

Classroom Assessment Technique – Chapter 7:

an adaptation of CAT 6 – Minute Paper

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Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT) are a way for instructors to make ‘mid-course corrections’ in their teaching to better the overall learning transfer. Angelo and Cross state Classroom Assessment, “focuses the primary attention of teachers and students on observing and improving learning, rather than on observing and improving teaching” (1993, p. 4) and as a way to improve teaching as “an attempt to build on existing good practice by making it more systematic, more flexible, and more effective” (p. 6). My first usage of CATs within my Corporate Teaching environment (in which I typically see people once and only for less than an hour) was an adaptation of CAT 6 – Minute Paper. This CAT was chosen due to its ‘Low estimated time for students to respond to the assessment’ (essential because of the already mentioned short timespan together) and easy ability for the students to ‘verbalize’ their learning.

The CAT was adapted/changed to ‘*One Sentence Summary of the Course* - which could be used

in a brochure to describe and ‘sell’ the course to other engineers’. It was my desire in changing the CAT to better understand what the learners felt were the ‘highlights’ and as such felt that other engineers would benefit from those specifics. To that end, the materials used were a small sheet of paper (chosen on purpose so that people didn’t feel it was a ‘long assignment’ and in hopes that overall it would be brief/succinct) and additional pens for those without.



While it was my hope that the learners would enumerate the specifics of features, products, and/or competitive differences they valued; you can see from Table 1 that this was only

# of Attendees	27
# of CAT Responses	25 (93% of group)
'Kudos Only' (no specifics)	12 (48% of responses)
'Single Specific' (some value)	9 (36% of responses)
Multiple Specifics (high value)	4 (16% of responses)

*Table 1 - CAT 6 Results*

accomplished by a few of the responders. Value was gained from the two groups of “Single Specific” and “Multiple Specifics” by

realizing that they valued the ‘straight talk’ about competitive differences – they also liked/valued some of our optional products (which I’ve always considered ancillary to the discussion but now realized I should highlight more).

One of the greatest strengths of “Minute Paper” is also one of its downfalls (or maybe better stated as an ‘area needing improvement’). Not listed within the text as a ‘Con’ of this method is that the ‘open-ended’ nature of the Q&A area can easily lead students to respond off-topic or non-essentially to the main topic being taught. This leads to questions of:

- Did the students understand the main points and only wanted to respond to something else?
- Were the students not taking the opportunity of feedback/classroom assessment seriously?
- If they weren’t listening to these basic/simple instructions (regarding the Classroom Assessment) – how much of the lecture/transfer-of-knowledge did they obtain?

Angelo & Cross reflect in their Chapter on “Lessons and insights from six years of use (in Classroom Assessment Techniques)” that “the most successful Classroom Researchers

pursued assessment questions that, though challenging, were focused and limited enough to provide them with useful feedback.” (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 379).

An area that I would change for future use of this adaptation of CAT 6 would be to:

- State that "While I'm thankful for the kind words about the presentation, I'm really looking for specific feedback as to how to improve and learn what is not clear and/or missing". It is my hope that by stating this, it will help reduce the kind but non-useful responses.
- Clearly ask the respondents for what specific features/benefits and/or products stood out in their minds and would help future engineers.

It is believe that through these minor continuous improvement adjustments that the use of this CAT will produce actionable direction for future presentations and more define (rather than being so open-ended) what would help future teachings of the course.

References

Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques* (2nd. ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.