



TBTEA Journal

Looking to the Future

2015

The *TBTEA Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal.
Articles that are included have been subjected to a blind-review by external peers.

Texas Business and Technology Educators Association

August 2015

Dear TBTEA Members:

Welcome to the 2015 edition of the Texas Business and Technology Educators Association Journal, "Looking to the Future," Volume XIII, No. 1. Business education today is constantly in change mode. Business Education teachers have to be ready and willing for these changes. As workforce changes, the skills that we need to teach change as well. We must always be "Looking to the Future."

Articles in this Journal are written by post-secondary and collegiate teachers from Texas, Illinois, North Carolina, Oregon, and Wisconsin. These articles address methods of teaching, teaching preparation, student engagement, personal finance, soft skills, and social media. Readers should be able to find articles that are relevant to teaching in today's classroom.

The Journal Review Board contributed their time to review these articles and to select those that would be included in this issue. Thank you to all those who peer-reviewed, proofread, and provided guidance in the completion of this journal.

I'd like to extend a special appreciation to the contributors to the journal with their articles that demonstrated expertise, research, and passion in their fields.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as the editor for this issue of the TBTEA Journal. I believe we have a quality publication that reflects "Looking to the Future." Please consider sharing your expertise with the membership by submitting your article for the 2017 Journal. The call for papers will be posted on the Texas Business and Technology Educators Association website: <http://tbtea.org>.

Sincerely,



Karen May, Editor
TBTEA Journal

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Running head: TWO APPLICATIONS OF STORYTELLING

Two Applications of Storytelling in Business Classes

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Abstract

How can telling stories help business students improve their oral communication and teamwork skills? What is the value of storytelling to their intellectual and emotional growth? This article discusses the use of storytelling principles and techniques in two critical areas of business education: oral presentations and team building. In oral presentations, students learn to craft stories based on personal experiences and to use such stories to teach specific lessons and morals. In team building, students tell stories as a way to become acquainted and build trust in order to cooperate on future tasks and activities.

Two Applications of Storytelling in Business Classes

Oral communication is likely one of the most important skills in group and professional settings. Despite predictions about the diluting effects of new technology on traditional communication practices, the sharing of ideas and stories has exploded (Petrick, 2014). For those embarking on technical and scientific careers, curriculum researchers and planners advocate that the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs include opportunities to build oral communication and team work skills for their students (Shinn, 2015). As well, surveys of employers and business schools continue to show that speaking, writing, and leadership skills occupy the top spots that employers seek, and three of the top four spots that the twenty-five top (“elite”) business schools emphasize in undergraduate programs (Ghannadian, 2013). Instructors of business communication and related courses have known this for a while, and have identified storytelling as a particular technique worth emphasizing in business classes (Graves and Epstein, 2011; Muir, 2007; Ralston, 2003; and Yang, 2013).

Stories are structured narratives that transmit lessons and morals using limited words, thereby creating new ideas and meanings, and stirring self-awareness in tellers and listeners alike. Telling stories is a “hardwired instinct of our species” (Yang, 2013, p. 134), helping us to make sense of moral and social issues we face in life. Stories help groups and organizations develop trust and commitment among their members, and may be the starting point for dialogue and discussion about a group’s existence (Pio & Haigh, 2007). In their book, *The Social Life of Information*, Brown and Duguid (2000) describe storytelling as the “social software” that

enhances workplace learning, insight and creativity. For many successful organizations, storytelling is used to define and share the culture of the organization by sharing information across generations. Stories are used to promote understanding of the place and role of the organization (Brady & Haley, 2013).

Storytelling can be used to help teams develop and share visions across many disciplines and cultures. It may serve as a unifying force in a team environment (Dominiak, 2006). In the nursing field storytelling is used to improve the transfer of knowledge and to build communication skills in team environments. Stories are described as who am I stories, why am I here stories, vision stories, teaching stories, values-in-action stories, and I know what you are thinking stories. All of these story types are used to increase communication skills in the health system (Rabinowitz, Johnson, Mazzapica, & O'Leary, 2010).

Of course, teachers have long used stories to engage students, especially in elementary grades. As students move into more content-based learning in high school and college, stories are less often used as telling is often seen as less important in the curriculum. However, stories told by students allow them to connect with one another while giving them the opportunity to share their experiences and views (Montalbano & Ige, 2011) in forums such as group work, job interviews, and presentations. This article discusses the theme and structure of stories and their application to oral presentations and team building activities in business classes.

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to provide background information on storytelling and ideas about how storytelling can be used in two practical ways in oral presentations and in teamwork activities. The ability to turn real-life experiences that business students encounter into relatable stories is a skill that will be beneficial in their business communication.

Theme and Structure of Stories

When using storytelling as a class activity, it is important to explain that stories typically have themes that express the message or moral to be received by the audience. Students should learn to structure their stories in order to have the intended impact on their audiences. The instructor might also limit the number of possible themes, contexts, and the length of stories students craft and share. (Graves and Epstein, 2011)

(1) *Theme:* The storyteller uses a theme to translate the message or moral of a story to the audience. Growing up, most students would have heard, watched, or read animal tales, religious parables, family sagas, and cultural legends that impart positive themes such as love, kindness, friendship, forgiveness, patience, and courage. They would also have heard stories with negative themes such as the opposites of the themes listed. Whatever the type or theme of the story, it should be clear to the students that the story should end with a message or lesson that shows how the story affected their lives and how they grew and saw the world in a different way. In other words, the audience should not just hear the details of an event or experience without being able to figure out the “so what?” conclusion.

For themes, it is probably best to assign the class a single theme or related themes. This should make it easier for the students to discern the lesson or moral in each story, and allow for comparison of stories and the students’ frames of references about the theme. Such themes may arise from current events, business trends, or campus activities that students have studied and are familiar with.

(2) *Structure:* The structure defines how the story is organized from start to finish. Story structures tend to differ from that taught in basic speech or a freshman essay: open with an attention-getting statement; give the audience a roadmap and message (thesis); provide relevant

and logical details to support the message; close with a “thus” statement that reinforces the message for the audience. A well-crafted story is more similar to a short story: open with a casual statement (“Once upon a time there was...”); provide details that may not seem connected or relevant; build up to a surprise ending that requires the audience to review the details in order to understand the moral. Creating an effective story structure requires that students learn to choose and strategically place the details that will hold the interest of the listeners and best convey the message.

Application to Oral Presentation

Stories are recommended for use as an advanced public speaking activity after students have learned and practiced the fundamentals of public speaking. The objective of using structured, thematic stories is for students to use personal experiences to craft a story that enhances the topic or issue of their presentation. Similar to a graphic or visual, the story is not the center of the presentation, though a well-crafted story may linger long after a presentation is made. From an ethical standpoint, audience members should not be manipulated by the use of the story as this may diminish trust. To help students understand and apply the concepts of theme and structure, the instructor may have students read good stories or share his or her favorite stories. Here is an example of a story (parable) that might be effective:

Two friends were traveling on a ferry from the city back to their village. They chatted excitedly about their encounters in the city market and what they planned to do once they got home. The other travelers knew the men well and shared in their excitement. At one of the stops, a stranger boarded the ferry and sat facing the men. He observed the camaraderie between them, and after listening to the men for some time, the stranger greeted them, smiled, and asked if they had any dreams and wishes. The men quickly responded that everyone has wishes, so they had

wishes. The stranger pondered for a minute then proposed that if the men told him their wishes, he would grant them. The two friends looked puzzled.

“You can grant our wishes?” asked one friend, jokingly.

“Oh, yes.” The stranger replied. “But with certain conditions.”

“What conditions?” the other friend asked.

“Whatever the first person wishes for, the other person gets twofold,” replied the stranger.

The two friends were unconvinced but started discussing what they might wish for. They also joked about who would go first. Then the discussion got serious.

“Well, why should I go first?” one friend asked, “You go first.”

“But you always get your way,” said the other. “You can be less selfish for once.”

As the men argued, their faces became stern, and it was apparent to the other passengers that the friends were getting angry toward each other. Finally, one friend volunteered to go first. The other friend was relieved but pleased that his friend was giving up. The friend who offered to go first turned to the stranger to speak his wish.

“I wish,” said the friend, and then paused. “I wish to be blind in one eye.

This story usually creates more discussion about some of the human nature and values. Students may have heard similar stories but did not evaluate them at a deeper, meaningful level as the exercise requires them to do. Afterwards, if time allows, students may test their stories in small groups and allow their group mates to give feedback on the theme and message and if the details were appropriate for the audience to understand and appreciate the story.

Also, because of the time constraints for telling the story (no more than four minutes), students will learn to adjust the details and decide, for example, when they allow the characters

in the story to speak directly or just report what the characters say. Some students prefer to videotape their practice as well.

Stories can also be applied to the process of working in teams.

Application to Teamwork

Learning to work in teams is an important critical skill for business employees, so in many business classes students are randomly assigned to teams. They may be meeting their team mates for the first time, and must quickly become acquainted and build the rapport necessary for them to collaborate on their tasks and projects. Letting the students work together on activities before the major team activities gives them a chance to get to know each other and to better understand each other's learning and working styles. For this activity the class is divided into teams of four students. Five specific elements of the course are selected. For example, the following could be used: ethics of a business or in a business scenario, intercultural business practices, technology used in the workplace, roles of groups, and nonverbal communication behaviors.

For the first activity the students on the team would be asked to work together and select one of the five areas mentioned (ethics, intercultural, technology, groups, or nonverbal). Together they will come up with a story that illustrates one aspect of the topic. For example, if the team chose ethics, the story could involve a situation and how ethics relates to solving the situation. The instructor then offers suggestions such as including characters in the story, say, the story must have a character named Felix. Other criteria could be added depending on how much perceived assistance the team might need. So, for step one the team will work together to write up the story. The team members will share the story with the instructor who can then decide if additional information should be included to help the students better frame their stories.

The next part of the activity requires each team member to select one of the remaining areas. Team members would then write individual stories. They would ask fellow team members to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. With the team story and four individual stories in hand, each team would vote to select the best of the five stories. The instructor would then provide an opportunity for each team to share the best story from the group with the rest of the class. Different strategies could be used such as presentation in front of the class, creating a video to post for all class members to view, or another format that would work well with the class.

The end result of this storytelling activity is to help students put concepts in their own words with examples they can follow and understand. They will get a chance to work individually and to work with other team members. They will be encouraged to proof their work for improvement. When the major assignment comes along, the team will already have some experience in working together which will make the project easier to comprehend and complete.

Feedback from Students

Whenever we have used storytelling, students display a range of emotions as they tell their stories and as they listen to their classmates' stories. Sometimes they express how grateful they are to be able to examine and share experiences that have clearly impacted their lives but they did not think about using as a story in a professional setting.

Some students will be overcome with emotions as they tell their stories, but in most cases they are able to regain composure so that the audience can fully appreciate the depth of their experience. Some students use artifacts that symbolize aspects of their stories. Of course, they must be reminded that stories need not be sad, but that happy moments in their lives are also good themes on which to build a narrative. In any case, it is a good opportunity for them to learn

that compelling stories tend to appeal to audiences and so the students have to expose themselves to more social and cultural experiences than what they have been used to.

Conclusion

The two approaches discussed in this article should provide a good foundation for building storytelling exercises in the business course. In the first, students create a story to use in an oral presentation and to present examples and a moral. In the second, storytelling is used as an activity for teams to use to begin the path of working together by using their creative ideas within a framework to assist each other in storytelling.

The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words may be revised to say that a good story is worth many cryptic PowerPoint slides (Cross, 2005). As noted psychologist Howard Gardner states, the “creation and articulation of stories constitutes a fundamental part” of leadership and professional success (1995, p. 43). We agree that good stories can help students get in touch with their experiences and create meaningful narratives that enhance the content of their presentations and the building of their relationships.

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Perceptions of Business Teacher Education Majors
Concerning Preparedness to Teach Personal Financial Literacy:
A case study of one teacher education cohort

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**Perceptions of business teacher education majors concerning preparedness to teach
personal financial literacy courses at the secondary level:
A case-study of one teacher education cohort**

Abstract

Personal financial literacy is a necessary skill for financially responsible adults. Although important, the skill is often overlooked in traditional secondary curriculums; or the concepts are buried within the content of other classes. The primary research question for this study asked: Do business teacher education candidates who complete the longitudinal development assignment feel more prepared to teach personal financial literacy than those business teacher education candidates who did not complete the development assignment?

A mixed methods study using survey research and qualitative analysis techniques of reflective essays was used to answer the research questions. The survey was administered to business teacher education candidates and/or graduates who had completed a technology class and a consumer education class between August 2011 and May 2014. The course curriculum in 2011 and 2012 did not include specific projects related to financial literacy. In 2013, a longitudinal project focused on financial literacy topics that spanned both classes was introduced. The majority of teacher education candidates teach financial literacy topics during one or more clinical experiences of pre-student teaching and student teaching; therefore, it is important for the business teacher education program to continue and enhance the teaching methodologies and content in the area of financial literacy.

**Perceptions of business teacher education majors concerning preparedness to teach
personal financial literacy courses at the secondary level:
A case-study of one teacher education cohort**

Introduction

Personal financial literacy is a necessary skill for financially responsible adults. According to Waldman, Bashaw, and Niederjohn (2012), “Economic and financial literacy serves the public interest in several ways . . . the costs of economic and financial illiteracy can be great. One needs to look no further than the financial crisis of 2007 – 2008 to find evidence of that” (p. 62). Chairperson of the Federal Reserve System, Ben Bernanke stated, “The financial preparedness of our nation's youth is essential to their well-being and of vital importance to our economic future” (2008). Although important, the skill is often overlooked in traditional secondary curriculums; or the concepts are buried within the content of other classes. The State of Illinois, recognizing the need for financial literacy education, now requires all secondary students to complete a minimum of nine-weeks of instruction in consumer education including the basics of financial literacy as a graduation requirement (Illinois Compiled Statutes 105 ILCS 5/27). In Illinois, the concepts of personal financial literacy can be taught in multiple classes such as economics, introduction to business, personal finance, or courses through the family and consumer sciences, social studies, or agriculture departments. At the present time, any teacher, regardless of academic background, who has met the requirements for endorsement in consumer economics, can teach financial literacy.

Business teacher education programs have incorporated personal finance and economics topics into the curriculum of future business teachers for decades (Clow, 2009). Due to focused preparation in economics and finance, business teachers are highly qualified to teach personal financial topics (Waldman, Bashaw, & Niederjohn, 2012); however, the self-efficacy to teach personal financial topics may be lower than desired (Way & Holden, 2010). Based upon

feedback from student teachers and cooperating teachers in 2010 and 2011, the program faculty revised two courses in the teacher education curriculum during 2012 in order to incorporate specific teaching strategies within the core content courses. The revised courses began in 2013. Although neither class focused on teaching methodologies, students created learning activities related to financial literacy by using iPads and mobile applications. Additionally, students in the classes utilized hands-on activities and multiple resources to learn and interact with the course material.

Utilizing social cognitive theory, self-efficacy in this study is defined as an individual's belief in the ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977). The primary objective of the study was to determine the self-efficacy of business teacher education candidates at the largest business teacher education program in Illinois.

Background

Way and Holden (2010) reported survey information about current teachers' self-efficacy for teaching personal financial literacy topics. The survey indicated that almost two-thirds of those teaching personal finance and consumer economics felt unqualified to teach financial literacy content based upon individual state standards and that just over one-third of the teachers had taken a college-level course in financial literacy. Way and Holden (2010) concluded, "Formal education is a predictor of teachers' own perceived competence to teach specific financial topics, so the fact that teachers are acquiring little formal education in personal finance is important" (p. 10).

The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (PCBEE) (2011) released Policy Statement 88 in 2011. Specifically, the PCBEE stated:

Because business educators have undergone rigorous training and are certified to teach accounting and finance, they are the most qualified to teach personal financial literacy.

We believe business educators must be vigilant in assuming the sole responsibility for teaching personal financial literacy and maintaining course integrity. (Policies

Commission for Business and Economic Education, 2011)

As part of the preparation to teach multiple business subjects, the Business Teacher Education program at Illinois State University requires all teacher candidates to complete multiple courses that incorporate financial literacy into the course requirements, including *Decision-Making for Consumers*, *Principles of Economics*, *Business Finance*, *Business Enterprise*, *Entrepreneurship*, and *Basics of Business, Accounting, and Marketing Teaching Methods*. No other teacher education program at the university requires as much coursework in the financial literacy field.

Research Question

The research question for this study asked: Do business teacher education candidates who complete the longitudinal development assignment in *BTE 225: Advanced Microcomputer Applications* (BTE 225) and *BTE 330: Decision Making for Consumers* (BTE 330) feel more prepared to teach personal financial literacy than those business teacher education candidates who did not complete the development assignment?

Longitudinal Development Assignment. Based upon feedback for the student teachers in 2010 and 2011, plus input from cooperating teachers and the program advisory committee, revisions to the two courses were made. The two courses designed to be taught in back-to-back semesters included the new course content beginning 2013. The changes included updating the technology course from Microsoft Office to a technology survey course incorporating knowledge of computer programming concepts, HTML, web design using Dreamweaver, Adobe Photoshop,

and current technologies as determined each semester. Students in the technology class use the skills learned to create a presentation about a financial literacy topic. The next semester, the student completed the consumer education course. The consumer education course is open to all majors in the university; therefore, updates to the consumer education course involved adding a teaching or presentation project that required all students to teach or present a 10-minute lesson on a specific financial literacy topic. The teaching/presentation project included a learning objective (main idea), instructional materials related to the objective (an activity), and a formative assessment (question/answer session).

Methodology. A mixed methods study using survey research (See Appendix A) and qualitative analysis techniques of reflective essays was administered to business teacher education candidates and/or graduates who had completed classes between August 2011 and May 2014. Students who completed the two courses in 2011 and 2012 did not complete the longitudinal development assignment. Students who completed the courses in 2013 and 2014 completed the longitudinal development assignment. Course objectives were the same during the observed time and taught by the same faculty member; however, students in the later classes were required to complete all projects with a focus on financial literacy. Students in the earlier classes selected a project from any business education topic.

Due to the small sample size ($n=20$), the surveys from both groups were analyzed using descriptive statistics only. Additionally, thematic coding of the reflective essays was conducted in order to determine the perceived level of readiness to teach personal financial literacy and to determine the differences, if any, in the perceptions of self-efficacy of the two groups of students.

