

Abstract 2C

Challenging right-answer syndrome in a taught postgraduate programme in accounting and finance

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A great deal has been written about the trials and tribulations experienced by overseas students in adapting to UK higher education at postgraduate level. As universities increasingly vie with each other to increase their enrolment of such students, it becomes more and more important to offer as attractive an experience as possible to such students. A vast amount of effort has been expended in the form of support services and adaptations to make these students welcome, but some problems still persist. In particular, some overseas students still report surprise at their relatively low attainment in the UK compared to their home nation. We do not know the full range of reasons for this performance gap, but it is possible that "Right Answer Syndrome" (RAS) is responsible for some element of this. RAS is manifested in many ways, for example, a student may be reluctant to answer an examination question, even where s/he might be able to make a creditable attempt. Accordingly, the RAS student may submit incomplete or even blank assignments rather than take a more strategic or pragmatic approach which would obviously achieve better results. The literature reveals that RAS is ethnicity and gender neutral, but is more common in disciplines where answers are more commonly "right" or "wrong". This report gives an account of the writer's attempt to challenge RAS in a large group of taught postgraduate students studying international accounting. It concludes that although isolated success was achieved, it would be better to attack RAS as part of a suite of measures designed to improve attainment. Whilst this study concentrates entirely on taught postgraduate students, there may be lessons which could be applied to undergraduates as well. In addition, awareness of RAS might be of assistance in courses where assignments are of a less clear-cut nature.

Outcomes

Suggest means by which right answer syndrome may be challenged in order to reduce expectation gaps between student performance in their home nation and in the UK