

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Adult Education: Improving Student Assessment and Program Feedback

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Abstract

Since Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is not widely applied in adult education, the author used SoTL principles to investigate the degree of student satisfaction, rating of course difficulty, and self-assessment of learner gains for non-credit adult educational programs.

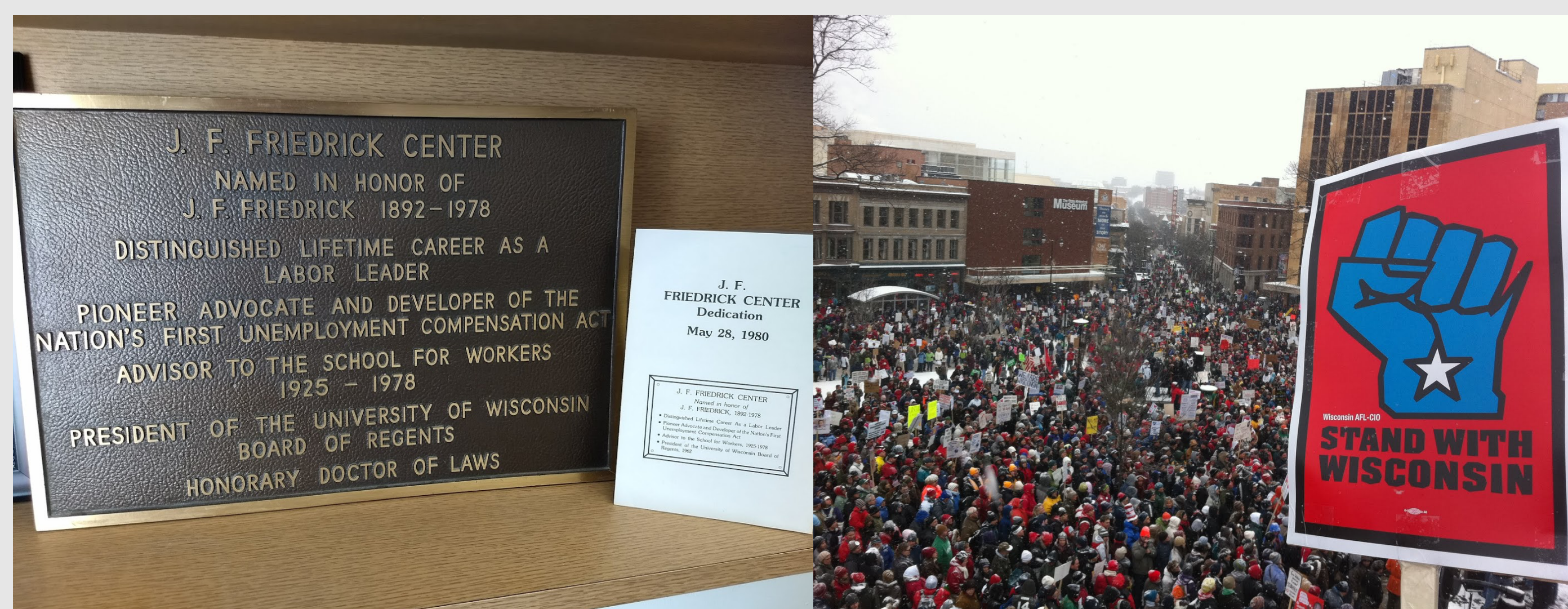
Respondent feedback related to learning gains as well as course satisfaction and other measures were summarized and analyzed. The data provide important feedback about how program participants generally rate department courses for their learning gains, as well as provide student perceptions about course difficulty and the importance and practical applicability of discrete program curriculum components.

Background

The University of Wisconsin School for Workers is the oldest university-based labor education program in the United States. Started in 1925 as one of the first operational components of the Wisconsin Idea, the School's faculty and staff have long brought teaching, research, and outreach to thousands of workers, unions and employers throughout Wisconsin, the nation and the world.

Our mission is to empower working people and labor organizations at the job site, in the national economy, and in the global economic system through a comprehensive program of lifelong adult learning opportunities. We are also committed to the broader socio-economic goals of working people including the enhancement of and tolerance for cultural diversity, the advancement of civil rights, the participation in labor organizations and other social institutions of under-represented and disadvantaged groups, and the improvement of educational opportunities at all levels. The School is widely recognized as one of the leading labor education programs in the nation.

Our motto is Education for Workplace Democracy.



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Methods

A new evaluation was prepared that incorporated key elements of our previous program evaluations, such as traditional instructor ratings and demographic data. Also incorporated were standard scale and free response questions from the student assessment of learning gains (SALG). The SALG website is a free course-evaluation tool that gathers learning-focused feedback from students hosted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The survey was created and hosted in the UW-Madison Qualtrics. With staff support, the survey instrument is adapted for each of the School for Workers programs and prepared for use. A form containing both a web link and QR barcode is distributed at the end of the program and faculty explain the process to complete the survey and encourage the students to do so.

Discussion

Initially, the SALG web interface was used in creating and deploying the survey instrument. However, due to its difficulty of use and inability to render in a usable fashion on a mobile device, an alternative method was sought.

Since UW-Madison continues to have a subscription with Qualtrics and it provides both excellent mobile device rendering and analysis tools, it was used to implement the project.