Findings

Thirty-one students completed classes during 2011 - 2014. Twenty students responded to the survey for a response rate of 65%. Ten respondents were in the early courses and nine respondents were in the later group. One survey response was declared invalid because it was incomplete. Responses asking the respondents to rank their confidence level (0 = not confident at all, 10 = extremely confident) to teach personal financial literacy or related courses between the two groups showed no difference between the perceptions of the two groups (See Table 1). Students were also asked to indicate if they had taught a lesson in financial literacy as part of a class at the institution and/or during student teaching.

Table 1

Survey Results

	2011 – 2012	2013 – 2014
	Students n = 10	Students n = 9
Mean	7.85	7.94
Mode	8.00	8.00
Median	8.00	8.00
Standard Deviation	2.32	1.73
Taught a personal finance lesson at ISU	Yes = 7 No = 3	Yes = 6 No = 3
Taught a personal finance or related class during student teaching	Yes = 8 No = 2	Yes = 8 No = 1

Although the descriptive statistics did not indicate differences in the students' perceived self-efficacy, the qualitative responses to the questions did provide insight about the teacher education candidates and graduates concerning their perceptions of self-efficacy to teach personal financial literacy.

Discussion

Using qualitative thematic coding techniques, the reflective essays analyzed highlighted differences in the self-efficacy to teach financial literacy between the two groups. The first group of students reported feelings of unpreparedness to teach financial literacy as indicated by six of the 10 respondents stating that they "did not feel confident preparing activities, projects, or assessments." Additionally, students in the first group felt prepared to teach the basics but did not feel comfortable teaching specific topics in financial literacy. Respondents also reported that they understood the concepts of financial literacy but did not feel confident enough to teach others the skills required to be financially literate. The student teachers reported difficulties in designing specific lessons or activities related to financial literacy despite being comfortable creating generic lessons and activities in other topical areas.

All nine students in the second group reported feeling "very prepared" and "extremely prepared" to prepare activities, projects, and assessments in the area of financial literacy. Eight of the students taught at least one unit on financial literacy topics during student teaching. One student's placement was in a computer/technology lab. This student reported that during the unit on Excel, he taught the students how to use Excel to create a budget and to create a check register.

Based upon the responses, it appears that the focused project on financial literacy improved the student teachers' self-perceptions to teach financial literacy. When updating the curriculum, the

goal was to infuse not only computer content knowledge but also practical applications of financial literacy teaching. An added benefit to the course changes was an increase of approximately five percent in content exam scores between the first group and the second group of students. Several of the projects students created were incorporated into a new general education course, *Personal Financial Literacy for the College Student*, at the university.

Limitations. It is important to recognize that this was a small study with limited applicability to the overall population of business teacher education candidates at the institution or in the broader community beyond the institution. Additionally, business teacher education classes at the university are small, allowing for individual attention and opportunities for students to practice teaching skills within the classroom. All business teacher education candidates, in both groups, presented mini-lessons on financial literacy topics and/or technology tools within the business teacher education curriculum. Not all candidates have had the opportunity to teach lessons during a clinical classroom setting.

Next Steps

The majority of the students in the second group entered their final on-campus courses during the Fall 2014 semester where they completed multiple teaching methods classes and the final courses required for teacher certification through the College of Education. The students in the second group student taught during the Spring 2015 semester. Eight of the student teachers taught at least one lesson on financial literacy during student teaching. One student delayed student teaching to Fall 2015 to complete additional course work. All students received Excellent or Above Average ratings from the cooperating teachers who supervised them during the student teaching experience. They also scored in the upper-percentiles on the education teacher performance assessment that is required in Illinois.

Future Study

A related research study, conducted by the Finance Department, surveyed freshmen at the university about financial literacy. The same survey was administered to graduating seniors. The study was launched during the 2014-2015 academic year. An analysis of the results is underway. Additionally, a second study by this author is underway to determine the educational department and the faculty member's educational background to teach personal financial in secondary schools of Illinois. A third study, modeled after a national study on the same topic (Way & Holden, 2010), will seek to determine the dispositions towards, knowledge of, and thinking about the importance of teaching personal financial literacy of K-12 Teachers in Illinois Public Schools. Data collection is in progress.

Conclusions

Based upon the number of student teachers required to teach financial literacy topics during their clinical experience of student teaching, it is important for the business teacher education program to continue to enhance the teaching methodologies and content in the area of financial literacy. Additionally, incorporating financial literacy technology tools into the classroom through a targeted project provided the students with a higher degree of self-efficacy to teach financial literacy topics at the secondary level.

Summary

Financial literacy is an important topic in today's society. Each day, the media reports on a financial literacy topic ranging from the potential student loan crisis to individual bankruptcies, high consumer debt, and housing foreclosures. Currently 20 states, including Illinois, require personal finance information to be incorporated into at least one course. Four states require at least one full semester dedicated to personal financial literacy instruction (Jump\$art Coalition

for Personal Financial Literacy, 2014). It is important that those who teach the courses be highly qualified in the field. Business teacher educators have the content knowledge background, and teacher education candidates are receiving dedicated instruction in how to teach financial literacy topics of personal financial literacy and economics that are embedded in the university curriculum that business teacher candidates complete (Clow, 2009). The longitudinal financial literacy project completed by the business teacher education candidates in this study indicate that self-efficacy to teach financial literacy improved for this group of students when compared to the previous cohort that did not complete a dedicated project in financial literacy. The project has become a required component of classes in the business teacher education curriculum.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. Which class or classes did you complete in your BTE Program with Dr. Davis?
 - BTE 225 Fall 2011
 - BTE 225 Fall 2012
 - BTE 225 Spring 2013
 - BTE 225 Fall 2013
 - BTE 330 Fall 2011
 - BTE 330 Fall 2012
 - BTE 330 Fall 2013
2. Based upon the "new technologies" project completed in BTE 225, how confident are you in your ability to teach personal financial literacy or related courses at the secondary level? (Related courses could include Introduction to Business, Consumer Economics, Decision-making for Consumers, etc.)
 - a. (0 being not confident at all; 10 being extremely confident).
3. Based upon the information taught and research project completed in BTE 330, how confident are you in your ability to teach personal financial literacy or related courses at the secondary level? (Related courses could include Introduction to Business, Consumer Economics, Decision-making for Consumers, etc.)
 - a. (0 being not confident at all; 10 being extremely confident).
4. Based upon the technology tools presented in BTE 225 and/or BTE 330, how confident are you in your ability to teach personal financial literacy or related courses at the secondary level? (Related courses could include Introduction to Business, Consumer Economics, Decision-making for Consumers, etc.)
 - a. (0 being not confident at all; 10 being extremely confident).
5. Did you teach a micro-lesson in personal financial literacy or a related course during your classes at ISU? (i.e. during your TCH/C&I classes or one of your BTE classes)
6. Did you teach a personal financial literacy or related course during your student teaching?
7. Are you a graduate of the BTE program or a continuing student in the program?
8. Which course or courses have you taught at the secondary level?
9. In your own words, describe how you feel about your level of preparedness to teach personal financial literacy or related courses at the high school level. Include information about what was or was not included in your courses at ISU and what could be added to courses at ISU to better prepare future business teachers in this area.
10. In your opinion, were the technology tools presented to you beneficial to your preparation to become a teacher of any business subject area? Please explain.

Methodological Issues in Estimating Local Economic Impact:

A Case Study on Midwestern State University

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Abstract

This essay describes methodological pitfalls common to studies of the economic impact of colleges and universities. We address problems in these studies pertaining to the specification of the counterfactual, the definition of the local area, the identification of “new” expenditures, the tendency to double count economic impacts, the role of local taxes, and the omission of local spillover benefits from enhanced human capital created by higher education, and offer several suggestions for improvement. If these economic impact studies were conducted at the level of accuracy most institutions require of faculty research, their claims of local economic benefits would not be so preposterous, and, as a result, trust in and respect for higher education officials would be enhanced. In estimating the economic impact of Midwestern State University, including its athletic programs, on the Wichita Falls metro area, this study uses a model based on RIMS-II multipliers from the Bureau of Economic Analysis that have been specifically developed for the North Central Texas region.

Methodological Issues in Estimating Local Economic Impact:

A case study on Midwestern State University

Colleges and universities often use exaggerated claims about their ability to stimulate the local economy. One of the purposes of this paper is to describe some common pitfalls to these impact studies, and to provide a better model for estimating the local economic impact of colleges and universities.

Purpose of this Study

Estimating the economic impact of a college or university, including its athletic programs, on a region can be extremely complex. More troubling is the potential for biased (Bourdieu, 1999) results. Although many studies regarding university economic impact have been conducted, they are often based upon the researchers' personal perception, slanted to appease the sponsoring agent, and often on questionable methodology. In this paper, we review previous economic impact studies with the goal of avoiding some of the methodological pitfalls that have accompanied previous studies. As a case study, this paper analyzes the economic impact of Midwestern State University (MSU) and its athletic programs on the regional economy. More specifically, the study seeks to determine the economic impact of MSU on the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Statistical area (MSA) for 2010-11. Coinciding with a recurrent five-year time frame for purposes of updating the impact analysis, this time period is further relevant due to a newly proposed sports (baseball) program. However, the purpose of this study is to summarize the totality of the economic activity generated by MSU, not just the impact stemming from its

athletic programs. The study is based on fiscal year 2011 (September 1, 2010 – August 31, 2011), which coincides with the academic year 2010-2011. MSU, located in Wichita Falls, Texas, is a co-educational institution with approximately 6,400 students. The comprehensive university is made up of six colleges: business administration, education, liberal arts, science and mathematics, fine arts and health and human services. Each college offers both undergraduate and graduate (Master's) degrees.

Literature Review of Economic Impact Studies

With respect to colleges and universities, Caffrey and Isaacs (1971) produced a systematic template to organize the measurement of economic impacts. Since 1971, the number of impact studies has grown with ever more complexity built into them. In a review completed prior to 1992, Leslie and Slaughter (1992) survey numerous economic impact studies. In addition to Caffrey and Isaacs, and Leslie and Slaughter, other contributions to the college/university economic impact literature include a study by Beck, Elliott, Meisel and Wagner (1995). The authors propose new methodologies and attempt to account for short-run and long-run flows. The long run is the conceptual time in which there are no significant changes in the output level while the short-run flows reflect a change in a variable that is different than just a change with the general economy. Brown and Heaney (1997) discuss the traditional "economic-base" approach while Felsenstein (1996) and Blackwell, Cobb and Weinberg (2002) use as an example of a university's impact on a metropolitan area.

In the analysis that follows, we address common methodological challenges that affect the accuracy and reliability of these estimates. For regional economic analysis, the proper procedure is to compare economic indicators in the presence of the institution with predictions

of those same indicators without the local presence of the college – that is, compare actual to “counterfactual” outcomes.

From this perspective, the portion of an institution’s economic activity that would remain in the local area, even without the institution, is not a contribution to the local economy. Few studies of the local economic impact of colleges and universities explicitly take into account such a counterfactual.

Every impact study should articulate the counterfactual it uses at the beginning of the report, and thereafter it should adhere to it relentlessly. If the study compares economic activity in the area to a prediction of what would have occurred if the college was not present, then the net economic impact would be considerable smaller. Someone who is visiting a region for business purposes may want to take in a university sponsored lecture, theatrical play, or sporting event. In any region, there is significant overlap between colleges, firms and industries. An example of this would be to calculate the contribution of every firm in a region. The sum of the contribution of the firms would be greater than the true volume of dollars circulating in the economy (Feldman, 2000). Thus, we must look at the interconnectedness of colleges with a region and consider the overlap with industries and other firms. Use of RIMS II multipliers from a regional input-output matrix allows one to capture the interplay from the various sectors and industries comprising a region.

Review on Economic Impact of College Athletic Programs

The consideration of the addition of a new sports program to a college or university often triggers an economic impact study. Such studies are primarily performed by consultants hired by local institutions to demonstrate the value of a proposed sporting facility (Johnson & Sack, 1996). Economic impact studies of sporting events are often controversial because of their

potential for biased results. Problems with these studies include: first, the use of different and conflicting concepts as well as the multiplier itself (Howard & Crompton, 1995). The economic impact from sporting events is typically derived by estimating the overall change in economic activity resulting from such events. The resulting economic change results from activity involving the acquisition, operation, development, and use of public facilities and services (Lieber & Alton, 1983). In turn, those initial investments generate visitors' spending, public spending, employment opportunities, and tax revenue. The economic impacts of expenditure are composed of direct, indirect, and induced effects where direct effects are the purchases needed to meet the increased demand of visitors for goods and services. Indirect effects come from additional rounds of re-circulating the initial dollars. Induced effects are the increases in household income that result from the economic activity fueled by the direct and indirect effects (Dawson, Blahna, & Keith, 1993; Howard & Crompton, 1995).

Secondly, inclusion of local spectators, time-switchers, and casuals in the study pose another serious problem when estimating the impact of local sporting events. "Time-switchers" are visitors who had been planning a visit to the region prior to the event, but scheduled the timing of their visit to coincide with the event. "Casuals" are visitors who were already in the region, attracted by other offerings, perhaps even visiting friends and relatives. In both cases, the impact of these visitors on the community would have occurred without the event. The event was not the reason they came to the city. Economic impacts attributable to sporting events should include only external flows injected into an economy by visitors and other external businesses such as media, banks, and investors from outside the community.

In addition, because expenditures by time-switchers and casuals would have occurred without the event, impacts of their expenditures should be excluded, especially if it is net

economic effects that are being estimated. Yet, in many cases, only gross benefits rather than net benefits are measured and reported. Estimates of expenditures derived from surveys should explicitly address this issue with a question as to primary purpose for being in the area.

Thirdly, economic impact studies by hired consultants often estimate only positive aspects, ignoring potential economic costs. In the case of non-economic impact, negative social impacts including such possibilities as traffic congestion and disruption of residents' lifestyle are rarely reported. Finally, the results and their interpretations could be changed based on the intent of the researchers, especially with regard to paid studies.

Methodology

The basic procedure in conducting an economic impact study is to sum expenditures of the college community (students, faculty, staff and visitors) created by the presence of the institution, including any university sponsored sporting activity, and then apply multipliers to account for the interdependency of economic activity in a local economy.

Inputs into a college impact analysis include: direct employment and payroll, less federal taxes; expenditures for equipment, supplies and services; construction costs; spending in the local community by faculty members, administrative staff and students; tuition and fees paid by students from outside the local area and by local students who would alternatively have attended college elsewhere; and expenditures by visitors who visit the campus for academic and/or athletic events. Multipliers are applied to these direct expenditures to account for indirect and induced impacts.

The appropriateness of the size and type of multipliers used for conducting economic impact analysis is critical when conducting economic impact analysis. The multiplier effect accounts for the net economic impact of those direct expenditures. The effect of income multipliers illustrates

the process through which initial spending in a region generates further rounds of spending within the region. The basic principle of the multiplier effect begins with an initial round of spending and its impact on increased income into an economy. A portion of the increased income is spent and further re-spent within the region (Archer, 1984; Crompton, 1995; Wang, 1997).

There are three elements that contribute to the total impact of visitor spending. Direct impacts result from first-round effect of visitor spending or initial community investments. Indirect impacts come from the ripple effect of additional rounds of re-circulating the initial dollars spent. And induced impacts stem from further ripple effects caused by employees of impacted business spending some of their salaries and wages in other business in the host community (Howard & Crompton, 1995).

A variety of modeling techniques are available for determining multipliers. Among the more popular are the Regional Input-output Modeling System, version II (RIMS II) developed by Wang, 1997; and Impact Analysis for Planning (IMPLAN) developed by Bushnell & Hyle, 1985 (Dawson, Blahna, Keith, 1993; Donnelly, et al., 1998; Howard & Crompton, 1995; Wang, 1997). The IMPLAN develops input-output models used to estimate the employment, income, and net sales for all states and counties in the United States. The RIMS II model, which was developed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) offers input-output tables down to the county level. RIMS II multipliers which examine the flows of goods and services among the disaggregated industries within the specified geographic market (Turkco and Kelsey, 1992) is the model of choice for this study.

Empirical Results

Higher education has a significant impact on the Texas economy, fueling the Texas economic engine with over \$33 billion per year. Likewise; a small university such as Midwestern

State University (MSU) with its athletic program has a significant impact on the regional economy, boosting local incomes by over one third of a billion dollars in 2010. Considering that the Wichita Falls MSA, composed of the Counties of Wichita, Archer, and Clay in the north central Texas area, has a gross regional product of just under \$6 billion, MSU accounts for a significant proportion (about 6.2%) of the area’s gross regional product. MSU generates its revenue of approximately \$90 million annually from state funding, local tuition and fees, and other sources. The sources of revenue are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Sources of Revenue (in \$mil.)	
Net Tuition and Fees	\$ 30.1
State Funds	\$ 30.8
Federal Funds	\$ 12.6
Private Funds	\$ 3.6
Investment Income	\$.8
Auxiliary & Others	\$ 11.1
Total	\$ 89.0

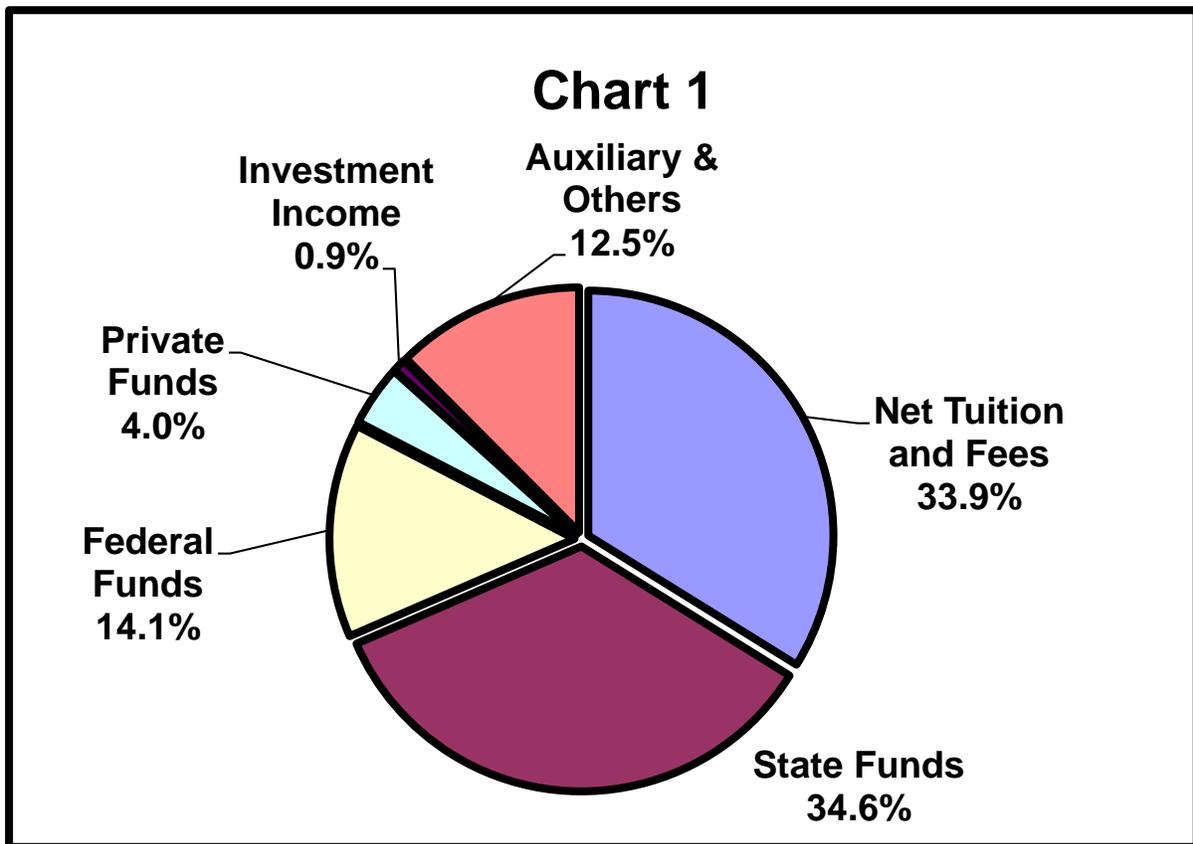
Source: MSU Fiscal Year 2011 Financial Report

A statement summarizing the revenues is helpful in the analyses. This is the statement that summarizes Midwestern State University's revenues:

Midwestern State University has several major sources of current operating revenues, used to pay for daily operations. Of roughly \$89.0 million in total resources available in fiscal year 2011, 34.6% was in the form of state funding; 33.9% net tuition and fees; and the remaining 31.5% from other sources, as shown in Chart 1.

