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Developing Teaching and Learning in a Management Education Course

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to suggest ways of improving student learning in an educational management course. The coursehad traditionally been taught in a face-to-face model, in multiple sections, at the university. The first part of the paper begins by given a general overview of some key ideas about student learning. It describes some of the common teaching and learning models and theories relevant to higher education. The second part examines how we might use different methods of teaching to improve student learning in the management education course. The paper shows that a more constructively aligned teaching and learning environment would lead students to adjust their learning approaches in a way that a deeper situational learning approach and a less surface situational learning approach would be employed in their study, despite their pre-existing individual differences in the preferred learning approaches.

Keywords: Improvement, Leadership and Management, Student Learning, Teaching and Learning.

INTRODUCTION

We all recognize the fast pace of change in higher education. The past decade has seen continuing increase in student numbers, further internationalization of the student population, and wider diversity in the prior educational experience of students. When teachers think the best, most important way to improve their teaching is by developing their content knowledge, they end up with sophisticated levels of knowledge, but they have only simplistic instructional methods to convey that material. To imagine that content matters more than process is to imagine that the car is more important than the road. Both are essential.What we teach and how we teach it are inextricably linked and very much dependent on one another.Consequently, changes in learning and teaching practices need to be achieved to counteract this divergence. It is argued that these new dynamics in higher education require a fundamental shift in the way in which institutions conduct their affairs, from leadership and strategic thinking to management and fundamental operations (25).

Over the last century leadership roles have changed dramatically.The array of theoretical approaches to management has had an impact on the discipline of educational management (32, 17, 31, 39). This outcome vividly points to several shortcomings of current management education, including: increasing homogeneity in course content, a limited view of human potential and creativity, and poor integration of diverse knowledge areas across the curriculum. The narrow discipline-based approach to courses commonly found in graduate business school education is known to be deficient in many practical respects, post-graduation (22).When courses are presented largely as a list of disconnected topics, it is generally left up to students to figure out how to integrate what they learned once they enter the workplace (1). The European Commission (23) mentioned that, in this era of increasingly rapid globalization, the teaching and learning experience for all students must be globally connected, enabling students to develop an understanding of how their subject is viewed and pursued in different parts of the world.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest ways of improving student learning in an educational management course.The coursehad traditionally been taught in a face-to-face model, in multiple sections, at the university. The first part of the paper begins by given a general overview of some key ideas about student learning. It describes some of the common teaching and learning models and theories relevant to higher education. The second part examines how we might use different methods of teaching to improve student learning in the management education course. The course was choosing because I have taught the education management course for some years.

After teaching for some years in the education management course and having some years of experience on how the course was organized, my general impression of the management education course is that it lacks intellectual rigor compared to what I experienced in my undergraduate and graduate education. I realized that the course is in need of improvement, particularly about the leadership and

management component. Also notably lacking was an appropriate balance of theory and practice within the course, which could help students make better management decisions in the future.

RELEVANT LEARNING THEORIES

Being a teacher trainer, I try to involve my students in their learning process. It is stated that there are two streams of constructivist thinking: cognitive constructivism and social constructivism (40). A founding father of cognitive constructivism, believed that people learn by integrating new experiences with what they already know and understand (38). This is similar to discovery learning, in which people learn best those things they discover for themselves (15). Social constructivism is associated with Vygotsky, who believed that a person's cognitive abilities are mediated through social interactions (33).

Social constructivism is also relevant to as it is believed that students learn by engaging with others (21). Although there are differences in these schools of thought with cognitive constructivists focusing on the cognitive nature of learning and social constructivists centering on acts of collaboration, both perspectives agree that people learn actively by constructing new knowledge rather than passively by accepting information passed on by others. It is stated that a deep approach of learning requires that students engage a task meaningfully and use appropriate cognitive activities (6). This is in line with the a constructivism theory of learning which postulates that knowledge needs to be actively internalized and information needs to be assimilated by the students (42). To encourage a deep approach of learning the teaching and assessment methods should be aligned with the intended learning outcomes, the learning outcomes should focus on high cognitive skill levels, and the teaching methods should engage students in active interaction with the subject (6).

Teaching for Learning

It is important to remember that what the student does is actually more important indetermining what is learned than what the teacher does' (43). This statement is congruent with a constructivist view and reminds us that students in higher education must engage with and take considerable responsibility for their learning. It is important that learners structure information and are able to use it (7, 30).

