of machinery, without obtaining satisfactory results in the performance of some of these students. None of the techniques used to overcome the difficulties experienced by students in the teaching/learning process has been accepted by the students themselves. The purpose of this paper is to assess why after taking concrete actions to help these students meet their learning objectives, their academic achievements and ability to pass the subject have not materialised as expected. It should also be added that precisely these students appear to show, on the one hand, a rejection to the system of ‘identifying problems, error correction, and resolution’ and, on the other hand, they say they would prefer the traditional evaluation system, that did not monitor their performance and learning outcomes so closely as the current system. However, that system did not help them pass the exam nor achieve an effective learning of the subject content. Hence, continuous assessment may not be the best tool to make students attain the learning objectives proposed for this particular subject when applied with large groups. An analysis of a specific teaching context in the civil engineering degree can provide us with data to answer the questions under investigation.

Keywords: Educational barriers, evaluation, continuous assessment, learning difficulties, students.