

Evaluation of the physical classroom by students and professors: a lens model approach

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Summary

A method for linking classroom evaluations to specific physical properties and for comparing the evaluations of different groups is described and illustrated. Thirty-five college classrooms were photographed and shown to 20 professors and 51 undergraduate students, each of whom evaluated the *friendliness* of and their overall *preference* for all the classrooms. Seven physical properties of the classrooms were reliably assessed by independent observers. Using a modified Brunswik lens model, the relations between the physical properties and the evaluations by the two groups were established and compared. Between 40 and 57 per cent of the variance in the evaluations could be explained from only three classroom properties: view to outdoors, seating comfort and seating arrangement. Evaluations by the students and professors were surprisingly similar, an encouraging sign for classroom designers.

Keywords: classrooms, evaluation, professors, students, lens model, Brunswik

Students spend thousands of hours in classrooms, and therefore classrooms automatically are among the most important physical structures in society. Although much has been written about classroom environment in the sense of organizational structure or social environment (e.g. Byrne, Hattie and Fraser, 1986; Yuen-Yee and Watkins, 1994), much less has been written about the physical environment of the classroom.

That is not to say the topic is untouched; especially during the open-classroom and open-education debates, the physical setting of the classroom was examined

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