For each \$1.00 the State of Texas invested in Midwestern State University, the University generated an additional \$1.42 to cover its expenses from all other sources. The share of state funding has been declining significantly over the years. Just 10 years ago, state funding accounted for approximately 45% of the total revenue for the university.

Next, inserting charts to visually depict the sources of income helps the reader understand where the numbers used in the impact study derive from.



The following explanations summarize the details of the numbers that will also help the reader. For example, the number of full-time and part time employees and the associated payroll and accompanying tables to give more precise details:

Midwestern State University makes an important direct economic contribution to the economy of the Wichita Falls area. During academic year 2010-2011, the university employed 724 faculty and staff members. Additionally, 795 part-time student workers were employed by the institution, giving a total of 1,519 employees, including faculty, staff, and students, on the payroll at MSU. During the same academic year, \$37.4 million was paid in the form of wages and salaries to these individuals. From September 2010 through August 2011, MSU spent approximately \$35.8 million for utilities, materials, supplies, equipment, repairs, travel, payroll related costs, and insurance. The total 2010-2011 university expenditures were \$99.6 million as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 MSU Economic Impact Academic Year 2010 – 2011	
The University	
	(In \$mi.)
Wages and Salaries	\$37.4
Utilities, supplies, equipment, repairs, travel, insurance, etc.	\$35.8
Sub-Total	\$73.2
Scholarship and financial aids	\$10.3
Scholarship discounts and allowances	\$10.4
Construction	\$5.7
Sub-Total	\$26.4
Total	\$99.6
The Students	
Two regular semesters (\$11,754 X 6,400)	\$75.2
Summer Semester	\$18.8
Sub-Total	\$94.0
- Scholarship and financial aids	-\$10.2
- Scholarship discounts and allowances	-\$10.4
Sub-Total	-\$20.6
Total	\$73.4
The Visitors	
\$148*34,840	\$5.2
Total	\$5.2
Grand Total	\$178.2
Regional Multiplier	2.03
Regional Expenditures Impact	\$361.7
Total Gross Regional Product	\$5,744.0
Percent of Gross Regional Product	6.3%

The following paragraphs provide additional details that were considered in these analyses.

In addition, MSU spent \$10.2 million for scholarships and financial aids during the academic year. Tuition exemptions in the form of scholarship discounts and allowances totaled \$10.4 million and construction outlays during the year amounted to \$5.7 million. Please note that in the strict sense, scholarship discounts and allowances are potential income not collected and a non-expenditure item. Altogether, the university was directly responsible for expenditures of \$94.0 million during the academic year.

The existence of Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls brings students to Wichita County. Furthermore, it keeps students in the Wichita Falls area who otherwise would have left to pursue their education or career preparation in other areas. A recent survey of students found that students spent, for everything other than tuition and fees, an average of \$11,754 for the two academic semesters. The original student survey was conducted in 2000. The amount in table 2 is adjusted for inflation. The enrollment over the nine-month period in academic year 2010-2011 was 6,400 students. Total expenditures for the nine-month period by MSU students are estimated to have been approximately \$75.2 million. The two summer sessions combined equal 20 percent of the total spending of the two regular semesters. Therefore, the combined student expenditures for the academic year totaled \$94.0 million. To avoid double counting, scholarship and financial aids in the amount of \$10.2 million was subtracted from the expenditures. Scholarship discounts and allowances in the amount of \$10.4 million were also deducted from the overall amount of expenditures, leaving the net total student expenditures of \$73.4 million.

Rough estimates show that during the academic year 2010-2011, there were 34,840 individuals from outside Wichita Falls who visited the Midwestern State University campus to

attend various events, ranging from Artist/Lecture Series programs to the numerous sports events. Estimates are that each visitor spent \$148.00, resulting in a total outlay of \$5.2 million.

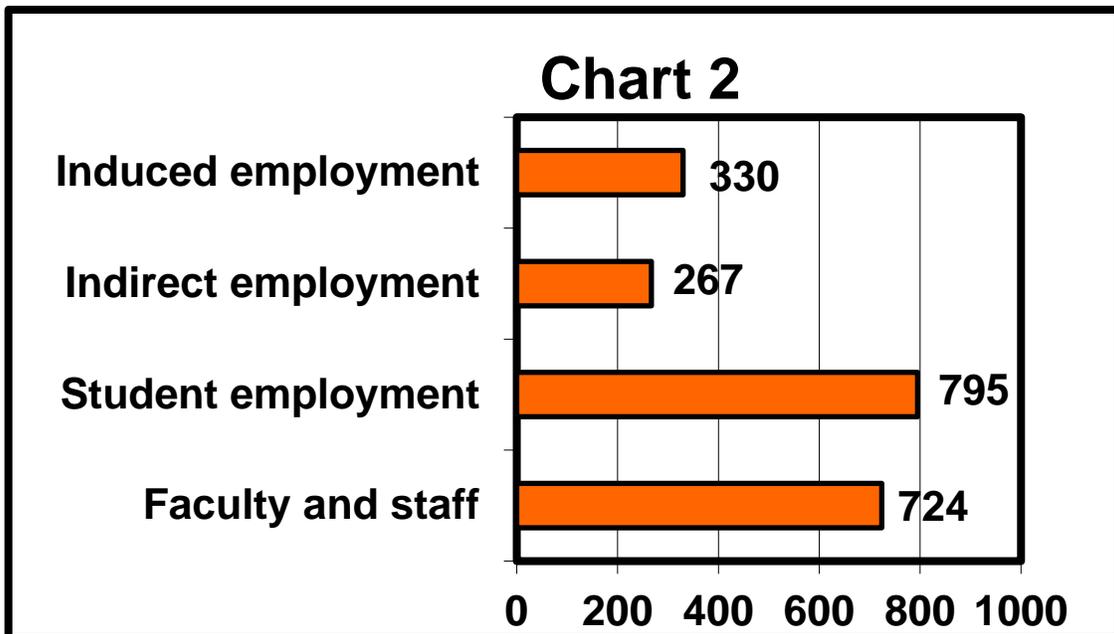
Overall, Midwestern State University was responsible for direct expenditures totaling \$178.2 million as shown in Table 2. The direct expenditures generate a multiplier effect within the regional economy. Resulting from the direct expenditures, local businesses will, in turn, make purchases from other local businesses to support direct expenditures. Each dollar associated with the direct expenditures will generate an additional \$.74 of indirect expenditures. In addition to the direct and indirect effects, an induced effect also arises from the revenue received by local businesses. Some of these receipts are paid to employees and other suppliers which, in turn, are used for a second round of spending, some of which will be local. Altogether, the multiplier effect from the indirect and induced effect produces an overall multiplier of 2.03, meaning that each dollar of direct spending produces \$1.03 of additional spending. The multipliers used in this study were derived from BEA's RIMs II multipliers for North Central Texas area.

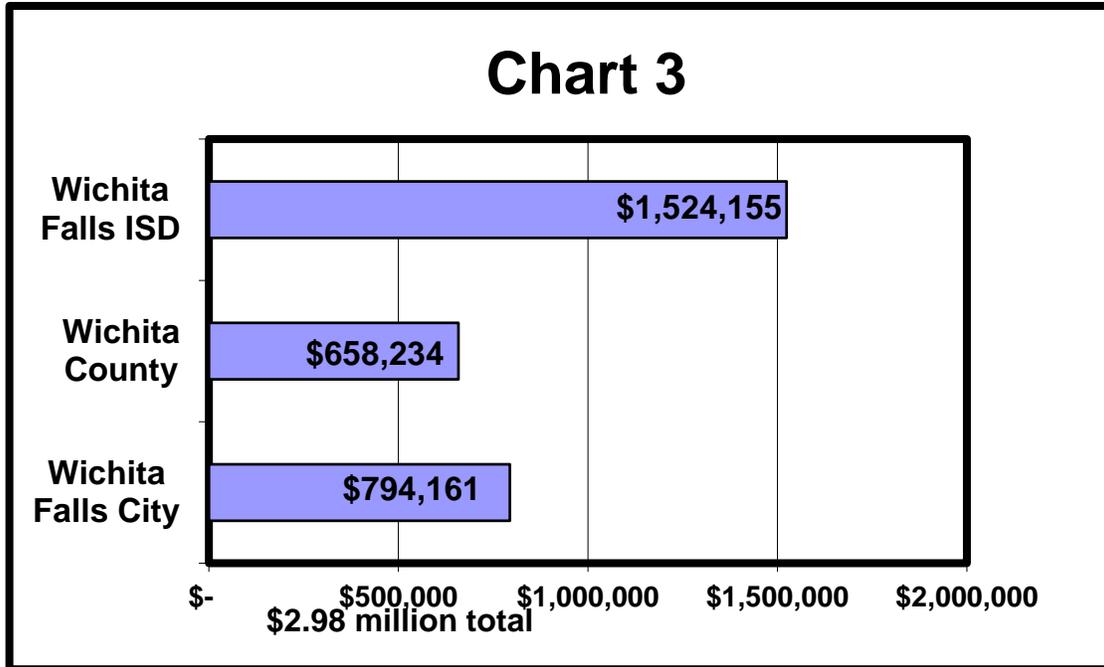
Given the above expenditures (\$178.2 million) and using the multiplier of 2.03, it is estimated that the total economic impact generated in the Wichita Falls area by Midwestern State University was \$361.7 million for the academic year 2010-2011. The total economic impact of Midwestern State University represents approximately 6.3 percent of the total gross regional product of the Wichita Falls MSA.

The economic impact of Midwestern State University on the Wichita Falls area is significant in another way. During the academic year, the university employed 1,519 individuals, as shown in Chart 2. Through the employment multiplier effect, the university is responsible for an additional 597 indirect and induced jobs in the Wichita Falls area.

The university also contributed, directly and indirectly, to the tax revenue of the Wichita Falls Independent School District, the City of Wichita Falls, and Wichita County. As shown in Chart 3, MSU was directly and indirectly responsible for almost \$3 million in local tax revenue.

Local tax revenues are generated through sales and property taxes. Sales tax revenues are calculated by applying local sales tax rates to the total spending stream, from both direct and indirect sources, generated by the university’s presence. The presence of the institution also creates direct housing needs for students and faculty as well as for all other university employees. Additionally, other housing needs are created through the indirect effects created from university-related spending. Local property tax revenues are applied to the total value of the additional housing values created to arrive at the sum total of property revenues generate.





Disclosures

The economic impact of a college or university (or college or university program) can be calculated by applying RIMS II multipliers derived from BEA regional data to spending estimates derived from surveys of students and visitors and from state and local funding sources. However, disclosures must be made to inform the reader that there is more to the story. Here is an example of a disclosure:

The economic impact of Midwestern State University on the local income, employment, and tax base is significant, as shown above. But, this does not tell the whole story. Because it is difficult to measure, the analysis used in this study cannot account for many other intangible benefits of higher education, including the general advancement of knowledge and cultural enrichment of the community. When it comes to MSU or any other institution of higher education, the stakes are much higher than short run economic impact. We are investing in our most important venture -- our workforce skills and thus the future viability of the regional economy.

The faculty and students of the university make, for example, contributions to local culture - theater, music performances, museums, and art exhibitions, thereby improving the quality of life of all the residents in the Wichita Falls area. Nor does the study account for the university's function in attracting firms and workers from other communities, research and development spin-offs, development of small businesses, and the other economic development in the local economy.

Through its business centers, Midwestern State University often serves as stimulus for economic development. The business centers promote new entrepreneurial growth through such programs as "Idea Wichita Falls" and "Idea MSU," small business plan competitions and support of a local angel investor group for new entrepreneurial activity. The university also enhances the quality of the local workforce, thereby improving the competitiveness of the regional economic base.

This study, furthermore, does not provide an estimate of incremental lifetime incomes to the local areas. These "difficult-to-measure" contributions of the university to the community may turn out to be of more importance than the dollar amount estimated in this study.

Conclusions

Economic impact analyses of colleges and universities and their programs are useful and necessary. This paper describes problems with methodology that are common to studies of the economic impact of colleges and universities. We address problems in these studies by using surveys and RIMS II regional data along with multipliers for the data pertaining to the specification of the counterfactual, the definition of the local area, the identification of "new" expenditures, the tendency to double count economic impacts, the role of local taxes, and the

omission of local spillover benefits from enhanced human capital created by higher education, and offer several suggestions for improvement. The result of the correct economic impact studies is trust in and respect for the analyses provided by higher education officials.

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Developing Instructional Strategies to Promote and Sustain
Student Motivation to Learn in Online Courses

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Abstract

This study presents the result of conducting a comprehensive literature review related to instructional strategies that can be used to promote and sustain students' motivation to learn in online courses. One of the most important aspects of teaching effectiveness is to design and deliver course content in a way that would foster student motivation to learn. The following instructional strategies emerged as a result of conducting an extensive literature review and can be used to motivate students to learn in online courses: Understanding motivational models, using social media, using technology-based games, creating dynamic interaction, and providing sufficient feedback to the students.

Developing Instructional Strategies to Promote and Sustain Student Motivation to Learn in Online Courses

One of the most important aspects of teaching effectiveness is to design and deliver course content in a way that would foster student motivation to learn (Anderman, Andrzejewski, & Allen, 2011). Research "has shown that students who are motivated, engaged, and interactive are more likely to be successful in an online classroom" (Finamore, Hochanadel, Hochanadel, Millam, & Reinhardt, 2012, para. 1). This study presents the result of conducting a comprehensive literature review related to instructional strategies that can be used to promote and sustain students' motivation to learn in online courses.

Motivational Instructional Strategies

The following instructional strategies emerged as a result of conducting an extensive literature review and can be used to motivate students to learn in online courses.

Understanding Motivational Models

Instructors must understand the various theories and models that can be used to motivate students to want to learn. This section overviews the three most cited models and/or theories found in the literature: Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Examination Theory, Keller's (1987) Motivation Model, and Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory.

Self-Determination Theory. This theory categorizes motivation into two areas: autonomous and controlled. Whenever instructors create a learning environment that supports three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competency, and relatedness), autonomous

student motivation is high. On the other hand, whenever the learning environment is established with controlled motivation, the three basic psychological needs are not supported and, consequently, student motivation decreases (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008).

In the online learning environment, the same situation applies. Online students report a high level of motivation if they feel autonomous; competent; and related to course content, instructor, and other students (Schuetz, 2008). By autonomous, this researcher does not mean isolation. Instead, it means that online students are encouraged and motivated to engage in independent thinking exercises and held responsible for engaging in self-discovery learning activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomous motivation "involves the experience of volition and choice, whereas controlled motivation involves the experience of being pressured or coerced" (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006, p. 19). Online instructors must develop ways to promote self-determined or autonomous motivation because it is the one that yields the most positive learning outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006; Schuetz, 2008).

Keller's Motivational Model. This model consistently emerges from the literature on the topic of motivation in online courses (ChanLin, 2009). Keller's model focuses on Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (ARCS). In this model, Kuhl (1987) added volition and defined it as self-regulated strategies used to overcome challenges associated with factors that negatively impact the success of students. The ARCS Model can be described as follows: online instructors must be able to find effective ways to keep the *attention* of their students by making course content *relevant*. Online instructors must build students' *self-confidence* through positive and immediate feedback that, eventually, leads to *student satisfaction*, as students are exposed to new learning strategies, such as the use of social media that foster increased student motivation (Keller, 1987).

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory. This model considers student self-efficacy as an essential part of motivation because it maintains students engaged in the learning process. Self-efficacy "is predicated on students' perception that they can persist at achieving e-tasks and goals that affect motivation" (Finamore, Hochanadel, Hochanadel, Millam, & Reinhardt, 2012, para. 16). The use of social media may assist instructors in maintaining student self-efficacy and motivation (Jonker, Elferink-Gemser, Toering, Lyons, & Visscher, 2010).

Using Social Media

Social media sites are being used all over the world as a means of communication. People are using social media sites to communicate and interact with others (Dyrud, 2011; Smith, 2011). For example, Facebook reached the 750-million active-member mark in the summer of 2011 (Kincaid, 2011). In addition, the top 10 social media sites have reached a total of 2.9 billion registered users ("Top 10 Social Networking Sites," 2011). In other words, "we are becoming symbiotic with our computer tools, growing into interconnected systems that remember less by knowing information than by knowing where the information can be found" (Sparrow, Liu, & Wegner, 2011, p. 4).