The teacher cannot do all the work if learning is to be the outcome; congruently, the teacher must ensure that course design, selection of teaching and learning opportunities and assessment help the learner to learn. As designers of courses and as teachers, we want to 'produce' graduates of higher education capable of critical thought, able to be creative and innovate at a relatively high level. Learning requires opportunities for practice and exploration, space for thinking or reflecting 'in your head' and for interaction with others, and learning from and with peers and experts. These imperatives, coupled with those of our discipline, should affect our view of how we teach (and design courses) in our particular higher education context.These activities really get the students energized while also teaching them the essential skills for collaboration on larger projects.

Selecting Learning and Teaching Strategies

We need to consider activities that will cause the students to engage with the learning. Course documentation usually defines the amount of study, in many institutions this is defined in terms of contact time in lectures and tutorials. However, we have seen that these are not the most effective way for the majority of students to learn as they can adopt passive learning approaches. Consequently, we need to consider approaches that require participation that is more active and encourage more high-level learning. Therefore, if we want students to consider that we expect them to synthesize concepts and link them together then we should consider assessment activities that encourage that behaviour, such as a mini-lab project, or a case study such as designing and costing a new power plant in a location with particular requirements.

The digital age is producing a revolution in education, yet for many practitioners the concept of lecturing has remained unchanged, underpinned by a belief that the teaching and learning process is simply a transfer of knowledge (24). This empty vessel theory of learning has the lecturer delivering a prepared talk on a set area of subject matter, with key points illustrated via board notes, overheads or power point presentation, whilst the students listen, take notes and occasionally are given the opportunity to question or respond.

Improving Teaching and Learning in a Management Education Course

In this section I describe some of the methods that could be used to improve the teaching and learning in the management education course. We may define good teaching as instruction that leads to effective learning, which in turn means thorough and lasting acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and values the lecturer or the institution, has set out to impart. The education literature presents a variety of good teaching strategies and research studies that validate them (16, 26, 34). In the sections that follow, I describe some strategies known to be particularly effective in promoting teaching and learning that could be use in the management education course.

Case Studies

Studies have shown that students can learn more effectively when actively involved in the learning process (9). I think the case study approach is another

way in which active learning strategies can be implemented in the management education course. Research has shown that case studies are an important part of a management course.Which is one of the core components that have been missing in the course. They present realistic, complex, and contextually rich situations and often involve a dilemma, conflict, or problem that one or more of the characters in the case must negotiate. A good case study, according to Professor Paul Lawrence is:
...The vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced in real life situations (19).

He further states that case studies can be an effective teaching tool in any number of disciplines. As an instructional strategy, case studies have a number of virtues. They "bridge the gap between theory and practice and between the academy and the workplace" (2). They also give students practice identifying the parameters of a problem, recognizing and articulating positions, evaluating courses of action, and arguing different points of view. Case studies vary in length and detail, and can be used in a number of ways, depending on the case itself and on the instructor's goals.

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning to Improve Student Learning Outcomes

The use of cooperative and collaborative learning gives students the opportunity to be more actively engage in the teaching and learning process. It is stress that, one of the greatest and inevitable challenges educators face is determining the most effective teaching strategies for their students (44). They further mention that understanding and assessing student involvement in learning can help teachers design the most effective curriculum and determine how student's best learn. In addition, instructors must consider which skills will be most practical for students entering a workforce where building relationships and productivity go hand-in-hand. To meet the demand, many educators are using active learning pedagogies, such as cooperative or team-based learning. Active learning in the context of higher education is often a social and informal process where ideas are casually exchanged through student involvement and intellectual and interpersonal activities (36).

Yamarik discusses the importance of cooperative learning as a teaching method where students work in small groups to help one another learn academic material (45). In the groups, students are expected to help each other find answers to questions, rather than seeking answers from the teacher. Cooperative work rarely replaces teacher instruction but rather replaces individual lecture and drill. If implemented properly, students in cooperative groups work with each other to make sure that everyone in the group understands the concepts being taught. Ultimately, the success of the group depends on its ability to make certain that everyone grasps the key ideas (41).

Collaborative Learning

Collaboration has been recognized as an effective way of enhancing academic productivity in scientific communities. It is mentioned that, in a collaborative learning environment, knowledge is shared or transmitted among learners as they work towards common learning goals, for example, a shared understanding of the subject at hand or a solution to a problem (12). Learners are not passive receptacles but are active in their process of knowledge acquisition as they participate in discussions, search for information, and exchange opinions with their peers. Knowledge is co-created and shared among peers, not owned by one particular learner after obtaining it from the course materials or instructor. The learning process creates a bond between and among learners as their knowledge construction depends on each other's contribution to the discussion. Hence, collaborative learning processes assist students to develop higher order thinking skills and to achieve richer knowledge generation through shared goals, shared exploration, and a shared process of meaning making (14, 18, 28, 37).

