

Critical Thinking in Media Writing: Preparing the Workforce by Training Students to Ask Effective Questions



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The scientific community needs students who can think critically and communicate clearly.

Introduction & Conceptual Framework

- Communicators can refine their ability to think critically by asking effective questions.
- We developed seven reusable learning modules—including asking effective questions—to train communication skills needed in the workplace (Crawford et al., 2011).
- Paul and Elder's (2012) model of critical thinking served as the conceptual framework.
- To support critical thinking within agricultural communications, we implemented an asking effective questions (AEQ) online reusable learning module in Texas A&M University's introduction to hard news media writing course ($n = 39$) in Fall 2019.

Purpose & Research Objectives

- Investigate if completing AEQ would influence students' final course scores by:
 1. Describing students' participation and average time spent in AEQ.
 2. Investigating the relationship between completing AEQ and students' final course scores.
 3. Investigating if time spent completing AEQ could predict students' final course scores.

Method

- Designed AEQ to take approximately 60–90 minutes to complete.
- Generated Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) files to address how many students completed the module, how many minutes they took to complete it, and their final module and formative assessment scores.
- Analyzed data using descriptive statistics, a one-way ANOVA, and a simple linear regression.

Findings

- Thirty-two students (82.1%) completed AEQ; the range to complete the module was 20.4 to 296.12 minutes ($M = 116$; $SD = 63.82$). The average final grade was 85.47% ($SD = 7.37$).
- No significant effect ($p < 0.05$) of completing AEQ on final course scores [$F(1, 37) = 1.57$, $p = .218$, $\eta^2 = .041$].
- Time spent completing the module was not a significant predictor of students' final course scores ($\beta = 0.03$, $p < .209$).

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Increase the point value (>10 pts) allocated for completing AEQ to provide incentive for engaging in formal and structured course instruction.
- Increase student engagement with the material in AEQ to investigate if a more consistent expectation of time spent completing the module could possibly become a stronger predictor of final course scores.
- Incorporate reflective discussions in AEQ to encourage students to reinforce the process of asking effective questions to their peers.

Abstract