Online instructors should take advantage of the staggering statistics related to social media usage to motivate students in their online courses. For instance, "in August 2011, 65% of adult Internet users said they use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn, an increase from 61% a year prior" (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011, p. 2). They also found that "83% of Internet users aged 18-29, and 70% of Internet users aged 30-49 use social networking sites" (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011, p. 4).

Lofstrum and Nevgi (2006) provided a framework that uses eight social constructivism principles to integrate innovative technologies into the learning environment of the classroom,

both effectively and efficiently. Gaytan (2013) used this framework to provide classroom applications for each of the eight principles contained in the framework to demonstrate a method to integrate social media into the learning environment of their classrooms effectively. This integration of social media into the curriculum increases student motivation and engagement and overall academic achievement in online courses (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). Some examples of the most popular social media that instructors may use in the online learning environment include Twitter, Facebook, Animoto, and Simple Truths (Finamore, Hochanadel, Hochanadel, Millam, & Reinhardt, 2012). In the case of Twitter, it has been described as an electronic service that can be used by people to communicate and remained connected through the electronic exchange of brief, immediate, and frequent messages called "tweets" (Twitter, 2013).

Instructors can take advantage of this frequent, immediate, and short communication by posting "tweets" that can be read by students on their cell phones, tablets, laptops, or desktop computers. This instructional strategy is supported by current research that recommends a high level of constant and consistent faculty-student and student-student interactions (Gaytan, 2011, 2013). This communication process can be enhanced if online instructors connect their Twitter to their Facebook accounts and invite their students to join. Because students visit their Facebook pages several times a day, they can immediately see their online instructors' tweets. This instructional strategy becomes very effective in the online learning environment (Finamore, Hochanadel, Hochanadel, Millam, & Reinhardt, 2012).

For instance, instructors can post a video or a lesson module to reinforce the concepts previously presented using the online course management system (e.g., Blackboard). This instructional strategy is very effective because students perceive social media as a "relaxed"

setting to interact with their online instructors. Because there is evidence to suggest that students use social media to share their own academic achievements, the integration of social media into the learning environment of the online course has the potential to develop a "sense of community among students from different sections and classes and, perhaps, at different points in their degree program" (Finamore, Hochanadel, Hochanadel, Millam, & Reinhardt, 2012, para. 24).

In short, there exists "an emerging interest in sharing academic achievements through social sites" (Yan, 2008, p. 27). In addition, it should be noted that the integration of social media into the curriculum of an online course may be necessary to address the various student learning styles, as some students may very well prefer to learn through networking in social media sites.

Regarding Animoto, online instructors can use this website to develop instructional videos using PowerPoint slides, pictures, text, and music. Animoto is free of charge, very easy to use, and can be shared widely through a hyperlink that can be posted in an email, Facebook, Twitter, or any other social medium. In terms of Simple Truths, these are brief movies, based on inspirational stories that can be sent to the students via a hyperlink as well. Because of the inspirational nature of the story portrayed in the short movie, many students become motivated to learn. The impact of Simple Truths is remarkable because "today, more than 75,000 people each day around the world are watching an inspirational movie from Simple Truths" (Simple Truths, 2013, para. 2).

Using Technology-Based Games

Technology-based games have been found to have a positive impact on student engagement and motivation (Draughn & Gaytan, 2010; Williamson, 2007). Student engagement is critical to learning because:

It is perhaps the key element for almost any learning context. When engaged, learners are enthusiastic and excited about the subject. Their work is informed by the enjoyment of discovery. Engaged learners work willingly, instead of by coercion, and approach their assignments as something that matters to them personally. The spirit engendered by engaged learners in a course is infectious, spreading among and sustaining all participants. (Brown et al., 2010, para. 1)

Making learning fun "does not require huge investments in technology. Instead, focusing on the ways that entertainment technology engages us can result in methods that we can transfer to any learning situation" (Smith-Robbins, 2011, para. 13).

Creating Dynamic Interaction

Course interaction is directly impacted by the delivery method and the technologies used in online courses. Interaction is defined as communication among the participants of the online course (Bernard et al., 2009). "Every effort should be made to ensure a high-level of interaction between students and faculty and among students" (Gaytan & McEwen, 2007, p. 130). This high-level of interaction is referred to as *dynamic interaction* because it is intense, constant, consistent, engaging, and meaningful (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). Because online interaction has a positive impact on student achievement (Gaytan, 2006), instructors must aim at achieving dynamic interaction in their online courses (Bernard et al., 2009). Researchers (Bocchi, Eastman, and Swift, 2004) found that increased interaction produced more student motivation to learn, overall satisfaction with the online course, and increased learning. Instructors must assess the dynamic interaction in their online courses (Gaytan, 2006, 2007; Gaytan & McEwen, 2007; McEwen & Gaytan, 2006; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006).

Because online students usually drop the course when they experience technical difficulties (Bernard et al., 2009), online instructors should design ice-breaking activities at the beginning of the term that allow students to introduce each other in a more relaxed setting, while they learn how to use the discussion tools. These exercises empower online students to learn the online technologies very well. Research has shown that online students, having a good understanding of online learning technologies, become very successful in online courses. Online instructors must always be willing to troubleshoot any technical problems that their students may experience (Bernard et al., 2009).

Interaction in an online course is classified into three types: student-to-student, student-instructor, and student-content interaction. Student-to-student interaction is “desirable both for cognitive purposes and motivational support, and indeed, is at the heart of notions about constructivist learning environments in distance education” (Bernard et al., 2009, p. 1248). Online instructors should encourage their students to learn from their peers through discussions and feedback (Conaway, Easton, & Schmidt, 2005). Some of the instructional strategies that can be used to increase student-to-student interaction in an online course include the assignment of roles to students. For instance, one student could be given the "clarifier" role, another could be the "example giver." Yet, another one could be the "moderator" (i.e., reviews postings before they are made public). Another instructional strategy is to use group blogs to solve problems and to engage in reflective exercises (Bernard et al., 2009).

In terms of student-instructor interaction, online instructors must motivate students to do well in the course and convince them that self-motivation and self-direction are extremely important to their success in the online course (Bernard et al., 2009). Communication may include phone, chats, discussion boards, and email. Face-to-face communication may be

achieved if the course is blended or if the students take face-to-face courses at the same educational institution (Bernard et al., 2009). For instance, a strategy that online instructors could use to motivate students involves convincing students to post a picture of themselves to make online communication more personal. This strategy works well to form a learning community because students begin to connect names and faces together. In addition, whenever the online instructor shares personal stories with the students, students feel that they can do the same thing.

Finally, student-content interaction takes place when online students interact with the content of the course to an extent that it changes their perceptions, cognitive structures, perspectives, and overall understanding of the course material. In other words, students begin to construct their own meaning of the material presented and use this new understanding to solve problems and construct additional knowledge. An example of this type of interaction is when online students watch videos or use computer simulations (Bernard et al., 2009). Student-student and student-instructor interaction, when achieved successfully, can lead to an improved form of student-content interaction. That is, “due to increasing computational power...and storage capacity of computers...there is pressure and opportunity to transform student-student and student-instructor interaction into enhanced forms of student-content interaction” (Anderson, 2003, p. 3). This "enhanced" form of student-content interaction has a positive effect on student motivation,

. . .as long as one of the three forms of interaction (student-teacher; student-student; student-content) is at a high level. The other two may be offered at minimal levels, or even eliminated without degrading the educational experience...High levels of more than one of these three modes will likely provide a more satisfying educational experience,

though these experiences may not be as cost or time effective as less interactive learning sequences. (Anderson, 2003, p. 4)

Providing Sufficient Feedback to the Students

To maintain students interested in an online course, instructors must provide feedback to their students. This feedback must be immediate, detail-oriented, constant, consistent, and personalized. This way, students are able to incorporate the feedback given to improve performance in future assignments. Using Microsoft Word's "track changes" feature is an excellent way to provide valuable feedback to each online student. Because this feature is not always known to online students, Microsoft has a wonderful video that does an excellent job explaining the "track changes" feature (Anderman, Andrzejewski, & Allen, 2011). Today, having cell phones and other portable electronic devices allows instructors and students to respond immediately to messages. It is a communication culture that must be established. There is no excuse for an online instructor to take longer than one day to respond to a student question. In fact, it should be immediate. The same applies to the online student.

Students need to be taught the importance of giving meaningful names to their files. Having several files named "Assignment 1" does not help the online instructor and the students. Most importantly, students need to provide meaningful feedback to their online instructors. This process, however, must initiate with the online instructor. Throughout the online course, the online instructor must ask students to complete an anonymous survey to learn how the students perceive the course and whether or not they feel that they are learning. Quite often, the feedback is so valuable that the online instructor is able to make modifications to enhance the learning experience (Anderman, Andrzejewski, & Allen, 2011; Bernard et al., 2009).

Summary

This study discussed several instructional strategies that can be used to promote and sustain student motivation to learn in online courses. Online instructors must understand motivational models, use social media, use technology-based games, create dynamic interaction, and provide immediate feedback to their students.

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The Importance of Listening in the Teaching and Learning Process:
History, Challenges, and Recommendations

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Abstract

Listening is extremely important in the educational process because it is one of the crucial element of learning. However, listening is educative only if attention is paid to the content of the message being transmitted and the qualities individuals bring to listening and those developed during the course of listening to a message. This analytical paper presents the history and challenges of "good listening" in an attempt to provide business education teachers with recommendations to achieve "good listening" habits in their classrooms, including mastery of the speaking-less-and-listen-more instructional strategy.

The Importance of Listening in the Teaching and Learning Process:

History, Challenges, and Recommendations

Listening is extremely important in the teaching and learning process because it enhances teacher-student and student-student communication which, in turn, improve the entire pedagogical process. In other words, "good communication, of which listening is an integral part, is important to all sorts of widely valued relations and endeavors; communication is one of the principal ways by which we organize and manage relations with others" (Rice & Burbules, 2010, para. 2). However, listening has not received sufficient attention in the pedagogical literature (Rice & Burbules, 2010).

This analytical paper discusses the history and challenges of "good listening" in an attempt to provide business education teachers with recommendations to achieve "good listening" in their classrooms, including mastery of the speaking-less-and-listen-more instructional strategy.

Brief History

"Good listening" has been defined as "conducting an inquiry well. The listener asks a question and listens to all perspectives, compares to own perceptions, and interprets and constructs own meaning" (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2011, para. 3). On the other hand, speaking has historically been the most common instructional activity in the classroom. Even Dewey (1900, 1961) made a few ironic claims related to the way school children have their hands clasped and their mouths closed tightly. In addition, Dewey (1944) reminded the world that education is a

communication process that is impossible to achieve without listening. Aristotle (1985) wrote about virtue and developed a theoretical framework to lead discussions about, and analyses of, virtues such as good listening.

More recently, several researchers have written about the importance of dialogue in the classroom but the focus continues to be on speaking, not listening (Haroutunian-Gordon & Waks, 2010; Newman & Ober, 2013; Schultz, 2003).

Listening Challenges

Business education teachers face several challenges when trying to become "good listeners" to achieve teaching effectiveness. Some of these challenges are discussed next.

Listening with Empathy, Compassion, and Reverence

Business education teachers should try to recognize the perspectives of others and to become more sensitive and respectful of them. To successfully respond to the challenges associated with listening with empathy, compassion, and reverence, business education teachers "may need to extend themselves beyond stock rules and practices and to draw on their deepest feelings, creative intuitions, and spiritual insights - three widely neglected human resources in our age of scientific reason" (Haroutunian-Gordon & Waks, 2010, para. 5).

Listening Well

Listening well requires business education teachers to have patience to allow their students to develop their ideas, persistence to ensure their students are able to communicate these ideas, courage to be able to hear student ideas that are completely "off base," and trustworthiness to protect student confidentiality (Haroutunian-Gordon & Waks, 2010; Newman & Ober, 2013).

Listening in a Democracy

Business education teachers should listen for increased understanding in their students' discussions of concepts presented. In addition, business education teachers should listen and engage in deliberation before acting (Parker, 2011).

Listening to Silence

Business education teachers should pay attention to silent moments between students' spoken words. These silent moments have their own meanings and are not always understood by business education teachers and, therefore, these instructors must achieve command of the language of silence (Newman & Ober, 2013; Schultz, 2011).

Listening in Classrooms Filled with Verbal Interactions

Business education teachers may become overwhelmed with noise and loud verbal interactions and, therefore, good listening criteria may not apply. Several researchers (Haroutunian-Gordon & Waks, 2010) argued that:

In light of all the demands on their attention, the best kind of listening is sometimes *fake* listening - enough merely to give the appearance of, for example, empathy or compassion or even more understanding. The challenge for teachers is to lean, when good - that is attentive, focused - listening is appropriate and when it is not. (para. 9)

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to business education teachers in an attempt to remind them of the great impact that "good listening" has in the teaching and learning process.

1. Business education teachers must understand the characteristics that one must possess to achieve "good listening." Some of the traits include patience, tolerance, humility, receptiveness, and active listening. For instance, patience is required when a business education

teacher is trying to listen to a student who has challenges in articulating speech. Tolerance is needed when a student is articulating an idea that is in conflict with "the norm" or what the business education instructor is trying to teach. Humility may be required when dealing with students' cultural differences. Receptiveness is needed when business education teachers must listen to a student without any preconceptions or prejudices. Lastly, active listening is excellent whenever a student feels that he/she is not being listened to by the business education teacher. Active listening allows the business education teacher to construct his/her own meaning of what the student has stated and ask the student to validate if what the teacher heard is what the student intended to communicate (Newman & Ober, 2013; Rice & Burbules, 2010).

2. Business education teachers must understand that "good listening" depends on the context of the communication situation. For instance, "good listening" may involve giving undivided attention to a friend going through a very difficult time. However, "good listening" may also involve listening only half an ear, particularly when listening to a group of 28 first graders in a classroom. To become "good listeners," business education teachers need to make sound decisions regarding how closely to listen and/or when not to listen at all (Rice & Burbules, 2010).

3. Business education teachers must develop instructional strategies that allow their students to become "good listeners." For instance, business education teachers must develop moral and intellectual attributes that will empower them to distinguish the various cues that are spoken by their students. When a female student says to the business education teacher, "he is harassing me," the teacher must be able to discern if the girl wants to draw attention, is crying out for help because she is truly being harassed, or simply joking with the boy. In any case, business education teachers must understand that, whenever they listen well to their students, an

example has been established. Children, being great imitators, learn and practice this model of listening because they are able to appreciate how great it is when others listen to them (Haroutunian-Gordon & Waks, 2010; Newman & Ober, 2013; Rice & Burbules, 2010). In addition, business education teachers must develop other instructional strategies that foster "good listening" practices among their students. For instance, to avoid students shutting out because they feel that the information presented is irrelevant and/or boring, listening games can actually train students how to become "good listeners." Listening games constitute an effective instructional strategy because students are highly interested in games. Classroom debates can also assist business education teachers in enhancing students' listening capacities. Teachers who wish to nurture their students' capacity for good listening may choose to organize discussions in such a way that careful listening is respected and rewarded as much as eloquent speaking. Students who are especially vocal might be encouraged to speak less and listen more. (Rice & Burbules, 2010, para. 36)

Conclusion

Business education teachers must develop and use instructional strategies that achieve "good listening" in their classrooms. To this end, they must first model "good listening" behaviors to teach their students the value of "good listening." Rice and Burbules (2010) best explained the educational significance of listening when they stated that:

Listening can be profoundly educative. It is one of the principal ways in which we learn about the world and its people, develop a sense of self, form relations with others, and expand our moral and intellectual capacities. The extent to which listening can be educative in these and other ways depends not only on the content of listening, as important as that is, but also on the qualities we bring to listening and that we develop in

the course of listening. Learning to listen well is educationally generative. The better one can listen, the more educated one can become, and the more educated one becomes, the better one can listen. (para. 39)

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Searching for that Elusive Perfect Syllabus – Does it Exist?

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Abstract

There may be no such thing as a perfect syllabus. In order to create the best syllabus for a specific class, the instructor needs to determine what his or her syllabus is meant to accomplish. Various purposes have been suggested in the research, such as the syllabus as a contract, an instrument of power, a communication or signaling device, or to function as a collaboration tool. In order for the syllabus to succeed, regardless of the chosen purpose, it must be read and understood by the students. Examples of infographics are included to enhance student reading and comprehension of the course syllabus.

Searching for that Elusive Perfect Syllabus – Does it Exist?

The three authors of this article have spent many years at many educational levels striving for the perfect syllabus. These authors have taught at the elementary, middle school, high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels. One thing that all levels seem to have in common is the fact that no matter how plainly one tries to lay out the semester for the students at the beginning of the year, little time passes before students fail to follow the procedures carefully laid out in the ever-expanding syllabus. Despite measures, such as having students pass a test over the syllabus, each semester these authors find students asking questions about things covered in the syllabus and then, in turn, the authors create longer, more detailed information. This process has given the authors the reason to ask the following question: If students are not reading what is in the syllabus now, what makes these educators think making more pages of rules and regulations will cause students to read the expanded pages in the future?

Review of Literature

Singham (2007) expressed concern about the state of course syllabi. He contended that they are rule-infested, punitive, and controlling documents handed over to students on day one of class. He further claimed that course syllabi failed to mention the important facts of what would be learned in the class. Consequently, perhaps the first question to answer is as follows: What is a syllabus? A syllabus, according to Webster's is, "a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study, or of examination requirements" (merriam-webster.com, retrieved 2015). Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2014) outlined ways that course syllabi are used, including:

- As a Contract
- As Power Instrument
- As Communication or Signaling Device
- As Collaboration

They suggested that the first two are used much more frequently than the last two in the list.

They also contend that, though a large number of instructional innovations have occurred over the years, the course syllabus has seen less innovation and maybe has suffered from an outdated pedagogical perspective (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014).

In the quest for the perfect syllabus, one must first decide the overall purpose of the syllabus. Is it to be simply an outline and examination requirement listing? Is it designed to cover every single question that could possibly be asked by a student in the course? Is it to cover the professor as a legally binding contract with the student? Is it even possible to actually accomplish all of these things in one document? That, our fellow colleagues, is an answer we do not have for you. What we would like to explore is whether a change in our presentation of the material could result in a syllabus that is actually read by the students. This does not mean the authors feel as one article so artfully stated, “Death to the Syllabus!,” but it does mean looking at ways to get buy-in, or at least glance at, the syllabus that educators work so hard to prepare. The syllabus can be of benefit to all involved.

