

Salsa: The Systematic Analysis of Learner Self Appraisal

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Introduction

Salsa is a teaching aid and research tool that is designed to help:

- promote reflective practice in learners
- gain a better understanding of how learning occurs

Salsa is grounded in the affective domain and values the belief that learning happens best when learners take responsibility for their own learning.

Methodology

The course designer uses the Salsa software to prepare a detailed course plan covering time expected, activities and learning outcomes.

Learners monitor their learning progress against the plan and use the Salsa software to submit a weekly report of their time investment, engagement in the learning activities and self-assessed mastery of the learning outcomes. They can also indicate where they believe they need more time and where they need help and can update the report at any time.

The lecturer can use the Salsa software as a teaching aid to monitor the learning progress of each individual learner and identify areas where they need help.

Elements of the course with which many learners have difficulty can be identified.

These can be addressed in one-to-many mode and can be used to inform course design for future deliveries.

The researcher can use the data captured by the Salsa software to gain a better understanding of how learning happens.

Results

Many researchers (e.g. Boud, 1995, pp93-101; Lopez et Al, 2005) have shown that there is significant correlation between self-assessed mastery and objective measures of learning achievement.

This means that we can use the week-by-week Salsa data to analyse the learning process in much more detail than is possible with snapshots gained from assessments or surveys.

Students value the software; Salsa is seen as an aid to their learning, rather than an imposition on their time.

Conclusions

Use of the Salsa software helps a lecturer promote a culture that values reflection and self-appraisal.

Salsa builds a rich body of evidence that researchers can use to explore many aspects of how learning occurs.

References

- Boud, D. (1995), "Enhancing Learning through Self Assessment", London: Kogan-Page.
- Lopez, D., Lopez, M., Peppiatt, J. (2005), "Do we know or just think we know?", Proceedings of the NACCQ, Tauranga, New Zealand, 10-13 July, 2005