Beyond the straight forward transfer of facts and skills, ambitious instruction has teachers and students making meaning of rich academic content, engaging authentic practical and intellectual puzzles, and creating new knowledge and capabilities in themselves and others (20). He also stress that collaborative learning redefines traditional student-teacher relationship in the classroom because activities can include collaborative writing, group projects, joint problem solving, debates, study teams, and other activities in which students team together to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project. In this course, I noticed that the use of active and group learning techniques by the teachers in the programme was not widely used.

Reflection Papers

It is argued that, in order to facilitate learning, teachers need to develop not only their own ability to engage in reflective practice, but also the skills necessary to enable others to engage in reflective practice (13). It has also been emphasized that, the potential for reflection in facilitating learning and understanding in the more unstructured areas of knowledge domains, enabling students to tackle the 'messy corners' of even the most structured domains, is one of its most powerful features (29).

He goes on to say that, the ability to reflect has been associated with the higher levels of learning in a number of taxonomies of learning objectives. Bloom's taxonomy places the process of reflection

resulting in evaluation and critique as the highest educational objective (10). John Biggs refers to the SOLO taxonomy which 'provides a systematic way of describing how a learner's performance grows in complexity when mastering academic tasks' (7).

I believe that one of the more useful devices for finding out what students have learned at any point during a course is known as the 'reflection' paper; so called since it is quickly implemented. For example this could be introduced in the management education course to change the pace of the class inorder to have students write regular reflections on the work they have done. It is important to encourage and focus their writing with a prompt, such as:
Q1. What was the most important thing you learned in class today?
Q2. What was the point you found most difficult to understand in today's class?

It is important to note that the reflection paper focuses directly on what students understand about the course content, rather than their perceptions of the teaching processes or course design. While interactions in tutorials and small classes enable the teacher to see how students are processing the content, in larger classes it can be more difficult to know what students understand and where they are confused. Administering a reflection paper at the end of a teaching session is a potent antidote. These give students the time to reflect on their experiences and to integrate newly acquired skills and knowledge with previous learning. The teacher reviews these reflections as a way to assess student progress and provide feedback to help clarify misconceptions and refocus musical thinking (35). The importance of these reflections is highlighted by (3):
...When using these kinds of journals teachers are amazed that students' curiosities and confusionsare not what they would have predicted. It's difficult for teachers to identify beforehand whatstudents will find complex, confusing, and just too difficult to understanding at any given time [3].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

By introducing new teaching and learning approaches in the educational and management course with different degrees of the constructive alignment, this paper try to show that a more constructively aligned teaching and learning environment would lead students to adjust their learning approaches in a way that a more deep situational learning approach and a less surface situational learning approach would be employed in their study, despite their pre-existing individual differences in the preferred learning approaches. A recent study by European Commission (23) mentioned that teaching and learning in higher education is a shared process, with responsibilities on both student and teacher to contribute to their success. Within this shared process, higher education must engage students in questioning their preconceived ideas and their models of how the world works, so that they can reach a higher level of understanding.

There appears to be a strong argument for including small group collaborative learning experiences in different courses. The literature reveals a significant relationship between participation in these experiences and deeper learning as well as the development of learning and teamwork skills. It is stated that, it is an instructional strategy and has been reported to be highly successful in the classroom because of its increasing need for interdependence in all levels, providing students with the tools to effectively learn from each other (20). Students work towards fulfilling academic and social skill goals that are clearly stated. Further, collaborative learning appears to increase a sense of community, which has been shown to be closely linked to learner satisfaction and retention.The European Commission (23) emphasized that, teachers must be aware that different kinds of teaching methods and educational settings can produce different kinds of learning. Teachers should be able to face rapidly changing demands, which require a new set of competences and call for new approaches to teaching and learning. They should also be able to stimulate open and flexible learning that will improve learning outcomes, assessment and recognition.

Finally it is important to note that teachers who wish to improve teaching and learning in a course should consult the literature, see which instructional methods have been shown to work, and implement those with which they feel most comfortable. In conclusion, I would say good teachers are often those who experiment. They try out different teaching methodologies and evaluate them carefully. This sort of activity is a form of 'classroom research. You are researching the pedagogy of your own discipline, just as you might use experimental techniques in your disciplinary research work.I believe as teachers, we learned on a daily basis how to better deal with the course content and ways to teach and learn.In this paper, I have tried to show that learning theorists offer a diversity of approaches to learning and also look at some models and discuss how they can contribute to improving the problem of how students can achieve deep learning and higher learning outcomes in the management education course.

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