One of the suggestions offered by Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2014) is to consider streamlining syllabi to recognize the habits of today’s students. They argued that syllabi should be “clear, direct, and succinct” (p. 726) to increase the chance of the actual use by students. In addition, they think that the schedule portion of the syllabus should be placed as one of major

importance. Other suggestions they make include creating it in a format that encourages students to engage by making improvements in readability, design, and layout.

One suggestion for streamlining and improving readability is to use infographics in a syllabus. The Oxford Dictionary online (oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/infographic) defines an infographic as data represented visually. This visual representation can be done in a variety of ways such as chart, a diagram, photograph, etc. It is for this reason that the term *infographics* has also been interchanged with the term *data visualization*. Curtis Newbold produces a blog called “The Visual Communication Guy.” He teaches at a university and taught a short course on the use of infographics. He said “it occurred to me that if the subject matter was going to be on infographics, the syllabus probably ought to be an infographic as well. Not wanting to be accused of doing what has been labeled as “performative contradiction” (i.e., talking about one thing, but doing something else), I opted to go this route” (Newbold, 2014, 4). His infographic syllabus can be found at:

<http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2014/07/02/would-a-course-syllabus-be-better-as-an-infographic/>. Newbold reported that the response was overwhelmingly positive, but he did question whether it was just because of the novelty of the format. He also acknowledged that some may see this format as reinforcing the habits of an already reading-reluctant audience in simply skimming information or what he terms as dumbing-down the information. He does present what the authors feel is a valid question, however, which is, if students aren’t reading it anyway, could the use of infographics be a better idea?

Toward this end, the authors are embarking on developing a streamlined syllabus. Though they may not yet be able to immediately change to a totally infographic syllabus, they are working on transitioning with a hybrid syllabus that will begin testing out some of the

important and often questioned, or not followed, syllabus sections as infographic sections. In the following paragraphs are examples of sections of a traditional syllabus and how infographics might be incorporated to increase the student interest in reading and/or comprehension.

Infographic Examples

The first example is the attendance policy for an on campus course:

Attendance in class is mandatory. Without attending class you are missing out on important information that is critical to your success in this course. Three (3) unexcused absences will result in being dropped from the course. An infographic syllabus component example created for this article using Infogram is shown (www.infoagr.am.com).

Attendance Policy



3 Unexcused Absences = Drop

The second example is the mobile device policy for an oncampus course:



Mobile devices should not be used in the classroom. No texting, phone calls, facebooking, or surfing the Internet. The exception to this rule is when the instructor requests use for enhancing learning opportunities. This infographic syllabus component example was created for this article using Picktochart (www.picktochart.com).

The third example shows materials needed for an online course and the corresponding original syllabus section. The original syllabus section read:

REQUIRED Software, Textbook, & Equipment: Personal High Speed Internet Access and Personal Computer (not campus computers – you will be required to participate using options that will not be available on university computers). DO NOT TAKE THIS CLASS IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A COMPUTER, INTERNET ACCESS, AND OFFICE 2007 OR NEWER.

Textbook: Information Systems: A Manager's Guide to Harnessing Technology by John Gallaugh, v.2.0 -- Available at <http://tinyurl.com/GBU321>. You must have the textbook to complete the class.

Adobe Reader - Documents will be posted in .docx and .pdf format, and you will need Adobe Reader to read the .pdf files. Adobe Reader is a free download.

Online Video Viewing program that will play .wmv files (chapter lectures are provided in this format).



The same information can be seen in the infographic created for this article using Picktochart.

The fourth example is to inform students of the late work policy. The original policy shown was included in the syllabus of an online class of one of the authors. It read as follows: *In order to move quickly and successfully through the semester, specific deadlines for all*

assignments are clearly stated in the course syllabus schedule found on the last six pages of the syllabus. No late work is accepted - No Exceptions. Once closed, no assignments will be reopened. Over my 25+ years of teaching, I have heard every excuse in the book. I decided some time ago that in order to be fair to all students, I will not play judge and jury. Therefore, the no-late-work policy is strictly enforced. As long as you work a little ahead, you will not find this policy to be a problem. In fact, it may actually help reduce your stress level of waiting until the last minute to do your work.

Despite what the professor felt was clearly stating "no late work," students continued to ask to turn in late assignments (which instructor does not accept). The new syllabus will instead include the infographic shown below.



The fifth and final example is for an Email policy. The original policy reads as follows:

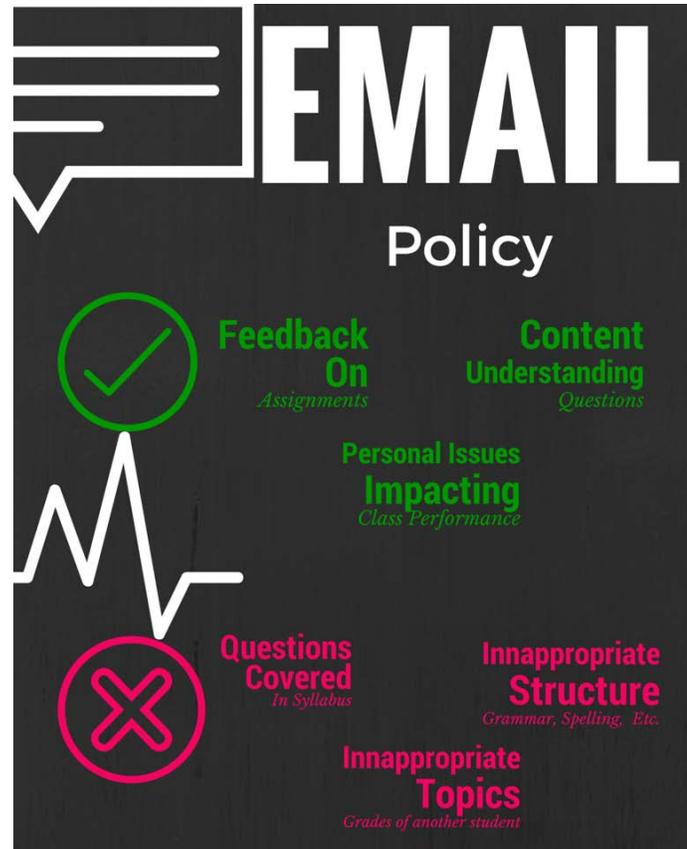
The reason for this policy is to cut down on excessive emails and ensure that both students and the professor abide by reasonable expectations for response times. Please ensure that emails you send are for a legitimate need.

Emails may be exchanged regarding the following:

- *Questions arising from difficulty understanding course content.*
- *Requests for feedback on graded assignments.*
- *Private issues appropriate for discussion within the teacher-student relationship.*

Emails that will not be answered are:

- *Questions already answered in the course syllabus or assignment descriptions.*
- *Questions that raise an inappropriate subject such as the grades of another student.*
- *Contain inappropriate grammar, sentence structure, and spelling mistakes to the point that the email is unintelligible.*



Created for this article using Canva:

www.canva.com

From the infographic above, you can see the same information is provided, just in a different format.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The syllabus has long been an important component of education, especially higher education. However, many high schools and middle schools are beginning to also provide syllabi for their courses. Finding a way to encourage students to actually read the information could be a way to increase student success. According to Visual.ly.com (<http://visual.ly/what-is-an-infographic>, 2015), the advantages of using infographics include the ability to:

- Quickly and clearly present complex information;

- Use graphics not only to reveal information, but also patterns and/or trends;
- Provide information in a more understandable manner than the use of words alone; and
- Present information in attractive and engaging ways.

The use of infographics, especially in the area of course syllabi, is still in its infant stages.

Studies are needed to determine the effectiveness of this format that would benefit both students and faculty.

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National Competitiveness of the U.S. Natural Gas Industry

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Abstract

Economists have used trade theory to explain the conditions under which two nations trade. This paper briefly describes the progression of various trade theories from country-based theories to firm-based theories, and uses one such theory, Porter's determinants of the competitive advantage of nations, to analyze the U.S. natural gas industry. The industry has strong attributes in factor conditions, domestic demand conditions, related industry structure, and firm strategy, structure and rivalry. Recommendations are made from free market perspective on how government policies can further strengthen the competitive position of the U.S. natural gas industry.

Keywords: trade theory, competitive advantage, natural gas, free market, international business

National Competitiveness of the U.S. Natural Gas Industry

Prior to the modern understanding of what constitutes a sovereign nation, cultures have traded and bartered with each other. As political boundaries have become more defined throughout history, economic theorists have attempted to explain under what conditions countries might engage in an exchange of resources and what might explain repeated patterns of trade (Carpenter & Dunung, 2011). The purpose of this paper is to use one such theory, Porter's (1990) determinants of national competitiveness, to describe the climate of the U.S. natural gas industry. In addition, recommendations are offered on how the government can implement policies to ameliorate the conditions of this industry to facilitate a competitive advantage for U.S. based firms operating within its bounds.

International Trade Theories

The term "trade theory" refers to the various methodologies used to explain trade between two parties. When preceded by "international," the concept evolves into an explanation of what causes countries to trade with each other. International trade theories have progressed from early attempts by Smith, Ricardo and Heckscher & Ohlin to explain the phenomenon of trade by using country specific factors (known as country-based theories) into the modern theories of Linder, Vernon, Krugman, and Porter that incorporated the domestic industry and firm specific factors (known as firm-based theories).

Country-Based Theories

A comprehensive discussion on international trade theory must properly include the origination in mercantilism. Most European powers of the 16th through the 18th century employed this economic ideology where policies and resources were focused on maximizing a trade surplus (Rojas, 2007). Economic thinkers such as Charles Davenant, Philipp Wilhelm von Hornick, and Sir James Steuart were some of the first authors to describe the international trade theory known as mercantilism during this era (Davies, 2011).

Smith's (1776) oft-cited treatise *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* provided new insights on international trade theory that directly contradicted the zero-sum presuppositions of mercantilism. He argued that governments should reduce these protectionist measures and focus not on avoiding trade deficits, but rather employ labor where that nation has an absolute advantage in production (Carpenter & Dunung, 2011).

Ricardo (1817) offered a slightly different theory on how countries should choose in which industries to focus their resources and production. Countries should be inclined to produce goods where they have a comparative advantage in production of that good; that is to say, each a country should evaluate producing (or not producing) a good by considering its opportunity cost to all producible goods of that nation.

In the early 1900's, Swedish economists Hecksher and Ohlin formulated a new theory to describe international trade, known today as the Hecksher-Ohlin model (Blaug, 1992). This trade theory was a modification of Ricardo's explanation of comparative advantage – countries would import goods that were produced with resources scarce in supply to that country and export goods that were produced with resources excess in supply to that country.

These four theories – mercantilism, absolute advantage, comparative advantage, and the Hecksher-Ohlin model - attract most of the attention in the literature in terms of country-based

trade theories. However, the focus for scholars in the second part of the twentieth century was on industry and firm specific factors that explained why countries traded with each other.

Firm-Based Theories

The Hecksher-Ohlin was found to lack empirical support for explaining international trade. Leontief (1953) observed the U.S. importing capital intensive goods while exporting labor intensive goods, despite its status as a capital-rich nation. This eventually became known as the Leontief Paradox (Carpenter & Dunung, 2011) because it directly opposed the hypothesis of the Hecksher-Ohlin model.

In response to the Leontief Paradox, scholars began to look for new explanations of international trade. Linder (1961) formulated a trade theory which included industry specific factors, known as the country similarity theory. In contrast to Hecksher-Ohlin, where country resources determined which goods they would produce and which they would trade, country similarity theory hypothesized that nations will tend to trade goods with other nations that are similar in economic size, per capita income, and consumer preferences (Carpenter & Dunung, 2011). This included an exchange of finished goods even within the same industry.

Vernon (1966) responded to the failures of the Hecksher-Ohlin model with the product life cycle model. Goods would tend to be produced originally in the country of invention, followed a growth and maturity phase where other nations would trade for and ultimately produce outside the country of invention.

Krugman contributed to a school of thought known as the global strategic rivalry trade theory (Carpenter and Dunung, 2011). He argued that firms become more efficient when they are faced with emerging competition in international markets. Firms must consistently find new competitive advantages to sustain themselves such as economies of scale, research and

development, control of resources, and intellectual property. These competitive advantages in essence become barriers to entry to new competitors.

Competitive Advantage of Nations

Porter (1990) formulated a new approach to explaining international trade that accounted for the weaknesses of many previously postulated trade theories. He argued that the economic prosperity of a nation came not from natural resources or access to capital, but rather in its ability to innovate and continually re-invent the way it produces and offers goods. This innovation is a result of domestic companies benefiting “from strong domestic rivals, aggressive home-based suppliers, and demanding local customers” (p. 73).

He refutes the economic thinking that competitive advantage derives from macroeconomic factors, access to natural resources, protectionism, or effectively managed labor resources. Instead, he suggests that a nation’s competitive advantage derives from its ability to produce by efficiently employing their capital and labor. The role of international trade, therefore “supports rising national productivity by allowing a nation to specialize in those industries . . . where [its] companies are more productive” (p. 77).

A nation’s ability to produce is a function of four key determinants – 1) factor conditions, 2) demand conditions, 3) related industries, and 4) firm strategy, structure and rivalry. Factor conditions include attributes required to produce goods in a given industry, including access to skilled labor, infrastructure, and technology. Demand conditions in the domestic market drive companies to innovate more quickly in response to buyer needs. This pushes companies to be more efficient in production and to reflect market demands. The strength of related industries in the home country affords a company more cost-effective and logistically

efficient supply chains. More importantly, Porter states, is the symbiotic relationship that exists between related industries as they complement each other's attempt to innovate.

These four determinants will serve as the framework for analyzing the U.S. natural gas industry, and outlay the argument for which government policies might foster competitive advantage in the same.

Natural Gas Industry in the U.S.

Natural gas is an important commodity in the United States in that it supplies 25 percent of all domestic energy supply, and is the second most consumed form of direct energy in the country (FERC, 2012). The market demands natural gas for a variety of purposes. 32 percent of the natural gas use in 2014 went to residential and commercial consumers for heating, cooking, and air-condition (EIA, 2015a). 30 percent was consumed for the production of electricity, and 29 percent went to industrial consumption for production of synthetic chemicals (i.e. fabrics, plastics, nitrogen-based fertilizers, and anti-freeze). The United States has traditionally been a net importer of natural gas; in 2014, an estimated 1.3 trillion cubic feet was brought into the United States (EIA, 2015b).

Long-term demand for natural gas in the United States is driven by factors such as population growth, economic growth, technological advances in processing and extraction equipment, and environmental policies. Short-term demand is driven predominantly by weather conditions (e.g. the colder it gets, the more natural gas is needed to heat homes and businesses and the hotter it gets, the more natural gas is needed to produce electricity to cool). In the short-term, demand for natural gas is considered inelastic, with limited substitutes. Consumer needs for warmth or cooling are immediate and the switching costs to another energy source is burdensome for most of the market (FERC, 2012).

There are two distinct markets that comprise the natural gas industry in the United States. The first is the physical market where the product is retrieved, stored, processed and distributed. The second is the financial market where producers, retailers and traders buy and sell natural gas as a commodity (FERC, 2012). For the discussion purposes of this paper, both the physical and the financial markets will be assessed in terms of national competitiveness.

Factor Conditions

Factor conditions of the U.S. natural gas industry reflect not only a strong stock, as reflected in the estimated reserve levels. The U.S. natural gas proved reserves are estimated at 354 trillion cubic feet, and as geological measuring technologies continue to improve, more accurate estimates have shown previously undiscovered patches of natural gas in the U.S. (EIA, 2015d). More important than stock levels, Porter (1990) states is the “efficiency with which [an industry] creates, upgrades, and deploys” these resources (p. 79). The U.S. natural gas industry has seen an upward trend in production because of technological advances over the last decade. A new extraction method called hydraulic fracturing (commonly used vernacular is “fracking”) has been developed and its use is widespread today. This fracking method allows for greater access to shale deposits which are rich in natural gas (Clark, Burnham, Harto, & Horner, 2013). This will result in an oversupplied domestic market within the next five years, converting the U.S. into a net exporter of natural gas. By 2040, industry projections show the U.S. exporting annually 5.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (2015c). Most of these exports will come in the form of LNG.

To accommodate the increase in LNG exports, additional facilities will need to be constructed along the Gulf Coast and the East Coast. However, political pressures over the previous decade have made getting a license to build an LNG export facility difficult (Galucci,

2014). A recent acceptance of four projects (ranging from \$3.8 billion to \$10 billion) shows progress in bureaucratic measures, but there are still ten projects awaiting approval by the government. To make the U.S. natural gas industry more competitive, the U.S. government should streamline the process of getting a facility license, and reduce the impact of partisanship politics on the process.

Demand Conditions

Demand for natural gas in the U.S. is expected to rise by 0% annually for the next 25 years (2015c). Again, Porter (1990) qualifies the notion that growth in domestic demand alone makes an industry more competitive globally. “The size of the home market proves far less significant than the character of home demand” (p. 82). It is necessary to look at the character of domestic demand for *all* forms of energy because this has determined the direction of both natural gas and its (long-term) substitutes.

End-use consumers have trended towards energy sources that do not emit carbon dioxide or have other harmful effects (like nuclear waste). This trend will force the natural gas industry to find new methods to extract, and cheaper ways to produce and transport in response to the cultural preferences for alternative energy. This characterization of home demand is dynamic, as defined by Porter, and makes the U.S. natural gas industry more competitive because of this forced innovation on natural gas companies.

The percentage of renewable energy sources as a portion of total energy consumption is projected to grow by 26 percent globally over the next 25 years, while natural gas will grow by 7 percent (EIA, 2015e). However, the cost of production for renewable forms of energy (i.e. solar, wind, hydro, and biomass) is much higher than natural gas. As a result, the U.S. government

subsidizes these alternative forms of energy to incentivize production. Natural gas also receives subsidies, but at a rate twenty-five times less than given to renewable energy (Worstall, 2013).

Recommended action for the U.S. is to remove all subsidies for domestic energy production. While this will render some energy production sources less profitable, it will make the overall energy industry more competitive, compelling all producers of energy to innovate. Moreover, eliminating subsidies will have a unique effect on natural gas as it competes now with a substitute based on consumer demands, and consequentially their willingness to pay for that demand, a truer reflection of market forces and demand conditions.

