MICROS AND MINIS - CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Micro computers situated in micro computer labs and the desire of faculty to switch to using micro computers and micro-based packages as a tool for teaching is growing rapidly on campuses. This can have its advantages but also, from an economic as well as a practical point of view, is often loaded with disadvantages which can far outweigh the advantages of using a mini or mainframe computer.

This paper will focus on some of the advantages and disadvantages, both the obvious and the sometimes obscure, which surround the micro vs. mini or mainframe tool for teaching. From an economic standpoint the discussion will point out the costs of maintaining a micro lab on a cost per student basis taking into account not only the initial hardware and software costs, but also the cost of system administration and hardware maintenance. From a practical standpoint the discussion will point out what little differences there are between packages which can be used on a micro and similar packages that can be used on a mainframe and how easily a student can adapt to using a slightly different but similar-in-purpose package. While it is important that a student be taught how to use tools such as a fourth generation language and a spreadsheet package, that fourth generation language or spreadsheet package does not have to be the most popular package being used on micros. There are very good fourth generation packages and spreadsheet packages available for minis and mainframes.