“Are You Board Let’s Get Smart.com” Methodology

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In the process of finding out whether or not utilizing smart board technology in a classroom setting was effective for students, qualitative methods were used. Qualitative methods were implemented in the study because it gave a chance to use individual focus groups, which allowed each professor to state their own facts and opinions about how they felt about smart board technology. In order to receive accurate results, the chairmen of the Department of Computer Engineering, Physics and Computer Sciences at Jackson State University chose three of their faculty members, from each of their departments, to participate in a semi-structured in depth interview conducted to get each of their points of view on the study. Each interview with the professors was conducted in the conference room located in the Computer Engineering building and took no more than 30 minutes per interview. Before interviewing them, they were offered gourmet delights and coffee to intrigue and get them interested in participating in the study. Each professor was asked questions about how they felt about the smart board technology and how did they utilize it in their classroom. After asking a set of semi-structured questions in each interview to each professor, they were all able to probe and follow up with their own questions and opinions. To avoid bias, the focus groups were held simultaneously with student facilitators and videotaping crews.

While using qualitative methods for this study, there was a chance to observe the professors and their reactions to the questions being asked. Each of the professors had their own stories to share about their experiences with the smart board. Because the study wasn’t too personal that the professors may have shied away from answering any of the interview questions, visual and audio recordings were utilized. Before actually recording any of the interviews with the professors, each professor was asked to sign a permission slip. The permission slip stated what would be going on during the interview, if they would like to be video or audio taped or both, and what would actually be asked during the interview. After getting permission from each professor, the interview process was able to begin. Many of them had some type of experience with the smart board outside of their classroom, such as in meetings, but none of them really utilized the technology in their own classroom. Most of them felt that the technology was useless and needed some type of workshop showing them how helpful it would be utilized in the classroom.

While doing this study, volunteer sampling was implemented. While implementing volunteer sampling in the study, it had given the professors a chance to really voice out their opinion, especially because they knew a little about what was being studied and they already had a sort of set opinion about it. The individual interviews only consisted of university professors from Jackson State University from the Departments of Computer Engineering, Physics and Computer Sciences. Choosing professors from different departments on campus had broadened the type of answers given for the study. As a result of using this technique, the study became more accurate and plausible.

Before the actual study of smart board technology could start, legal documentation had to be implemented. An IRB application had to be filled out and approved by research methods instructor, Dr. Wynn, with the correct information about the study and exactly what would be going on throughout the process of the study as well. It actually took longer than expected because this was a study being done by first time student researchers. After finally putting together precise information on the IRB application, the application was ready for approval by Dr. Wynn. This was actually the first step of approval for the application. The next step was to get “official” approval from Dr. Prosser, located in the Administration Tower on Jackson State University’s main campus. Dr. Prosser oversees every IRB application that entails any type of research that is conducted on the school’s campus. Anything ranging from major problems to small tedious things could get the IRB application denied. After a back and forth trip to Dr. Prosser’s office, everything on the application finally came to a close and was ready for an “official” approval. This gave the research study an approved pass to start the research process.

Using the qualitative research method instead of quantitative was the best option for the type of research being studied. Instead of studying the quantity of the research study, the quality of the research was studied. Qualitative methods helped with analyzing each interview. With qualitative methods, the research process allowed the use of individual interviews with each professor. In addition, because individual interviews were allowed, the use of in depth interview questions was implemented. The in depth interview questions weren’t too personal and they allowed for each professor to not feel pressured and allowed them to follow up with their own opinions and ideas about how they felt about the technology being studied. Because the study was restricted to a time constraint, there was only time to analyze what was going on at that moment in time rather than analyzing the study over a period of time to come up with accurate results.