Related Industries

Examples of related industries to the natural gas industry would include transportation modes, distribution services, and storage facilities to compliment the physical market as well as the trading capabilities of U.S. firms to bolster the financial market. The U.S. natural gas industry is “accommodated by an extensive infrastructure” to facilitate the physical movement of product (FERC, 2012, p. 22). There are over 306,000 miles of pipe that transport the product domestically and to export facilities to Canada and Mexico, 1,400 compressor stations, 400 underground storage facilities, 100 LNG peaking facilities, as well as 1,300 distribution companies to transport the product to end-users. In regards to the financial market, the U.S. market has been characterized as the largest and most liquid natural gas market in the world, with both cash and forward pricing options at the 40 trading centers and hubs throughout the country (FERC, 2012).

A common theme in Porter’s description of determinants of national competitiveness is to focus on the innovation and not mere size of the industries attributes. This begs, the question – how much re-invention occurs in the natural gas physical market, and how efficient is the

financial market for natural gas? Related industries do in fact continue to innovate. The most efficient mode of transportation is via pipeline, and this is where much of the innovation is originating. Upgrades to the domestic pipeline will increase both the throughput capacity and the optionality of natural gas movement. By 2017, more than 32 percent of the pipeline in the northeast U.S. will have the ability to ship product both directions (Tran, 2014). A recent project in Ohio will connect an additional natural gas processing plant to the main pipeline that runs from this region to the Rocky Mountains, known as the REX pipeline, which allows this pipe now to run east and west (Ford & Teller, 2014)

Research suggests that the trading capabilities and risk management practices of the U.S. commodity marketing industry ensures continued liquidity for natural gas and related commodities. In 2012, U.S. based commodities trading firms accounted for four of the top ten trading houses in the world, representing 30 percent of global commodity revenues (Szala, 2013).

The recommendation for government action in related industries focuses on the financial markets for natural gas. Congress passed Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Financial Protection Act in 2010 in response to speculative trading positions by major U.S. banks (Suppan, 2013). The effects, however, go beyond the banking industry because Dodd-Frank regulates all derivatives trading, an essential function for risk management in commodities (and hence natural gas trading). Dodd-Frank has limited the natural gas industry's ability to trade as efficiently as it did previous to the institution of this landmark legislation. Recommended action to make the U.S. natural gas industry more competitive is for the government to amend the coverage of this act to banking institutions only, and allow commodities trading companies the freedom they need to trade using derivatives without costly oversight.

Firm Strategy, Structure, and Rivalry

Natural gas supply in 2014 was dominated by ten companies who comprised 56 percent of production (NGSA, 2015). These top producers are major players in the oil, gas, and other energy sectors, including Exxon Mobil (9.8% market share), Chesapeake Energy (8.6% market share), Anadarko (7.5% market share), and Conoco Phillips (4.4% market share). Their experience in the production of energy and ability to trade around their production assets make this a competitive environment. As Porter (1990) states, strong rivals will continue to push each other to “lower costs, improve quality and service, and create new products” (p. 85). This is certainly the case in this highly concentrated collection of major producers in the production of U.S. natural gas.

This rivalry has compelled players to get more efficient in production and to seek new technologies. Several competitive conditions are currently keeping the cost of natural gas low in the U.S. These include increased production from new shale discoveries and technological advances in drilling practices - “three years ago, it took about 23 days to drill a well. . . today, it takes only about 14 days” (To, 2015). This rivalry also pushes companies in the industry to find new fields of natural gas and drill new wells, as evidenced by the recent drilling of a Colorado well considered to be one of the biggest in the U.S. (Thornton, 2014).

The recommendation for government action in regards to firm structure, strategy and rivalry is to refrain from doing anything to affect the competitive nature between these firms. Porter (1990) argues that the government should not be completely hands on in the market place, nor should they be completely out. Their role is to be the catalyst and challenger of businesses. They set the playing field and allow competition to drive change and “higher levels of competitive performance” (p. 87). For this determinant, the best action the government can take

to make a more competitive advantage for the U.S. natural gas industry is to let the players in the market drive the change, not burden it with regulations that would favor a particular firm or competing sector.

Conclusion

The recommendations offered for each of the determinants of national competitive advantage are based in a free market orientation. Many industries find themselves lobbying the government to pass legislation that would effectively benefit them economically. Examples include import and export tariffs, production quota systems (such as ethanol mandates), and many other protectionist measures. Instead, each of the recommendations offered in regard to the natural gas industry are focused on the government allowing the market to decide which companies, services, or technologies should survive.

Economists have evolved in their understanding of what drives international trade. From country-based factors to firm-based factors, the complexity of international trade will always compel scholars to dig further. Porter's determinants of national competitive advantage are a contemporary approach to explaining trade by providing a framework to analyze specific industries. Using this model, I have discussed the competitiveness of the U.S. natural gas industry, with findings showing this industry to be a strong national competitive advantage.

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From the Classroom to the Boardroom:
A Reality Check for Authentic Engagement

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Abstract

To equip undergraduate business majors with industry expected skills, this exploratory study attempts to improve students' skill development in a business communication course. By presenting a reality based assignment, this article demonstrates how Experiential Learning practices can be applied to authentically engage students. Findings indicate that pedagogy that provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge from course content by practicing and developing skills improves their understanding of industry expected skills.

Keywords: authentic engagement, business communication, experiential learning, industry skills, pedagogy

From the Classroom to the Boardroom:
A Reality Check for Authentic Engagement

Many academicians and practitioners agree that students grapple with gaps between academic preparedness and professional expectations. For example, literature related to the field of business communication suggests these gaps - knowledge and/or skills - derive from how little students actually know about expected workplace practices. A significant recommendation from literature is the use of relevant experiences during academic preparedness which promotes student engagement (Smart, et al., 2013; Wiggins, 2012; Okoro, 2012; Satci, 2008; DiMartino & Castaneda, 2007; Smart & Csapo, 2007; Nealy, 2005; Goby & Lewis, 2000; Dewey, 1938/1997; Kolb, 1984). In these studies, student engagement is examined through the lens of Experiential Learning, often referred to as Active/Action Learning because it engages learning through relevant experiences. These experiences are generally descriptive using pedagogical strategies such as flipped classroom meaning class time is not exclusively for lectures or class meetings take place in locations outside the traditional setting. From a pedagogical perspective, authentic engagement may occur when work the student is assigned has clear meaning and relatively immediate value to the student (Berrett, 2013; AACSB International, 2011; Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010; Schlechty, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1938/1997). The primary objective of relevant experiences involve opportunities for students to apply knowledge from course content by practicing and developing skills that are required for academic and professional success.

This article contributes to discussions about Experiential Learning practicability for authentically engaging students. Based on recommendations from related literature, a flipped classroom – boardroom meetings –was used to help business majors develop two professional expectations - interpersonal skills and intercultural etiquette – applicable to a business setting. In this article, Interpersonal skills are broadly defined within the contexts of attitudes and behaviors that people possess such as soft or people skills. This includes etiquette; in this case, intercultural etiquette skills are used to apply knowledge learned about cultures (Moshiri & Cardon, 2014; Capelli, 2012; Yu, 2012; DeKay, 2012; Robles, 2012; Barnett, 2012; American Management Association, 2010; Yu, 2010; Alsop, et al., 2009; Sapp & Zang, 2009; Thomas, 2007; Du-Babcock, 2006, Muir, 2004).

The following sections begin by explaining the pedagogy used to engage students via relevant experiences. Next, these experiences are mapped to selected class activities/exercises using the four stages of Kolb’s Learning Styles. Finally, student narratives detailing their own gained knowledge and skills are shared to determine the effectiveness of the learning outcomes.

Background

The business classroom is constantly managing changes in higher educational settings related to such trends as demographics and labor market demands driven by global competition. These trends are mirrored in this study, typical of an urban university, the classroom demographics included: mixed gender (27 females /10 males), generations (Baby Boomers, Generations X, Y, and Millennials), work experiences (full/part time, never employed) and age range (20-62). Subsequently, the author of this paper, a business professor has experienced first-hand how course content and practical activities can provide awareness that often times perplexes students with what they discover about themselves as it relates to a lack of academic

preparedness. Observations made during these students' discoveries prompted use of pedagogical strategies drawn from literature related to a flipped classroom design – class time is used for practical applications of course material (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015; Estes, et al., 2014; Albert & Beatty, 2014; Berrett, 2012; Gabriel, 2008). These strategies were integrated with Vroom's Expectancy Motivation Theory- the level of motivation and effort based upon perception is influenced by the degree of expectation and the worth or value of the particular goal or objective to be accomplished or rewarded (Vroom, 1964). It seemed reasonable to explore if linking these discoveries to business learning objectives designed with industry expectations would engage students' awareness about the importance of closing knowledge and/or skill gaps.

Thus, in this exploratory flipped classroom study, the author sought to “authentically engage” students to accept responsibility for improving their soft skills. Soft skills refer to attitudes and behaviors displayed in interactions among individuals that affect the outcomes of various interpersonal encounters (Muir, 2004). Within this scope, the objective was to apply Schlechty's (2002) definition of authentic engagement: the task, activity, or work the student is assigned or encouraged to undertake is associated with a result or outcome that has clear meaning and relatively immediate value to the student (p.3). In line with Schlechty, students were asked to reflect on and identify an activity that would have real time meaning and value. This included self-assessing perceived knowledge and/or skill gaps required for the activity and designing improvement plans with expected performance outcomes. After discussion and reflection sessions, two separate ten minute writing exercises were used to engage students and generate data for this study.

Selected examples follow of how these open-ended pedagogical activities, e.g. writing exercises, reflections, flipped classroom, were used to caption students' experiences. The findings indicate these declared business majors (General Business, Accounting, Marketing, Finance, Management, Computer Information System) learned through shared experiences mirroring workplace practices.

Examples

First Question: Recall a communication incident (in a class or at work) that was embarrassing or had disastrous results. *Second Question:* What did you learn/takeaway from this incident?

Excerpts from Writing Exercises

Incident: I recall a class experience that had disastrous results. I had failed to prepare for class given work and family obligations. I walked into class late and an activity was in progress. The instructor had paused for students to comment about the class activity. She stated something about an acceptable practice for males to kiss each other. I jumped into the discussion instead of listening to gain understanding and made *strong negative comments* about males kissing each other.

Learn/Takeaway: I learned a number of things from this incident that cannot be ranked in order of importance. The most memorable was my classmates and instructor accepting my apology. We talked about the mistake and used it to develop business communication skills.

Incident: I recall a communication incident during my probation period that was embarrassing. My team leader invited me to a business meeting with corporate leaders. He encouraged me to use this as an opportunity for career advancement. I agreed with his advice and

managed an opportunity to talk with the CEO of the company during the lunch break. As we talked, the CEO leaned toward me and whispered “*You have food in your teeth.*”

Learn/Takeaway: This experience reminded me of sage advice from my mother “*Do not talk with food in your mouth.*” I was so eager to position myself for career advancement; poor manners were used that resulted in “*turkey in my teeth.*”

We discussed and mapped these incidents using a Strategic Forces model in our course textbook comprised of four forces that have inherent impact on business communication effectiveness: diversity challenges, legal and ethical issues, changing technology and the team environment (Lehman & Dufrene, 2011, p. xvi). In doing so, we collected data which depicted a need to practice how to properly apply course content at business events. *Etiquette* was consistently identified as a topic that students perceived as having significant influence on improving knowledge in order to develop applicable business skills. My students and I decided, given our culturally diverse classroom and workplace, to use the basic principles of *etiquette* to avoid a “laundry list of rules.” So, we defined *etiquette* as “expected norms--good manners and professionalism--of behaviour given the business situation.”

After the robust discussions, I wanted to surprise my students by inviting them to attend class in a simulated boardroom on campus. My goal was to “authentically engage” my students about *etiquette* by using a simulated workplace environment. Students were excited about attending the “flipped class setting.” So much so, we did not identify a challenge to the activity that later revealed itself.

This resulted in a “communication incident” for me on the meeting day when I discovered only 2 of the 37 students enrolled in the class had been in a boardroom. Interestingly, students’ responses on Student Information Sheets and during class discussions did not reflect

limited workplace experience. Given the students' lack of experience, providing this real world experience was put into perspective as being even more valuable for them than originally thought.

Rethinking these gaps, I prepared a brief lesson for the boardroom derived from my "reality-check" that focused on developing "trust" in a team environment. In planning, since the students did not have prior knowledge about the boardroom, it was important to establish a meaningful connection to the experience for future use. Given this challenge, I focused on creating a comfortable boardroom environment that would help students map learning points to *etiquette*. The following is an example of how I applied Kolb's Learning Style to jumpstart a series of practice sections on *etiquette*.

Kolb's Learning Style in the Boardroom Context

For contextual purposes, I provide a brief description of Kolb's Learning Style four stage learning cycle: *concrete experience* (new experience) – *reflective observation* – (reviewing/reflecting on the experience) - *abstract conceptualization* – (learning from the experience) and *active experimentation* – applying knowledge/skills gained via the experience (Smart, et al., 2013; Goby & Lewis, 2000; Kolb, 1984). The following are selected examples of how these stages were applied in terms of instructional design and mapping assessment data.

Concrete Experience

Given the limited exposure of students to the boardroom, I decided to flip the lesson design taking into consideration the need for training sessions –*time on task*--rather than lectures with etiquette threaded through course content. I contacted four former students –graduates from the university employed in upper level positions in industry--to collaborate with me to develop

role playing scenarios that demonstrated incidents, i.e. boardroom faux pas, with suggested best practices from their industry experiences.

We planned two meetings – the first meeting involved students watching the “boardroom faux pas” performed by former students. This depicted a loud talking executive hosting a board meeting with an international guest. The meeting started with the executive reflecting on the boardroom – his reflections included brief comments about the importance of preparing for the meeting. We then viewed greetings, e.g. kisses, handshakes and bows. Also included was a brief presentation of the agenda items, which demonstrated a participant talking while eating.

Before the presentation, students were instructed to take notes focusing on related course material. A question was used during instructions to help them initiate thinking before collecting “relevant” information useful for a personal reflection paper about the experience. I defined “relevant” as “personal” knowledge or skills gaps of interest for career success. The goal was to help students relax in a new environment while viewing “funny incidents” related to *business etiquette*. After viewing the performance, we closed by enjoying light refreshments and “laughing” with our guests. I asked students to “reflect” on the experience and be prepared to discuss findings at the next board meeting with our guests.

Reflective Observation

Three questions were used for the activity (before, during and after) to help students think before writing the first paper and additional board training. The questions spanned the two day training – 1st meeting (before and during performance) and 2nd meeting (after performance).

Questions for 1st Meeting

Initiate Thinking: How can you relate this experience (fill in the blank with course content or career success)?

During the Training- How can you relate this activity to interpersonal intelligence?

- In planning the training, we built in “*short pauses*” to help students while watching and listening to the performance map the dialogue to course content and lectures. For example, the above question was used to redirect students to thinking about what we discovered in terms of missing information on the Student Information Sheet. This was to prompt students to reflect on course content related to *Johari Window*, a behavioural theory that shows how sharing and disclosing information increase the chances of humans applying effective communication in the workplace (Lehman & Dufrene, 2011, pp. 44-46).
- Question for 2nd Meeting

After the Training - What did you learn from this training?

I used the above question as a closer at the end of the first board meeting. This was to engage students to review and *think about “relevant” findings and develop “their” own questions* to help with knowledge or skills gaps related to *business etiquette* before the next board meeting. The following are examples of questions posed by students during the next meeting.

How can you save face when you are really uncomfortable with kissing as a form of greeting?

What is the best advice for how to tell a person about “food in their teeth?”

What are two strategies you would recommend using after making a career-damaging mistake in the boardroom? Examples -violating the dress code or use of profanity

Can you describe an incident that required you to think on your feet during a virtual board meeting?

Abstract Conceptualization

After the second meeting with debriefing activities, students were instructed to write a *1 to 2 page reflective evaluative memorandum* out of class. I asked students to describe and explain key concepts perceived as “relevant” to their development of *business etiquette* in the boardroom. The goal was to engage students to map and evaluate the effectiveness of the training given data related to communication incidents that we discovered and discussed in class.

Expected outcomes were to help students “think about their own learning” and “map” this experience to course concepts and activities. The memorandum required students to link specific course material emphasised during in-class activities and the boardroom. By doing so, I was able to assess what information students found “relevant” to their knowledge and/or skills gaps. The below criteria was used to evaluate the reflective evaluation memorandum.

- Critical Thinking (identifies the relationships between key facts, limits arguments to those which are important to specific question) - 20
- Content (validity, thoroughness) - 20
- Organization (purpose statement, sequence of ideas, closing) – 30
- Writing Style (word choice, tone) - 20
- Format (document design) -10

Total Points 100

Active Experimentation

We used data from *reflective evaluative memorandums* to identify gaps - knowledge and/or skills - in order to form teams based on matching interests. Examples of teams based on identified gaps related to content areas included: How to Develop Swift Trust in Work Teams, Culture Issues Related to Etiquette and Five Career-Boosting Tips for the Boardroom.

I instructed the teams to develop a role playing scenario for the boardroom that focused on a communication incident related to the content area. The teams were asked to apply key points from the assigned content area about *etiquette* to demonstrate an incident and best practices from industry to manage the incident. *Time on Task* slots were assigned to teams in order to practice in the boardroom prior to the board presentations.

Teams were also instructed to write a report for submission after the board presentations. This was used to engage students' thinking in terms of continuously mapping prior content and activities to solve incidents by applying knowledge and skills to the new activity. *Time on Task* slots were utilized to allow students to research in and out of class discussions, writing activities and practice sessions.

Summary

Given the students' relative inexperience with actual business meetings, making classroom time into a simulation of such a meeting was a clear and obvious choice. As many faux pas can occur due to nervousness and a general lack of experience, a simulated event functions to give students some form of direct experience while also serving as a learning tool. This flipped classroom experience was beneficial to students' "authentic engagement." In terms of practice, students recognized the connection between course content and development of knowledge and skills to lessen gaps. I believe we formed "trust" within our

boardroom, thereby building a basis for productive and meaningful learning/training. In line with flipped experiences as a conclusion to this article, students' comments are provided to assess learning outcomes. The following are some students' responses after the second boardroom meeting to the questions posed: *What did you learn?*

Student A/General Business - My understanding of soft skills improved given the boardroom practice sessions. A key learn/takeaway was the importance of taking time to understand the expectations of other people involved. Etiquette is influenced by culture, so, behaviours that might appear embarrassing might be normal given the culture and/or situation. Since my major focuses on knowledge and skills across the business discipline, this information is key to effective business communications in the global workplace.

