

The use of competency based learning to improve mastery of essential knowledge and skills in a unit of Word Processing in a fourth form Information Technology class.

The University of the West Indies

Faculty of Humanities & Education

School of Education

Post Graduate Diploma in Education

COURSE: EDIT5200 – Teaching of Information Technology

Curriculum Study

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DATE: 14th April, 2016

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Abstract

It has been observed that the students at the Form 4 level are overly dependent on rote learning and lack the ability to identify what they are competent in and think critically. This study sought to investigate whether Competency Based Learning strategies had an effect on the promotion of identifying self-competencies and critical thinking among Form 4 Information Technology students. According to Bramante and Colby, (2012, p. 63), “Competency-based learning asks students to learn important content information and skills. It also requires that a student demonstrates that learning by applying the content and skills in unique ways”. The 12 participants in the study were between the ages of 15 to 17 years and attended a Co-Ed Average Student, secondary school (CEAS) in Trinidad and Tobago. The study used an Action Research methodology, with the resulting data being analysed through the use of both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods. The findings suggest that Competency Based Learning did have a positive effect on the students’ display of identifying self-competencies and critical thinking abilities during the period of study. Although there were some constraints such as internet connectivity and disruptions of classes, CBL is recommended as an effective strategy that not only develops the students’ Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) but the other valuable 21st century skills as well.

Keywords: Competency Based Learning, 21st Century Skills, Competencies, Critical Thinking.