The collection of the data has been unexpectedly challenging. Moving from paper with checkbox to the online equivalent was not expected to pose challenges, but initially it was difficult to match our previous level of high participation in course evaluation forms.

Demonstration

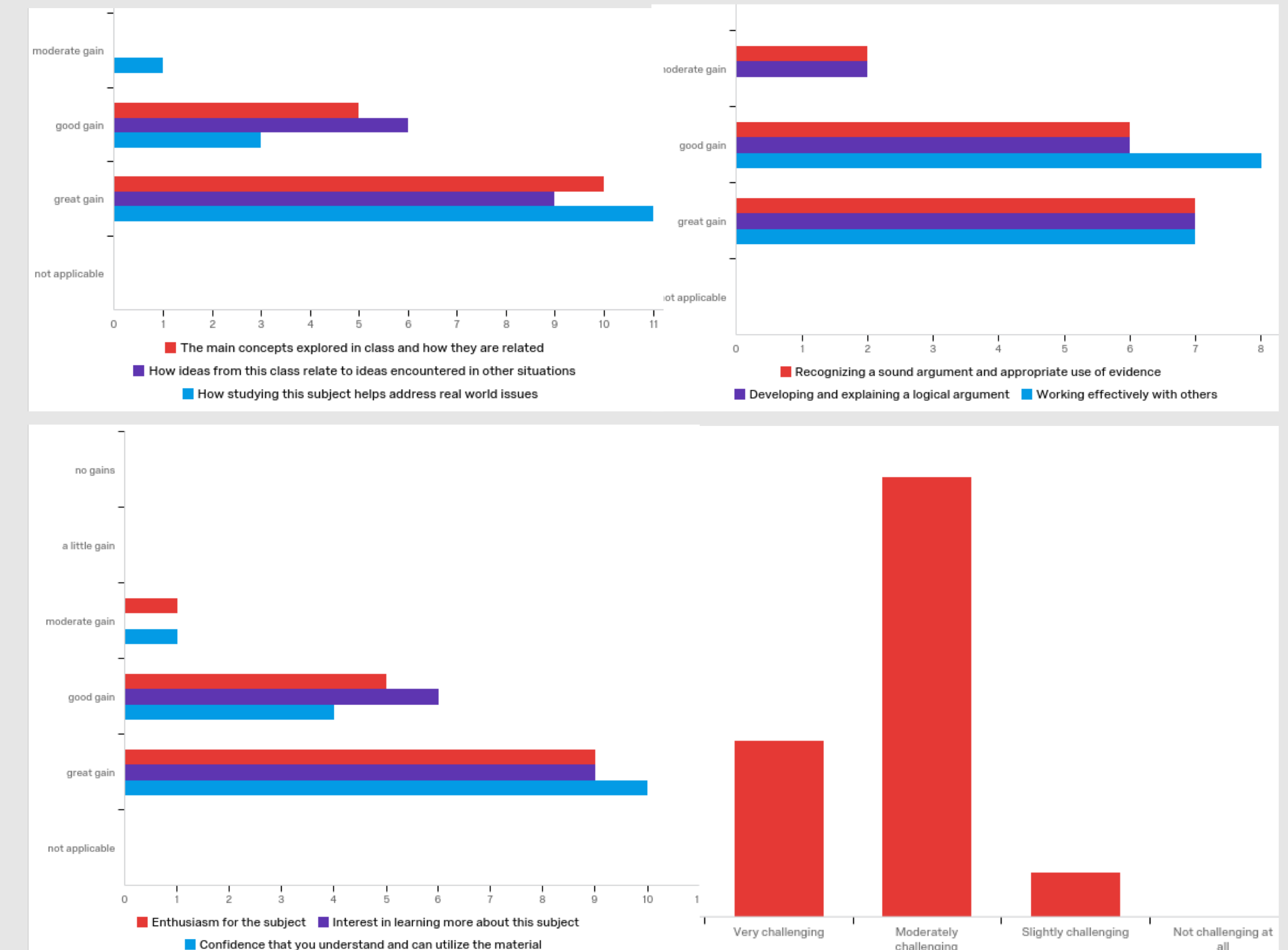
Anonymous Survey Link: A shortened link similar to the one below is included in the course evaluation handout, as well as a QR code which takes users directly to the survey. Feel free to scan the code or type in the URL and see an example survey!

<https://bit.ly/2UqbBO6>



Results

The charts below are the tabulated results from a typical SFW program using the default report provided in Qualtrics.



Conclusions

Using an online survey to gather participant data has decreased response rate, even when time is allowed for completing it. Qualtrics research has shown that response quality and completion rates both decline when questions use the matrix format. With that in mind, we are considering reducing the number of possible matrix responses (for example: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree simplified to Disagree, Neutral, Agree).

The feedback from incorporation of the three SALG questions as well as the additional survey questions they inspired has giving a deeper understanding of the student perception of the SFW programs. This information has been helpful in the department's planning of program curriculum as well as the discussions about scheduling of programs.

The capabilities of Qualtrics analysis have not yet been fully realized. Future work is planned to allow for the data to be combined across programs for a richer understanding of the participant feedback across the department program portfolio.

Amalgamation of the data will also allow for deeper insight about the impact of demographic data on participant responses. For example, length of student time/experience in a given role can be related with their perceptions of difficulty or usefulness of topics.



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