Student B/Marketing - These practice activities developed my sense of trust. I was uncomfortable and resisted participating in class discussions due to not having professional work experience. I believe my tipping points occurred when the former students, business professionals, role played some embarrassing boardroom incidents. Our instructor encouraged the class by explaining regardless of experience a mistake can happen. I will always remember one of her funny catchphrases used during the role plays when pausing to show best practices after a mistake: "This is how we Two Step in Texas."

Student C/Finance- My understanding of soft skills related to business etiquette deepen in the areas of oral and written communication and working in teams. During the Time on Task sessions I felt confident working with team members on our board presentation. My abilities to interpret body language, listen, and draw conclusions before presenting

findings significantly improved. These takeaways are very helpful in my current internship.

Student D/Management- My thinking related to applying course content to a communication incident improved because of the practice sessions in our boardroom. I started thinking and applying skills related to my goal of assuming a leadership position. My confidence grew when we worked with the former students and discussed best practices. The most important teachable moment for me as a future business leader was how to apply etiquette when receiving constructive feedback. It is not always necessary to defend your performance. Sometimes thinking on your feet involves thinking about the feedback before responding.

Student F/Computer Information Systems- These activities helped me to practice and refine my soft skills when using communication technology. I enjoyed preparing and practicing for the boardroom using the teleconferencing apps. I also gained additional insight about professional opportunities given the use of information technology in all industries. I developed a weekly action plan to upgrading my knowledge and skills about key software programs.

Student G/Accounting- I showed up to every class/board meeting prepared as a business professional. I enjoyed our lively in-class discussions, but the boardroom activities engaged my sense of professional responsibility. The pre -training on business etiquette helped me to understand the importance of being familiar with “good manners.” I learned that this involved more than just remembering numbers, lists and/or rules. For example, the incident about “turkey in the teeth” certainly required the CEO to be sensitive given the embarrassment. I believe by practicing these incidents a future

Accountant can develop skills about how to be sensitive when communicating bad news. My thinking is supported by course content and the former students who recommended best practices from industry that showed how practicing before a board meeting can be helpful.

To summarize, there is no magical solution to engaging students that will ensure academic and professional success. For academicians, exploring pedagogy that aim to engage students' understanding of the need to address gaps - knowledge and/or skills - might optimize learning experiences, thereby, improve career choices. These findings offer academicians teaching business courses an application to identify theoretical and practical gaps needed to improve business communication and other skills.

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Pension Fund Basics for Personal Finance Students

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Abstract

A well rounded Personal Finance course covers the basic finance-related topics individuals need to understand in order to make sound financial decisions throughout their lives. One important topic of interest involves different ways to prepare for retirement. This article explains the basics of the different avenues with which to save.

Pension Fund Basics for Personal Finance Students

Especially during times of great uncertainty, being able to make wise financial decisions is a must. The standard Personal Finance course taught in many universities and community colleges exposes future wage earners to topics such as budgeting, credit management, tax planning, making large purchases (such as a home or car), meeting insurance needs, investing to meet future needs (such as retirement or sending children to college), and estate planning (see Jones *et al.* 2005). With the majority of individuals living paycheck to paycheck, a basic understanding of how pension plans work and what avenues are available to save for retirement represents an important part of the course.

Public Pension Plans

A pension is an annuity paid to a retired person. These plans can be provided by the government and/or businesses. Those provided by government, such as Social Security or for government employees, are considered public plans while those provided by businesses or by the individual saver are private.

The most commonly referred to and understood public pension plan is Social Security. It was put in place around the time of the Great Depression and was set up as a PAYGO plan (as many public plans are). PAYGO means people working today are paying for the people retired today (hence the idea of pay as you go). Despite the past success of Social Security, the future looks grim according to Doescher and Turner (1988) and Jones, McDonald and Schaub (2006). The main problem with PAYGO plans is that shifts in demographics, technological advances and

life expectancy affect the future viability. For example, when Social Security was first instituted the average life expectancy was in the 60's whereas now it is in the 80's for both men and women (see National Vital Statistics Report, 2014). A longer life means more payments are required to each retiree. Also, a giant shift in population has occurred with the post-war baby boom. When first instituted, there were 10 workers for every retiree. Now it is currently less than 3 workers per retiree and will worsen as over the next 20 years the 65 and older population more than doubles while the number of those between 20 and 64 remains the same (see Schaub, 2006 and the 2012 US Census Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table 1). Despite the future challenges affecting the financial solvency of Social Security and Medicare, the programs are already currently running an annual deficit of \$500 billion or more (current figures along with other government expenditures are available at the debt clock: www.usdebtclock.org). For these reasons those that are prudent prepare as if Social Security will not be available. Since many state workers are in similarly funded plans, the same potential problems exist for those pensions as well (commonly referred to as the unfunded liability).

Employee Based Plans

In addition to deducting payroll taxes for Social Security and Medicare, many employers offer pension plans as part of an employee benefits package. Normally, the employee pays in a set amount into the plan and the employer pays a match up to a certain amount. The plans may vary in name based on the section of the tax code that deals with them. For example, 401(k) plans are provided by for-profit businesses, 403(b) plans are for not-for-profit organizations and KEOGH plans are for those that are self-employed.

Employer plans may be defined contribution or defined benefit. With a defined contribution plan the employee pays so much into the retirement plan and the employer pays a

match, at which point the employer’s responsibility ends. The employee normally has a set of investments where they can invest the money the way they choose (often using mutual funds). The amount of retirement money accumulated in the defined contribution plan depends on how well the investments perform.

Defined benefit plans differ in that the employee pays in so much and the employer pays in too. However, the employer promises a set retirement benefit to the employee that must be met. The amount the employee receives upon retirement is usually based on years of service and level of pay. These plans contain a lot of risk for the employer because they are required to make the promised payments regardless of how well the business does in the future (and are responsible for investing the pension money). As a result of several companies being bankrupted by defined benefit plans, Congress passed the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) in 1973 which provides pension insurance (through a government entity nicknamed “Penny Benny”) of up to \$49,500 per year for plan participants. The way the money flows into and out of these plans is illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 1. Pension Plans Fund Flows

Portfolio policy of Pension Plans:	<u>Defined Benefit</u>	<u>Defined Contribution</u>
Contribution – Employer	Variable	Fixed
Contribution – Employee	Fixed	Fixed
<u>Investment Income</u>	<u>Variable</u>	<u>Variable</u>
Benefits	Fixed	Variable

Another aspect of employee plans that must be considered is vesting. Vesting just means the length of time until the employer contributions become the personal property of the employee. For example, a plan that vests after a worker has been with the employer for 3 years

only entitles the employee to what they pay into the plan if they leave before the vesting period is up. Once they are on the job for 3 years, however, they can leave with both their contributions and that of the employer.

Individual Retirement Accounts

Anyone that does not have an employee retirement plan or has one that does not save enough to meet the individual's retirement needs may open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) on their own, although an IRA alone may not provide sufficient savings to meet all retirement goals (Schaub *et. al.* 2013). Many financial institutions offer IRAs including banks, mutual funds, brokerage firms and insurance companies. There are also two different flavors of IRAs, notably the Traditional IRA and the Roth IRA. The big difference between the two is that payments into the Traditional are tax deferred until the money is taken out (taxes upon withdrawal) whereas money that has already been taxed is paid into the Roth and the withdrawals are not taxed. So the question is whether the saver desires to pay the taxes today or in the future. Bechtel and Schaub (2003) show that basically if you are in a lower tax bracket today than you will be in when you retire, then the Roth is better because it locks the saver into today's tax rate. However if the tax bracket today is higher than it will be during the retirement years, the Traditional is better (because withdrawals will be taxed at a lower rate than today's). Both IRAs allow you to save \$5,000 per year which may be increased to \$6,000 per year after age 50. However, on a dollar-by-dollar basis, more money may be saved using the Roth because the same annual amount may be saved as the Traditional, but the withdrawals will not be taxed when taken out like the Traditional. Despite the benefits of a Roth IRA, Schaub and Bechtel (2010) show that doing a Traditional to Roth rollover (going from one retirement account set up to the other) may not be a good idea.

Conclusion

Retirement planning requires understanding of all the tools available to the saver. This article basically explores the different avenues of saving for retirement and how they function. Unfortunately tax laws change like Presidents and sometimes what was once an attractive strategy may change as well. As everyone will one day retire (we all hope), a good understanding of different retirement plans at the public, private and individual levels make the process a little easier to comprehend. For this reason this topic represents an important component of the basic Personal Finance course.

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Oops: Did I Just Do (Say) That:
Exploring Student and Employer Perceptions of Behaviors
During the Interview Process

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Abstract

The employment interview process is the gateway for students in pursuit of a professional position. Negative behaviors during that process or lack of preparation for it can severely limit students' success in these situations. Much research has been done looking at either employer or student perceptions of the interview process. This study compares the perceptions of both recruiters and students related to interview performance and preparation. The alignment or misalignment of these perceptions is discussed. Finally, suggested responses to these results are offered for both educators and educational institutions.

Pension Fund Basic for Personal Finance Students

Employer perceptions (positive or negative) of candidates during the interview process have a definite impact on the candidate's ratings and eventually the employer's decision on which candidate to offer a position (Barrick & Swider, 2010)

Interview skills do not come naturally to all students. They must and should be developed. Educators and educational institutions are charged with preparing students to be effective in the interview process. Educational institutions rely heavily on placement rates to promote and enhance the prestige of their institutions. The effect of student performance in interviews on success or lack of success in obtaining employment should not be underestimated.

Past studies have tended to focus exclusively on either student perceptions or employer perceptions of what is effective in the job interview process. Velasco (2012) surveyed recent graduates and found the most required attributes in the employment selection process are soft skills. Peterson (1997) explored interviewer's perceptions of communication inadequacies in the interview process. Robles (2012) looked at the importance of soft skills from the perception of business executives.

Problem Statement and Purpose

Employers look at potential candidates from a variety of angles (Botteger & Barsoux, 2012). Communication skills, both oral and nonverbal, have a significant impact on hiring decisions (Peterson, 1997). Grades, educational institution, referrals, and personal appearance are all considered by employers in the job application process. Recruiters also look at person-

organization (P-O) fit. This can be defined as the how well candidates and organizations match or fit together (Kristof, 1996; Velasco, 2012). Candidate mismatches can be very costly to companies.

Intangibles such as soft skills play a very significant role in the process (Klaus, 2014). Past studies looking into employers perceptions have been useful to learn what employers view as appropriate or inappropriate on the job (Robles, 2012) or in the job interview process (Velasco, 2012). This study not only looks at employer perceptions but also student perceptions about the job interview process. By directly comparing recruiter and student perceptions, we hope to answer the following questions:

Are employer and student perceptions in alignment as related to appropriate interview behaviors and preparation?

What should be the response of educators and educational institutions to improve student interview performance?

The implications of the results of this study should be considered by both educators and educational institutions.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the survey is limited to students and recruiters attending or associated with a mid-sized university in the Midwest. The business professionals who were surveyed were recruiters that come to campus for job fairs.

The students who were surveyed develop focused job application skills in two business communication courses: Business Writing and Business Presentations. Each course is two credits. Other schools may devote different levels of resources to developing interview skills in their students.

Methods and Procedures

Surveys related to manager perceptions (PR Newswire, 2010a; 2010b; 2011) of job candidate behaviors and preparation were researched. From that research a survey was created to be given to recruiters and students.

In the spring of 2014, 102 students at a mid-sized university in the Midwest were surveyed about their perceptions of employer preferences. These students were enrolled in either a business writing or a business presentations class at the time they completed the survey.

In the fall of 2014, 434 surveys were sent to recruiters from the same university. This survey mirrored the one sent to students. Ninety of the recruiters (approximately 21 percent) completed the survey.

The survey included 12 questions asking for employer and student perceptions on common issues that diminish a candidate's chance of being successful in the job application process. Two questions related to negative behaviors displayed by candidates during the interview process as well the preparedness of candidates for the interview will be explored in this article

In the survey two questions were asked to both students and employers about possible interview issues.

- What is the most common mistake candidates make during the job interview?

Rank the following interview behaviors according to what would make you less likely to hire an applicant. (Students were asked "make an employer less likely.")

Results-Common Mistakes Candidates Make During the Job Interview

The top five responses from recruiters in order were *Little or no knowledge of company* (33%), *Unprepared to discuss skills and experience* (25%), *Limited enthusiasm* (24%), *Lack of eye contact* (6%), *Unprepared to discuss career plans and goals* (4%), and *Late arrival* (2%).

The top five responses from students in order were *Little or no knowledge of company* (63%), *Lack of eye contact* (11%), *Limited enthusiasm* (11%), *Unprepared to discuss career plans and goals* (8%), *Unprepared to discuss skills and experience* (6%), and *Late arrival* (2%).

Results-Interview Behaviors That Diminish Candidate's Chances of Interview Success

Recruiters identified *Crossing arms over chest* as the worst behavior to display in an interview. The other four behaviors ranked in order were as follows: *Bad posture*, *Playing with hair or touching face*, *Giving a weak handshake*, *Using too many hand gestures*.

Students perceived that *Giving a weak handshake* was the worst behavior to display in an interview. The rankings for the other behaviors in order were *Bad posture*, *Crossing arms over chest*, *Playing with hair or touching face*, and *Using too many hand gestures*.

Discussion and Implications: Common Interview Mistakes

The results from the question relating to the most common mistakes candidates make during the interview were informative.

The current study compares the perceptions of recruiters and students with relation to common interview mistakes made by job candidates. The perceptions of recruiters are of paramount importance as they are the people that chose to hire or not hire our students for internship and post-graduate positions.

In three areas, recruiter and students perceptions varied significantly from recruiters: *Little or no knowledge of the company*, *Unprepared to discuss skills and experience*, and *Limited enthusiasm*. Table 1 compares the perceptions of recruiters and students in these areas.

Table 1: Common Mistakes Candidate Make During the Job Interview

	Recruiter	Student
Behavior	Perceptions	Perceptions
Little or no knowledge of company	33%	63%
Unprepared to discuss skills and experience	25%	6%
Limited enthusiasm	24%	11%
Lack of eye contact	6%	11%
Unprepared to discuss career plans or goals	4%	8%
Late arrival	2%	2%

Students understand that employers want them to have knowledge of the company to which they are applying. Although this perception is in alignment with the perception of recruiters, recruiters still see this as the most common mistake that students make in the interview process.

Educators should spend more time not only discussing this deficiency, but educators should consider the need of the following:

- Develop materials informing students of what types of information they should be researching.
- Create in-class exercises in which students role play and demonstrate knowledge of a company.

In contrast, students feel that they are prepared to discuss their skills and experience while recruiters disagree. Recruiters ranked this area as the second most common interview mistakes that candidates make. This misalignment of perceptions leads students to perform less effectively in interview settings.

Educators should better prepare students in two ways:

- Set time aside (in class and outside of class) to encourage students to spend quality time assessing their strengths and skills. Students should be prompted to focus on quantifying their experience by giving examples.
- Provide opportunities for students to role play discussing their skills and experience.

Recruiters also view *limited enthusiasm* as a major deficiency in candidate behavior.

Students appeared to understand that this is a common mistake made during the interview, but many do not seem to understand how important this factor may be to their success. Educators should continue to emphasize the absolute importance that candidates demonstrate high enthusiasm in the interview. Educators might consider providing the following to address this issue:

- Developing role plays during class in which students must demonstrate enthusiasm during interview situations.
- Reminding students that they are “onstage” in all stages of contact with interviewers (pre-interview, interview, post interview) and that they should demonstrate enthusiasm in every interaction.
- Developing projects in which students interact with business professionals in an interview setting (e.g. student-lead interviews, business panels).

Three recruiter and student responses were within five percentage points of each other: *Lack of eye contact*, *Unprepared to discuss career plans or goals*, and *Late arrival*.

Students understand the importance of establishing proper eye contact, being punctual, and communicating career plans/goals. Employers participating in this survey do not indicate that these areas represent major mistakes made by job candidates.

Recruiters and students also shared their perceptions regarding nonverbal behaviors. Not all nonverbal behaviors are created equal. Recruiters viewed *Crossing arms over chest* as the behavior to most likely diminish a candidate's chances of interview success. Students ranked this behavior as the third worst behavior, perceiving a *weak handshake* and *bad posture* as more damaging to interview success. Educators should inform students about this discrepancy and have students demonstrate proper nonverbal behaviors. More time needs to be spent emphasizing good posture and eliminating nervous or defensive nonverbal behaviors.

Both employers and students ranked *using too many hand gestures* as the least significant behavior to make employers less likely to hire an applicant. Students understand that *playing with hair or touching their face* and *using too many hand gestures* are not significant issues that employers see during the interview process.

Importance to Educators and Educational Institutions

The results of this study highlight deficiencies that employers find in the interview behaviors and preparation of job candidates. Also the differences between employer perceptions and those of students are compared. From these results both educators and educational institutions should consider how they can improve student performance in interview settings.

Educators should consider the following:

- Students should not only be encouraged to research companies, but they should be given advice on what types of information should be researched and communicated in the interview.
- Students should be provided with quality time (both in class and out of class) to consider their best attributes and develop strategies to effectively communicate those qualities.

- Educators should more thoroughly engage students so that they can effectively articulate their best qualities and match them to the needs of employers.
- Educators should create opportunities for students to understand the importance and role of nonverbal behaviors before (Barrick & Swider, 2010) , during, and after the interview.
- Students should get sufficient opportunities (drill and practice) to develop effective nonverbal skills. Perhaps educators need to incorporate more role playing opportunities for students to hone their abilities to discuss skills and experience. Simply talking about the importance of this issue is not enough.

Educational institutions should consider the following related to the preparation of students for the interview process.

- Educational institutions should understand the relationship between candidate interview success and placement percentages for graduating students.
- Both faculty and administration should understand that students could be better prepared for the interview process.
- To improve interview success, educational institutions need to devote proper resources (staff, credit hours, seminars) to help students develop their nonverbal skills (Klaus, 2014).
- Educational institutions should consider expanding the business communication curriculum to meet student and employer needs in the area of interview preparation.

The interview process is the gateway for students to obtain a professional position. Students need better preparation and understanding of this process if they are to be successful. As interview skills do not just come naturally for all students, these skills must and should be developed. Educational institutions should understand the link between student performance in

interview situations and placement rates as these organizations rely heavily on placements rates to promote and enhance their prestige. The performance of students in interviews (either positive or negative) affects placement rates, and educational institutions should consider allotting additional resources to improve student interview performance.

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Social Media: Helping and Hindering Employment in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The prevalence of social media necessitates that students and educators understand the role it plays in the job search process. Employers use social media in both recruitment and selection as a way to reach a wide array of potential applicants and to quickly access information about them. Since the information posted online can portray the applicant in a positive or negative light, it is essential that students understand that what they post can impact whether they receive a job offer. Practical suggestions are provided to help prepare students for a job search that includes the use of social media.

Keywords: Social media, social networking, job search, business education

Social Media: Helping and Hindering Employment in the 21st Century

Social media is everywhere, and now it is commonly used in the job search and employee selection process. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and others were first used to connect people online to stay in touch and share ideas. This has changed, according to Root and McKay (2014), as “companies are not only using social networks to market their companies and brands, but also are using social networks as a tool in their employee recruitment, screening, and selection processes” (p. 202). Therefore, it is important for students and business instructors to understand the effective use of social media in the job recruitment and job search process.

The prevalent use of social media is shown in a 2014 Jobvite survey, where 93% of recruiters stated they either currently use or plan to use social media in their recruitment efforts. Popular channels of social media include LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and YouTube. The most common site used by businesses is LinkedIn, which is used for searching for candidates (95%), contacting candidates (95%), and vetting candidates before an interview (93%). More than 90% of organizations use LinkedIn to keep tabs on potential job candidates (93%) or post jobs (92%), according to Jobvite (2014).

How Companies Are Using Social Media in Hiring Decisions

Regardless of the social media platform used, there are numerous benefits derived from organizations using social media for employee recruitment purposes. According to Nagy (2013), employers are able to reach job candidates faster and cheaper. In addition, social media sites allow employers to better engage their target audience and identify individuals who would be a

good fit with the organization. Social media sites also build brand awareness, which can be influential in the recruitment process. In addition, an organization can use these platforms to share information about the company, which can attract a diverse applicant pool. Another use of an organization's social media sites is the ability to access referrals. Passive candidates can also be recruited through social media sites (Nagy, 2013). Passive candidates are those who are not looking for a new job, but would consider it if the right opportunity presented itself ("Passive," n.d.).

A primary benefit for organizations utilizing social media in the selection process is the quick access to a large amount of information on candidates. According to Jobvite (2014), 55% of companies have reconsidered a job candidate based on what they saw online about the candidate. Recruiters can examine an applicant's professional experience, tenure, hard skills, cultural fit, and the presence of industry-related posts based on an applicant's social media sites (Jobvite, 2014).

While social media can be used to screen out applicants, it can also help focus on the credentials of an applicant. Based on what is viewed online, an organization can develop a positive or negative impression of an applicant's personality or perceived organizational fit. In addition, social media sites can support professional qualifications and provide more insight on an applicant's creativity. Positive references from those who know the applicant can also be viewed on social media. An applicant's communication skills are also highlighted on social media, as well as awards and accolades (Swallow, 2011).

How Students Can Use Social Media in the Job Search

It is evident that organizations use social media for recruitment and selection of job candidates on a regular basis. One would assume that today's students, who are heavy users of

social media, would expect to use these same tools in their future job search. However, an informal poll conducted in a university-level business communications class by one of the authors found that students were unsure if they would use it in their future job searches. The authors were interested in whether their students understood the importance of social media in their personal job searches. When asked in class, 35% of students stated they probably would use social media, whereas 35% stated they would not use it. In contrast, when the same students were asked if they thought potential employers would look at their social media sites when considering them for a job, 82% responded affirmatively.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to using social media in the job search process. The advantages include the ability to reach a wide network of employers, gain information on a specific company or industry, and increase the potential to market oneself. Disadvantages include technology issues, potentially jeopardizing current employment, and the possibility of missed job opportunities because a company is not online (Lewis, 2013). Job candidates need to remember that social media is one tool in the job hunt toolbox; a candidate also should continue to use traditional methods.

Root and McKay (2014) conducted a study of university students on their perspectives of what potential employers looked for on social media sites. These business students indicated they believed that employers were likely to check Facebook profiles because “students seem to have a good appreciation for the fact that many prospective employers may research their profiles when they apply for a job” (p. 206). The students stated they are not likely to post anything on personal sites they would not like an employer to view. The study found that students were not likely to understand the importance of written communication skills outside of classroom assignments.

Students were also unaware that associations with groups and other individuals on social media were likely used as part of the assessment of a candidate.

Why Social Media Should be Taught in the Classroom

Providing an early awareness is important for students. Root and McKay (2014) recommended that the importance of an effective social presence “should be addressed early in a student’s academic career. For that matter, these issues should really be raised in K-12 concepts” (p. 206), so that students will begin to establish a positive social media presence early and build on this throughout their college career.

Students need to be informed that recruiters look at many different items when reviewing a candidate’s social media presence. First, it is important to have some form of social media presence or it may be assumed that a candidate is hiding something (Schawbel, 2012) or may actually be at a disadvantage as an applicant (Smith, 2013). Recruiters also use social media to determine if a candidate will fit into the company’s culture (Schawbel, 2012). Social media can be a great source for potential candidates. It is ideal for job seekers because it helps the candidate to learn about a company, connect with its employees, and learn about job openings (Smith, 2013). Job seekers should review their privacy settings on each of their social media sites and allow some content to be visible. Each site should be reviewed to ensure a professional image is portrayed and that information online is consistent with resumes (Kwoh, 2012). Columbia University (2014) suggests that candidates begin by creating a personal brand, which is a unique way to present a person’s name, personality, expertise, and style to a potential employer. Candidates should post information and pictures that will consistently present this brand.

What Should Be Taught in the Classroom About Social Media

Recruiters use social media to screen for negative characteristics, and students need to understand the typical “red flags.” According to CareerBuilder (2013), a recent survey of hiring managers in the U.S. found that items that were most likely to hurt a job candidate included:

- Provocative/inappropriate pictures
- Evidence of drinking or drug use
- Negative communication about a previous employer
- Poor communication skills
- Discriminatory language
- Evidence that the candidate lied about qualifications

A candidate must be consistent in the use of social media: the information posted on different sites should be compatible across sites and with the candidate’s resume (Smith, 2013). The survey by CareerBuilder (2013) also cited reasons that candidates would be considered for a position including:

- Professional image
- Positive personality
- Well-rounded interests
- Support of qualifications
- Creativity
- Good communication skills
- References from others

Recruiters are likely to review candidates' social media sites, so it is suggested that candidates provide links to their personal sites to ensure that an employer is looking at the correct page, especially if the candidate has a common name (Jobvite, 2012).

The information presented so far provides an overview of how social media is used by recruiters and job candidates. Students should be reminded of the following tips for their social media sites which will impact their future job search (Egan, 2014; Mielach, 2012).

1. Edit pictures. Choose pictures and videos that are appropriate for all audiences, both personal and professional. Check Facebook settings to control who can tag photos, and monitor pictures for changes in tags.
2. Boost privacy settings. Tighten security settings on any social media accounts that are not career-connected, especially Facebook accounts. Set profiles to "private" status, but remember that nothing is private on the Internet.
3. Think before posting. Once a comment, status update, photo or video is published, it is there forever—even if it is deleted later.
4. Keep everything in context. Know where to post content that fits the situation. For example, Facebook is fine for sharing details about family, hobbies, or activities. LinkedIn should focus on one's professional life. Use caution rather than over sharing and never post anything that is considered "too much information" or extremely inappropriate.
5. Accentuate the positive. Social media accounts contain a mix of professional and personal lives. A social media presence should focus on the positive aspects of one's professional and/or personal life. Think about how others perceive an online image and highlight only positive things.
6. Maintain professionalism. Bashing a former or current colleague, a former or current boss, or the company is in poor taste. Be nice. Posting something negative can damage a reputation and image.
7. Keep it clean. Avoid cursing on social media including Facebook posts, tweets, and other social media updates. A 2014 survey by Jobvite found that 65% of recruiters frowned on job seekers who had profanity in posts. Sexual references are also a big red flag.

8. Watch words. Correct spelling and grammar counts on LinkedIn and other social media profiles. The 2014 Jobvite survey found that recruiters were more turned off by grammar and punctuation errors on job candidates' social media profiles (61%) than by references to alcohol use (47%).
9. Be careful with associates. Belonging to certain groups on social media may not be good for a professional image. Check groups on social media sites.
10. Search for other references on Yahoo!, Google, or other internet sites. Clean up online persona and set Google alerts to get notifications when a new mention pops up on the web. Everything that employers can find when they "google" an applicant's name needs to portray a positive, professional image.
11. Avoid controversy. Avoid hot topics like politics and religion because opposite viewpoints of a potential employer could hurt a job search. However, sharing content or news that an employer posts on social media or asking thoughtful questions on a company's Facebook page or Twitter chat can assist in getting noticed in a good way. Follow potential employers on LinkedIn and join relevant industry groups on that site.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Teaching

Social media is so prevalent in our society and this trend is likely to continue to be a part of our lives. It is not surprising that it would become an integral part of our professional lives as well. There are limited research-based studies published in peer reviewed journals that address the topics of the effective use of social media in the hiring process and how job candidates can use social media in their job search. In response to this growing employment practice, more research is needed to study these issues in depth and to better understand how social media is impacting the job search process for both applicants and organizations.

As future job candidates, our students should be prepared early to understand the ubiquitous presence of social media. In classes, we have often stressed the importance of presenting a professional image, but we may not have sufficiently stressed the importance of the

online image. In this competitive job market, educators must reinforce the importance of creating and maintaining a positive image both face-to-face and online.

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**USING THE HERRMANN BRAIN DOMINANCE MODEL TO DETERMINE
COMMUNICATION STYLE**

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Abstract

Introducing the concept of communication style into the classroom enhances not only audience analysis and planning for assigned communication tasks, but also jump-starts students' awareness of differences. One way to learn and apply communication style is a card game centered on the Herrmann Brain Dominance Model (Herrmann International, 2011). The Diversity© card game takes about 45 minutes to play for a group of 25 to 30 students, and will sort the students into four styles. Following the creation of the classroom group profile, the instructor can continue to explore differences and to discuss how styles can work with one another.

USING THE HERRMANN BRAIN DOMINANCE MODEL TO DETERMINE COMMUNICATION STYLE

Most of us learn early in our lives that we do not all think alike. As we increase in communicative skill and knowledge, many of us learn how to adapt, and even how to use, these differences. Corporations invest millions every year teaching employees about how to recognize and use these differences to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of communication and the quality and frequency of work results (Dreeke, 2009; Phillips, 1989; Sabol, 2011) using workshops of one and two-days' length. Introducing the concept of communication style into the classroom enhances not only audience analysis and planning for assigned communication tasks, but also jump-starts students' awareness of differences as they move into the workplace after graduation.

Several systems are in use in industry, all involving the use of four-box models resulting in four style types that individuals can use to better understand themselves as well as to identify style behaviors in others. With a basic three-step approach of 1) understand yourself, 2) understand the other, and 3) adjust your behavior to account for differences, individuals can use style knowledge to craft communication approaches in all channels and, thereby, to improve interpersonal relationships and communication effectiveness (Rehling, 2004).

In the classroom, work on communication styles can build relationships between students, open up the classroom climate for better discussion, assist in team formation for maximum diversity and skill use, and add an interactive element of fun and interest (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011).

The utility of the approach rests in its definition of communication style as a set of behavioral preferences. With style, we are talking about observable behaviors rather than deep measures of personality. All of us develop “comfort zones” of behavioral and thinking approaches that afford clues to others about how we prefer to approach issues and decisions. If our intention is to identify the communication style of another, we observe that person for such behavioral cues as word choice, speed of speech, facial expression, gestures, vocal variety, and preference for conversational focus on data versus people. Behavior is observable, and, while our choices are subject to change, we fall into preferred patterns, making style identification possible and practical. Based upon observations and consequent style identification, then, we can make choices about our own behavior to get into the comfort zones of our conversational partners, paving the way for improved interpersonal relationships and more effective communication results (Phillips, 1989).

Phillips (1989) provides a table of comparisons for sixteen available communication style identification instruments that categorize communication behavior into four styles based upon similar dimensions. Many of these systems require practitioners to earn certification to qualify them for use, and practitioners will typically pay a price-per-instrument for each student. All these models use two dimensions to create four styles, and, while every instrument has its own names for the styles and the dimensions, all the dimensions are equivalent and all instruments describe the same four basic communication styles.

All models include two dimensions: Task/People and Direct/Indirect. On the Task end of the Task/People continuum, the emphasis is on thinking, achievement, and emotional control. On the People end of the continuum, the emphasis is on feelings, acceptance, and emotional expression. The Direct/Indirect continuum describes variation in extroverted or introverted

behavior. On the Direct end of the continuum, behavior is more directly assertive, aggressive, and extroverted. On the Indirect end, behavior is more indirectly assertive, less aggressive, and more introverted. When the two dimensions are combined, four basic communication styles result (Phillips, 1989).

In a classroom setting, instructors seldom have eight hours to develop to teaching and developing skill in communication style, but the concept has utility and interest for courses that require communication tasks and teamwork. One way to learn and apply communication style is through the use of a card game centered on the Herrmann Brain Dominance Model (Herrmann International, 2011). This model color codes the four styles, so that instructor and students can use the color “shorthand” to refer to communication style behavior. The four styles and their corresponding colors are described in Figure 1 below.

Direct			
Task	Blue Style	Yellow Style	People
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes • Quantifies • Is Logical • Is Critical • Is Realistic • Likes Numbers • Knows about Money • Knows How Things work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infers • Imagines • Speculates • Takes Risks • Is Impetuous • Breaks Rules • Likes Surprises • Is Curious/Plays 	
	Green Style	Red Style	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes Preventive Action • Establishes Procedures • Gets Things Done • Is Reliable • Organizes • Is Neat • Timely • Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Sensitive to Others • Likes to Teach • Touches a lot • Is Supportive • Is Expressive • Is Emotional • Talks a lot • Feels 	
Indirect			

Figure 1: Herrmann Brain Dominance Model

(Herrmann International, 2011)

The Herrmann Brain Dominance Model is based on brain research by Ned Herrmann in his role as Director, Management Development at General Electric in the early 1970s. In this model, and in all the models, the styles describe preferred modes of thinking, learning, and working. All styles are neutral, that is, no one style is best, so the models are descriptive, not prescriptive. In all models, communication style preference does not equate to competence in communication. People in all style categories may communicate more or less well based on their skill levels. Organizations and teams need all styles to function well, and all of us have some behaviors from all styles. No individual is a “pure” example of any one of the styles (Herrmann International, 2011; Phillips, 1989).

Herrmann International offers instruments to assist individuals in identifying their style and instructional certification to trainers and others who wish to use the instruments in their practice. While individuals would typically experience a workshop of several days’ length to complete the instrument and to improve their skill at using the information and concepts, the organization offers an alternative approach which, while less thorough, offers access to the concepts and skills for students in a classroom. This approach is the Diversity card game, an inexpensive tool that requires no certification and that instructors can re-use over time.

The game takes about 45 minutes to play for a group of 25 to 30 students, and will sort the students, by their own identification of themselves, into the four styles. The deck contains 12 color-coded cards for each of the four styles and each card has a descriptor word. After “dealing” a hand consisting of five varied cards, students, through processes of ranking, exchange, and elimination, arrive at the two cards that best describe them. The instructor can then have students post their choices to a board to create a “profile” of the styles in the room.

Following the creation of the classroom group profile, the instructor can continue to build on the styles with like-style and multiple-style groups to explore the differences and to discuss how styles can work with one another. Follow-up activities built upon arriving at consensus can provide further, immediate experiences with the differences in the styles. Like-style groups can respond to proposed communication strategies from the other styles to refine students' inventory of communication strategies. Forming teams with diverse styles can enrich discussion and open students' eyes to the variety of approaches and viewpoints that result from communication style (May, & Gueldednzoph, 2006; Prichard, Bizo, & Stratford, 2006; Scarfino, & Roever, 2009)

One warning to impart to students is that the activity is equivalent to self-report data, that is, the style identification is how they see themselves, not necessarily how others see them. The assumption that we come across to others as we intend can be hazardous (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991). Several instruments for other style models are also based on self-report data (Inscape Publishing, 1996; Kraiger & Kirkpatrick, 2010). Several systems offer alternative instruments that individuals may use with friends, family, and coworkers that assist in pinpointing differences in how people may see themselves versus how they come across to others.

After style identification, instructors can lead students to apply the knowledge in varied communication task scenarios. In the pre-writing stage of situation and reader analysis, communication style, when it is available to the writer, has great utility in planning for effectiveness. Knowledge of communication style can help determine, for example, whether a direct or indirect pattern is appropriate, and may guide the choice of words and topics.

In face-to-face communications, students may choose words and topics that immediately place the conversation and the message in the receiver's comfort zone to increase the likelihood

that the message will be understood and acted upon as the communicator intends. For example, messages designed for Blue style receivers will be direct and will begin with a brief “bottom line” statement of intention or conclusion, whereas, for a Red style, the message may begin more personally with a salutation and brief conversation. For Yellow styles, speakers can show more energy and enthusiasm in their voices and gestures, and focus on what is new and different about the topic.

In written communication situations, including electronic messages, the communicator can, similarly, tailor the message to the comfort zone of the target. For Red and Yellow styles, a salutation and a friendly opening sentence at the beginning of an email message can pave the way for the reader to receive and understand the message. Conversely, for Green and Blue styles, getting directly to business will satisfy their need to attend directly to the task. For longer reports, direct approaches for Blue and Green styles with recommendations and conclusions at the beginning of the report will place the task first, and will enable these styles to delve as far into supporting detail as they wish.

Because all styles contribute to the work of a group, style identification can assist in the formation of diverse teams for classroom work that will expose students to how the styles may combine for complete coverage of a problem or case. Blue styles will keep the team on time and focused on outcomes. Green styles will be concerned about getting it right and organizing the team and work. Red styles will make sure everyone is involved and assist in arriving at consensus, and Yellow styles will contribute to generating new ideas and to building and keeping the group’s positive energy. Additionally, combining the styles in a team often leads to conflict so students can build their resolution skills. Style identification can take conflict out of the context of right/wrong and into a consideration of difference.

For the time invested, communication style identification using the Herrmann Brain Dominance Model yields benefits, not only in increased knowledge and skill but also in richer exploration of interpersonal dynamics in the classroom. Using the Diversity card game yields benefits to both instructors and students, and fits well in courses focused on communication, both oral and written.

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