Reviewer's report

Title: Electronic Voting to Encourage Interactive Lectures: A Randomised Trial

Version: 2 Date: 26 May 2007

Reviewer: James Wofford

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

GENERAL COMMENTS
-- In my view, the manuscript is much improved. The abstract still needs improvement, as readers decide whether or not to read the rest of the manuscript on the basis of the abstract.
-- Double line spacing is the preferred format.

ABSTRACT

Introduction - Every new technology is promoted by enthusiasts, and this is not reason enough to condemn it. The last sentence of the introduction is awkward. Consider - “Because the results from these studies have been mixed, we examined whether an EVS system could enhance a lecture’s effect on educational outcomes.

-- Methods - What does randomized by academic record mean? This must be a mistake.
-- Results - In contrast to the result section of the manuscript, the authors lead off in the results section of the abstract with the least important finding, namely, the views of the lecturers. Because it is only the opinions of only two persons, this should be the last part of the results section (if included at all in the abstract).
-- P-values in the abstract should be reserved for the main findings. Be consistent with the number of significant figures.
-- Given the nature of the study design, the difficulty of generalizing this experience to other settings, the fact that this type of technology is continuously evolving, your conclusions seem too condemning and too broad. Even at your own institution, one out of two professors continues to use EVS despite the data that suggests that it may not be effective. For these reasons, it might be better to soften the conclusions. The first sentence should be prefaced as “In this setting, EVS technology used in large group settings did not offer significant advantages over alternative teaching methods the more traditional lecture format”. Consider leaving the second clause of the sentence out altogether for the reasons mentioned above. There is no reason to inflame the enthusiasts, but more importantly, who knows what enhancements to EVS technology might bring about a better large group experience in the future?

INTRODUCTION
-- As much literature as there is using the term “audience response system”, you might consider using this term somewhere near the beginning of the manuscript, perhaps in the second paragraph of the introduction, i.e., “One way to encourage active learning… employ an electronic voting system (EVS) (or audience response system).”

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests