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Table of Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements	ii
Flipping the Classroom	1
Glenda Rotvold, Ph.D., University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota	
Sandy Braathen, Ph.D., University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota	
Using Social Media and Professional Development Programs to Enhance Student Acquisition of “Soft Skills”	9
Catherine G. Jones-Ridders, J.D., MBA, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan	
Perceptions of the Flipped Business Communication Classroom: A Pilot Study	14
Dr. Carol Blaszczynski, California State University, Los Angeles, California	
Dr. Diana J. Green, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah	
Student Assignment Feedback: Do We Give Them What They Really Want and/or Expect?	21
Gail Weatherly, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas	
Susan Evans Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas	
Ashley Hall, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas	
Get Ready for Generation Z: Teaching Methods That Address Different Learning Styles	27
Patricia A. Robbins, Ph.D., Adams State University, Alamosa, Colorado	

Preface and Acknowledgements

The Fall 2014 edition of the *M-PBEA Journal* brings together the current trends and best practices of our business education classroom. From teaching to the current generation of students, to teaching in the flipped classroom, to giving feedback on assignments, and looking at professional development programs, the journal takes us through various components of today's learners and educators. This edition continues to expand the walls of our classrooms to include the world.

As editor of the 2014 edition, I would like to thank all individuals who submitted manuscripts for consideration in the journal. The time and effort spent researching and composing articles shows a true commitment to the education profession and to the professional growth of fellow educators.

Sincere appreciation and gratitude are extended to my colleagues and all those who played a role in the publication of the journal. The expertise that each shared in reviewing, proofreading, and general support was invaluable. An additional thank you to the members of the Review Board of Peer Evaluations who donated time from their busy schedules to review the original manuscripts and offer their expertise and advice to our authors.

If you are interested in participating in the next *M-PBEA Journal*, the call for papers will be posted at the Mountain-Plains Business Education Association's website, www.mpbea.org. Potential reviewers may contact the *M-PBEA Journal* Editor directly.

It does not matter how long you have been teaching. It is always a good idea to explore new ideas and try innovative approaches to teaching business subjects. We must not forget that we continue to be students ourselves. The journal authors provide insights that allow us to grow personally and professionally.

Flipping the Classroom

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Flipping the classroom is a way to change up what instructors and students are doing inside the classroom as well as outside the classroom walls. To flip a classroom, the traditional lecture or teacher-provided instruction is completed outside the classroom, where students use videos, screencasts, podcasts, or other means to preview the material. The classroom time is then used to actively engage students by solving problems, participating in discussions, and collaborating with peers. Flipped classrooms provide a more effective use of both the student's and the teacher's in-class time. It can allow for more personalized, differentiated instruction because instructors have more time to help students when they need it.

Introduction

A flipped classroom may look like what some people would call chaos—noisy, interactive, and collaborative. Although it may look like chaos, real learning is taking place. Flipping a classroom reverses the typical passive learning experienced in lecture-based classrooms and replaces that with active learning activities such as problem-solving, discussions, and applying concepts. While the active learning is taking place, the instructor is available to help students with problems or questions (Berrett, 2012; Tucker, 2012). The content delivery or gathering of information is moved outside of class through recorded lectures, videos, podcasts, and other resources where students listen or view on their own.

Bergmann and Sams (2014) state that when using the flipped learning model, the most critical question is “What is the best use of face-to-face class time?” (p. 31). They state that the “key is to rethink and reimagine what class time should be like” (p. 30), and the role of the instructor changes from that of “a presenter of content to a coach who is developing the talents of her pupils” (p. 30). According to Stone (2012), what makes it worth the effort is the energy it brings to the classroom in addition to the opportunity it gives the instructor to walk around and listen to students’ opinions, questions, and concerns and then be able to interact with them.

While many simply label it flipping the classroom, the Flipped Learning Network notes flipped learning is different because the classroom or group space “is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter” (Flipped Learning Network, 2014, n.p.). They view the role of the professional educator as integral and more demanding, requiring the teacher to continually observe students, provide immediate feedback, reflect on their practice, connect with others to improve, accept constructive criticism, and tolerate controlled chaos in the classroom. Flipping, just for the sake of flipping with no planning, doesn’t guarantee better results. It requires thinking about what parts of the class to flip and then “you have to be

intentional about when to flip and clear about what the benefit will be for students” (Ash, 2012, p. 3).

Goodwin and Miller (2013) assert it’s not just the classroom getting flipped, “...but the entire paradigm of teaching—away from a traditional model of teachers as imparters of knowledge and toward a model of teachers as coaches who carefully observe students, identify their learning needs, and guide them to higher levels of learning” (p. 79).

Benefits

The specific benefits achieved by flipping a classroom can vary based on the nature of the course and how the flipped class is implemented. How the in-class time is used and how technology is implemented into a course makes a difference (Davies, Dean & Ball, 2013). “Leveraging the benefits of the flipped model means making smart choices about using planning time and technology” (Moore, Gillette, & Steele, 2014). Goodwin and Miller (2013) report that while the scientific research on the flipped classroom is lacking, the preliminary data suggests positive results. Following are six noted benefits of flipping the classroom.

First of all, it provides a scalable and effective method of class delivery. Large lecture sections, especially, can become more productive with better use of faculty time, more efficient facility usage, and achieving better learning outcomes (Berrett, 2012; Davies et al., 2013).

Second, students may find the flipped course more engaging and challenging, especially if active learning activities or group activities are used during regularly scheduled class time (Datig & Ruswick, 2013; Frydenberg, 2012;). Students find the in-class activities more engaging and also find viewing the homework lectures to be more interesting than reading assigned as homework (Satullo, 2013). Today’s students are used to using the web and social media for information and interaction, so watching videos or utilizing Internet resources is preferable.

Third, pacing is more flexible and allows better use of both students’ and teachers’ time (Davies et al., 2013; Fulton, 2012a). Students can pace themselves so they spend only the time needed to understand the material or complete the tasks assigned. Teachers can use quizzes to check understanding of homework assignments as a means to inform their teaching and use classroom time to address student questions, clear up misunderstandings, provide needed help to students, and incorporate peer instruction (Berrett, 2012; Simba Information, 2011). Because teachers are not lecturing in class, they have more time to interact with students one-on-one, creating better student-teacher relationships. Additionally, the feedback given during class is often immediate, making it more helpful to the students’ learning (Goodwin & Miller, 2013). Finally, students in a flipped classroom are allowed more time to become collaborators and are more willing to help one another (Brunsell & Herjsi, 2013; Simba Information, 2011).

Fourth, preliminary data suggests increased student learning and achievement in flipped classrooms (Fulton, 2012a; Davies et al., 2013; Stone, 2012). In 2008, students in Michigan’s calculus flipped classrooms showed twice the rate of gains as compared to those in traditional lectures (Berrett, 2012). Similar results were found in Minnesota when flipped classroom test scores were compared to test scores from previous years using traditional lecture methods. They found the flipped classroom increased the proficiency percentages for every chapter compared and found even greater increases in proficiency when the flipped classroom was combined with peer instruction (Fulton, 2012b). Additionally, as Kovach (2014) notes “...the value that students obtain from this type of learning approach often involves a deeper level of understanding of the course content compared to students who learn in a traditional classroom” (p. 40).

Fifth, many flipped classrooms report improved course evaluation scores on attitude towards the content, likelihood of taking another course, and willingness to recommend the course to others. Additional benefits include increased student and faculty interactions and development of lifelong learners (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Willie, 2011 cited in Stone, 2012). Favorable attitudes toward flipped classrooms are not limited to faculty and students. Minnesota parents also recognized the benefits of the flipped classroom: “In a voluntary parent survey, 84% said the flipped classroom is their preferred choice in instructional delivery for their children” (Fulton, 2012b, p. 23).

Last of all, it’s all about the learning. Teaching styles and methods of delivery vary greatly as do learning styles and how students receive information.

A flipped classroom gives teachers the flexibility to meet the learning needs of all their students, and it gives students the flexibility to have their needs met in multiple ways. By doing so, it creates a classroom that is truly student-centered (Sams & Bergmann, 2013, p. 20).

Students can pause and review parts of the videos as needed; teachers can spend more time on individualized instruction; peer collaboration is more like what students will experience when they enter the work world; teachers can take advantage of using high tech gadgets and online social networking which today’s generation embrace; and it fits nicely with bring your own technology approaches (Defour, 2013; Fulton, 2012b). Flipping facilitates sharing of lecture videos among teachers, which could provide students multiple perspectives of a topic or different approaches to solving similar problems (Fulton, 2012b). Simba Information (2011) reported the biggest benefit is that students learn how to learn for themselves instead of relying on educators to spoon feed them.

Limitations

Along with the benefits of flipping the classroom, some challenges or limitations also exist. First, access to computers and the Internet, especially for low-income students, can limit students’ ability to view the videos or access Internet materials outside of the classroom. Second, students who are used to traditional homework may resist the new paradigm and teachers may find themselves spending valuable class time monitoring whether students have completed their assigned homework or giving quizzes to determine understanding. If students do not come to class prepared, the class often cannot move forward. Third, the process of creating videos is time consuming for teachers (Defour, 2013).

Finally, letting go of control can be difficult for teachers, just as accepting control can be difficult for students (Kovach, 2014; Satulla, 2013). Flipping the classroom means that instructors sometimes need to “relinquish control from time to time within the classroom and instead empower students/training participants to be their own teachers and direct their learning processes at various times throughout the course” (Kovach, 2014, p. 39). The flipped classroom also requires teachers to have enough knowledge to answer student questions or give feedback during discussions or activities.

Best Practices

Before flipping a class, Bergmann and Sams (2012) suggest collaborating with others who are flipping their classes, setting aside time to learn new software, attending training or workshops on flipped learning and/or screencasting, being thoughtful about one’s teaching, and

modifying or tweaking one's class to personalize the course to reflect the instructor's teaching style and practice. When planning courses, instructors should first determine what they want their students to learn and what constitutes mastery of that content, and then design, create, or collect quality learning materials and resources to fit the instructor and class (Spencer, Wolf & Sams, 2011). Due to the time it takes, Fulton (2012b) recommends preparing all of the recorded lessons and in-class activities prior to starting the course. Of course, if teachers are working with previously developed materials or have additional instructional resources, they could build as they go. Satullo (2013) reports that "successfully flipping a classroom requires about a year of work just to create the lectures, slides and select content" (p. 13). Learning resources often includes videos; however, not all material is suitable for delivery by video. Other types of learning resources should be used to meet the varied learning styles of today's students.

When incorporating the use of video into the classroom, instructors need to decide first if they will create their own videos or use others' videos (Raths, 2014). If they create their own videos, the software they will use needs to be determined. Although "students like having the voice behind the lesson belong to someone with whom they have a personal relationship" (Fulton, 2012b, p. 22), this does not mean that instructors cannot include valuable pre-created videos from other sources

The length of videos, screencasts, and/or podcasts should be kept relatively short; screencasts and podcasts should be limited to approximately seven to ten minutes to keep students' attention (Frydenberg, 2012; Goodwin & Miller, 2013; Raths, 2014). Video lectures can be a bit longer, but the limit should not exceed 20 minutes. Bergmann and Sams (2012) suggest also setting a time restriction on the amount of time used to develop a video because "at some point a teacher must decide if a video needs to be perfect, or if it is needed on Tuesday" (p. 25).

To help insure that students watch the videos at home, accompanying worksheets, guided summaries, or reflective activities can also be assigned to address important concepts or to require the student to think about what they have learned, how it will benefit them, and its relevance. Quizzes (open-note or closed) also can be given at the beginning of the following class (Datig & Ruswick; Moore et al, 2014; Miller, 2012; Raths, 2014; Satullo, 2013). Another option is to require students to prepare an interesting question to ask in class during Q & A time (Simba Information, 2011).

Raths (2014) suggests that instructors encourage students rather than punish them, use some other engagement tools besides videos, and when using videos, teach students how to watch videos. They also should avoid falling into the trap of admonishing students for not watching the video; doing so, in effect, punishes those that actually did the homework of watching the video.

Distributing videos using familiar web sites such as YouTube can be helpful in addition to making them accessible on mobile devices (Moore et al., 2014). When students do not have Internet access at home, flash drives and DVDs could be used to provide the videos and lecture materials. In cases where students do not have computers at home, the school's media center could be used before and after school, during lunch, during free periods, and during study hall periods. Additional devices for viewing could be provided in the classrooms (Fulton, 2012b; Moore et al., 2014; Simba Information, 2011).

When content is being delivered outside of class, in-class activities should be designed to put that content into context, support stated learning objectives, and be engaging for today's students who learn in a variety of ways (Spencer et al., 2011).

To get started with flipping the classroom, instructors should start small with a few course units and see how students react (Raths, 2014; Moore et al., 2014). Doing so will help instructors avoid becoming overwhelmed and experiencing undue stress. Instructors should be creative and willing to try new things. If one delivery method doesn't work or is unavailable, they should try something else (Datig & Ruswick, 2013).

Resources

Numerous resources are available for helping create materials for the flipped classroom as well as to learn more about flipping the classroom. A variety of resources to create screencasts are available including Screencast-o-matic.com (<http://screencast-0-matic.com>), Screenr (<http://screenr.com>), GoView (<http://goview.com>), Jing (<http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html>), and Educreations (free, web-based tool available in the App Store) (Frydenberg, 2012; Raths, 2014). Fee-based programs include Adobe Presenter, Snagit, Camtasia Studio, and Screen Flow. In addition, lecture capture software can be used to record classroom lectures and then edit as needed (Raths, 2014).

Sometimes it makes sense to use high quality videos that have been created by others. Valuable sources for video repositories include Khan Academy, TED-Ed, and YouTube EDU (Rivero, 2013).

Quizzes can be administered using a learning management system (LMS) such as Blackboard, or utilizing clickers. Among the free tools for administering quizzes are Quizlet (quizlet.com), YacaPaca! (yacapaca.com), Google Forms (google.com), ProProfs Quiz Maker (proprofs.com), QuizMEOnline (quizmeonline.net), and QuizStar (quizstar.4teachers.org).

The Flipped Learning Network website (<http://www.flippedlearning.org>) provides a variety of free resources for those just getting started as well as resources for those who are already flippers. Their web site includes a resources tab where visitors can find research including a literature review and case studies, free archived webinars, sample videos shared by flipped learning educators, books on flipped learning, social media links, and information on how to register for their blended course. A quick online search will also reveal training programs available by other organizations.

Ideas to Flip the Business and IT Classroom

Business and information technology (IT) instructors will find that flipping the classroom can be complimentary to the methods they may already be using: for example combining the flipped classroom with mastery learning. In this approach, the same structure and resources can be used; however, students would not move on until they had mastered or successfully completed assignments, problems, and/or exams. Students could review resources, videos, or other learning objects as needed. Teachers could then use in-class time to provide students with differentiated instruction for all levels of learners “as they need it, when they need it, and at the appropriate level” (Sams and Bergmann, 2013, p. 20).

The earliest attempts—and arguably some of the most successful attempts—at flipping the classroom occurred in math and science classrooms. It would logically follow then that classes where pre-requisite knowledge is needed in order to perform problem-solving activities may be best suited to flipping. The accounting classroom is one such classroom. The lecture could be provided to students in a video to view as homework and the teacher could help students with the practice problems in class.

Another example would be a networking course. In this course, valuable class time could be used for application and problem solving. In-class activities could include a group lab where each student had a role in the configuration of workstations and network devices given a real-world scenario. They would then have to work together to coordinate their tasks and troubleshoot any problem areas. Other activities would be to give group exams. Working through problem scenarios together, discussing alternatives, and arriving at a solution could help students who are less comfortable with application of the concept increase their skills in how to logically solve a problem.

In a web design course, a series of short how-to videos could be made available to students to use as needed. When students are creating web pages for assignments and projects, the series of steps in finding the information would be to first view one or more short videos, followed by searching for other answers online, followed by asking the teacher to help. Setting up a series of troubleshooting steps may help the teacher resist the temptation to jump in and rescue the students when they are having problems. Asking students to search for their own answers before asking the instructor will also help prepare students for troubleshooting once they are on the job. The videos could be made available to students at any time during the course, much like an FAQ page. Allowing students to become frustrated to the point of giving up is not desired; however, working on the troubleshooting during class time would allow the teacher to gauge the student's level of frustration and could help guide them toward the answers if warranted.

In some business and IT classes, students in one class could help make the materials for another class. If a class project or assignment is to work on video editing or video production, students could actually edit and produce a video for a teacher to use as their lecture in a different flipped class.

Bentley University used the following format within a 75-minute, IT 101 class period: welcome and announcements (five minutes), short quiz on videos assigned for homework (five minutes), explanation of in-class activity (five minutes), in-class group activity (40-45 minutes), debriefing to discuss each group's activity/problem, solutions, and problems encountered (Frydenberg, 2012). In this class, students watched screencasts outside of class, completed quizzes which provided incentive to watch the screencasts, and completed group exercise during class time. Students worked in groups of three to six students with each student assigned a role such as Reader, Doer, and Checker. Students rotated through the various roles throughout the entire exercise. In-class exercises were not graded specifically, but students were given points for completion.

The Bentley IT101 course also used in-class activities requiring students to work with open data sets found on the Internet, adding relevance and allowing them to explore data of interest to them. Examples of open data sets include <http://data.gov> or <http://data.worldbank.org>. Students could be given exercises to download one or more data sets, import the data into Excel or Access, analyze the data, and produce reports, pivot tables, charts for presentation, display, and discussion.

Conclusion

The flipped classroom has been touted as a new approach to teaching and learning that offers many benefits for instructors and students alike. Recent research has also provided statistics to show positive improvements. Flipped classrooms require redefining roles for both students and instructors and will require extra planning prior to implementation. Numerous

resources are available to assist educators to learn more and to assist with developing materials for the flipped classroom. Planning ahead and preparing for a successful implementation can provide an enhanced learning environment of controlled chaos and increased learning.

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Using Social Media and Professional Development Programs to Enhance Student Acquisition of “Soft Skills”

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The business community and the AACSB increasingly demand that students leave their undergraduate business programs equipped with the soft skills needed to successfully function in our rapidly evolving professional environment. This article explores the use of professional development programs and social media to build these desired skills and increase real world business contact.

Introduction

It has long been maintained that business educators have traditionally focused on academic rather than professional preparation of students. In an article published in the mid-1990's Cunningham (1995) reported that:

... business schools have adopted the educational models of liberal arts faculties and not those of the professional faculties. Business schools have focused more on the development of specific skills and competencies in the classroom rather than the supervision of skills in an applied setting or the development of social skills and professional character. (p. 4)

In the early 2000's, Schlee (2000) commented that indeed, business students and business professionals themselves frequently perceived that the lack of professional development and real world interaction between business students and business leaders hinders students' career opportunities. Schlee's research also noted that the *Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business* (AACSB) Faculty Leadership Task Report reflected the demands of the business community and emphasized the need for student professional development (Schlee, 2000). Schlee added that the AACSB report also recognized that one of the major problems with a modern business education is the lack of real world business contact (Schlee, 2000). In explaining “soft” skills, Schlee (2000) cited business experts who asserted that skills such as communication, conflict management, group management, motivation, self-awareness, goal setting and career management were sorely lacking in a modern business education (Schlee, 2000). Perrault (2006) concurred with Schlee explaining that, soft skills such as those previously described, have been defined as “those traits and capabilities that an individual possesses in addition to the individual's technical and/or knowledge skillset” (Perrault, 2006, p. 125). Perrault's research emphasized the importance of training students in these skills beginning at the high school level (Perrault, 2006).

More recently, Blaszczynski & Green (2012) reported that this liberal arts model persists in many of the nation's business colleges and universities despite the demands of employers, who

increasingly note that new hires lack the “soft” skills needed to compete successfully in the modern business environment

(Blaszczynski & Green, 2012). The authors explained that employees who do not have excellent “soft-skills” may not experience success in obtaining and sustaining employment (Blaszczynski & Green, 2012).

At the same time that businesses are crying out for new hires that are competent in the “soft” skills, the modern business student exists in an environment where face-to-face communication, conflict management, motivation etc. is increasingly rare. Today’s business student spends more hours texting or on social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram than in engaging in face-to-face conversations (Vance, Carlson, Lively, and Mastracchio, 2013). At a time when these “soft” skills are highly valued by employers, businesses are starting to forgo the spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to teach employees professional skills. Instead, businesses are expecting new hires to possess these skills as a condition of employment (O’Sullivan, 2000). These reports dictate that the disconnect between the needs of employers and the skillset of future employees must be filled by our business educators in the nation’s high schools, trade schools, colleges and universities. Increasingly, these institutions are utilizing professional development programs to fill these gaps.

This article has two objectives: First to describe features of successful professional development programs that meet the demands of our nation’s employers. Next, the article provides insights into how these programs, that emphasize “soft” skill competency, can not only survive, but also thrive in an environment dominated by social media and other on-line opportunities that reflect the skillset of today’s modern student. Ultimately, these types of programs can easily integrate into our business courses at all levels of education from high school and beyond.

Features of Successful Professional Development Programs

Some interesting examples of professional development programs exist in the nation’s colleges and schools of business. These programs run the gambit from formal programs that require participation by all undergraduate students who are then awarded college credits, to more informal programs implemented by the students themselves or by student organizations. Upon studying the existing literature that examines these programs, several features of the more successful programs come to light. These features include: 1. Work-based learning with clear goals, 2. Mentorships and 3. Reflection and assessment.

The first component of a successful professional development program includes opportunities for work-based learning. Work-based learning can be achieved through many different activities including, actual employment, internships, job shadowing opportunities, case studies and roleplaying (Kuchinke, 2007). These sorts of experiences allow students to integrate classroom learning with the employment environment.

Regardless of the form that the work-based learning portion of a professional development program takes, the exercise should include a clear set of goals that the student seeks to achieve. These goals should include the acquisition of not only professional skills, such as “increase my knowledge of accounting principles applicable to a public accounting firm” but “soft” skills as well such as, “increase my ability to communicate effectively with my co-workers and future clients” (Kuchinke, 2007, p. 162).

A second feature of a productive professional development program is the opportunity for students to be mentored by business professionals who are employed in the student's specific area of business interest. Ideally, students are matched with people within the business world who can discuss the business environment with the student and explain how soft-skill acquisition enhances business success. These relationships are especially important for women and other individuals who are underrepresented in our nation's companies (Anderson, 2005).

While mentorships with business experts are probably the most desirable, peer mentorships can also work well in assisting students with soft-skill acquisition. Pairing more experienced junior and senior level students with less experienced freshmen and sophomores can result in positive learning as students share what they have learned as they participate in the work-based portion of the professional development program.

Last, but not least among the qualities of successful professional development programs is an opportunity for students to reflect on and assess their experiences and learning in the work-based and mentorship portions of the program. Assessment and reflection can take many forms. For example, the instructor might include classroom reports and presentations, discussion groups and journaling. Regardless of the form the reflection and assessment part of the program takes, it must allow opportunities for students to not only reflect on and assess their own experiences but to also gain feedback from their peers and their instructor (Blaszczynski & Green, 2012).

Opportunities to Integrate Social Media and Professional Development

Traditional educators tend to view social media as an obstacle rather than as an opportunity (Thomas & Thomas, 2012). Professional development programs can help to bridge the gap that exists between this traditional cohort and the modern student and employer. In fact, features of social networking can be utilized in each of the three areas of a successful professional development program to teach soft-skills.

Social media sites such as Youtube can be used to create work-based experiences, especially in creating case studies and roleplaying opportunities. Bringing these exercises into the classroom creates a deeper level of interactivity between the student and the instructor (Thomas & Thomas, 2012). The interactive nature of social media sites keeps students more engaged and provides current real-world examples for them to critique and learn from. These resources can also be customized to fit the specific goals of the student.

On-line sites such as Facetime, Skype and Oovoo can be used to enhance the mentorship portion of professional development programs. By using these or similar sites, business executives can actually "come into" the living-, class- or dorm- room. The mentor relationship can easily be achieved conveniently and instantaneously. While face-to-face meetings can play an important role as well, by using online sites, busy business professionals could reach out to and connect with numerous students simultaneously saving time, money and other valuable resources.

Additionally, through the use of social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook, students can connect with mentors in various industries and professional positions. While some students might be certain about their career paths, many undergraduate students remain curious about the options that are open to them within the business disciplines. Making professional connections through social networking sites can help to clarify these choices and lead to the development of the specific "soft" skills needed to excel within these specific positions.

The on-line environment also provides exceptional opportunities for students to reflect on and assess their experiences with professional development. Blogs, chat-rooms, and other similar forums allow students ample opportunities to reflect and connect. Instructors and mentors can also easily access these sites. This ease of access allows them to provide students with feedback and suggestions on developing their “soft” skills and enhancing their employment opportunities.

Conclusion

The use of social media and online resources has become an important part of the daily activity for most college students; students spend large amounts of time using a variety of social media. It is believed that the utilization of these social media and online sites is changing the way students approach future employment (Zula, Yarrish & Pawelzik, 2011). Simultaneously, business practitioners have expressed the view that graduates lack certain professional and career skills and the AACSB has even incorporated student skill development into their new standards (Kelley & Bridges, 2005). All this is occurring in a business environment where fewer dollars are being spent on professional development and increasingly it is the business educator that must provide training in these “soft” skills.

Those of us who are familiar with the typical business educator realize that there is sometimes a reluctance to try new approaches. It should come as no surprise that educators often favor traditional educational models and that these individuals can view on-line resources and social media as a threat or an obstacle (Thomas & Thomas, 2012). However, the Internet, social media and other on-line resources are here to stay. One way to bridge the gap between traditional paradigms, and the needs of our students and the business community is to use these resources to provide “soft” skill training through professional development programs. Business programs that use social media as:

... a medium to build and enhance relationships with industry will become differentiated from those which chose not to do so. To the wider public as well as potential students, a [program] which develops strong ties with industry would more likely be perceived as a more attractive learning institution than one that did not (Thomas & Thomas, 2012, p. 44).

Social media provides a ripe opportunity to serve our students and the needs of business in an efficient and effective way. Business educators at all levels should grasp this opportunity and use it to build the business leaders of the future.

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Perceptions of the Flipped Business Communication Classroom: A Pilot Study

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Perceptions of students (n = 194) about the flipped business communication classroom were identified. A total of 55% of undergraduate students who had experienced a flipped course perceived that they were more engaged in the flipped environment than in a traditional classroom. Similarly, about 66% of students who had not taken a flipped course predicted that they would be more engaged in the flipped course than in a traditional course. The reported student preference for flipping the business communication course was mixed.

Purpose or Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to determine the perceptions of business communication students about the flipped or inverted classroom strategy before actually flipping the course. Specifically, the study objectives included learning the reported level of student engagement with the flipped classroom strategy, the reported level of student learning with the flipped classroom strategy, the predicted level of student engagement with a flipped classroom, and student preference about flipping the business communication course.

Introduction

Much has been written about the flipped or inverted classroom being used as an alternative to the traditional classroom (Berrett, 2012; National Business Education Association, 2012). Simply put, in a flipped classroom (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013), instructors “assign the class lecture or instructional content as homework” (p. 45). By making these outside assignments, instructors are free to use class time to work closely with students to complete assignments and projects. Many of these activities allow students to work collaboratively (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013).

How would students perceive the implementation of the flipped strategy in the business communication classroom?

Review of the Literature

This section discusses the secondary literature about the flipped classroom including benefits, drawbacks, and best practices for implementation of the inverted classroom strategy.

What is the flipped classroom? A recent definition from the Flipped Learning Network (2014) asserts that

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter (n.p.).

Further, four pillars of a flipped classroom have been identified as flexible environment, learning culture, intentional content, and a professional educator (Flipped Learning Network, 2014). Benefits of flipping the classroom were enumerated by Bergmann and Sams (2012) and include assisting busy students since content is not missed if a student is not in class, helping students who struggle by devoting time to them during class, allowing students with varying ability levels to master material, permitting rewinding of videos and podcasts to reinforce concepts, increasing the interaction between students and teachers, and increasing the interaction between peers.

Prospective flipped teachers should contemplate the need for the following resources before implementing a flipped classroom strategy (Bergmann & Sams, 2012): a network of other teachers who will provide support for the flipped classroom endeavor, administrative support to provide both encouragement and resources, technology support to develop and maintain the flipped model, time to model and master software and to create content in video and/or podcast formats. Typically, a video lasting 10 minutes requires 30 minutes of preparation time. Further, some risk is involved in using the flipped model of instruction. As Pardo, Perez-Sanagustin, Parada, and Leony (2012) asserted,

Relying on previous activities has the risk of students attending the lecture with significantly different levels of engagement. This risk is irrelevant in a conventional classroom as the material is assumed to be totally new to students, but if the lecture includes activities that rely on student participation, this risk seriously jeopardizes the success of the session (p. 1).

Bergmann and Sams (2013/2014) developed the flipped-mastery model of education which enables students to complete content requirements flexibly. Mastery of the learning objectives must be demonstrated before students proceed to the next instructional unit.

There is little reported research about the results of flipped classrooms (Goodman & Miller, 2013). The Flipped Learning Network (Edudemic, 2012) surveyed over 450 teachers experienced in the inverted classroom strategy. Over 85% of the respondents indicated that attitudes of students had increased positively, 67% of the respondents indicated that test scores had risen, and 99% of the respondents reported that next year they would flip a course. Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) found that students reported a preference for the inverted classroom compared with the traditional classroom. In addition, students reported that they would like the inverted classroom approach to be used in future economics courses.

Bowen (2012) argued that instructors need to use technology outside the classroom to enhance student learning:

We need to provide not only more content outside of class but also more and better ways to engage with that content. Asking students to read is not enough. Technology provides tools to motivate students for deeper critical exploration, application, and integration of the information now available to them, and e-communication provides strategies for building intellectual communities (p. 130).

Further, Fulton (2012) asserted that, “The use of technology is flexible and appropriate for 21st century learning” (p. 23).

Student perceptions of flipped classrooms grew more positive after completing a flipped actuarial course (Burt, 2014). After completing a flipped introduction to business course, student views of flipped classrooms were mixed (Findlay-Thompson & Mombourquette, 2014) while learning achievement was similar to that of sections that were not flipped. While Drage (2012) described how to use the flipped classroom strategy with challenge based learning to enhance both student achievement and instruction quality in the business education classroom, business education research findings were not reported.

A review of the literature revealed no studies about using the flipped classroom strategy in business communication courses. As a result, this study was undertaken to fill part of the gap in the business education literature.

Research Questions

For the purpose of the study, four research questions were developed:

1. What is the reported level of student engagement with the flipped classroom strategy?
2. Of those students who had completed a flipped course, what is the reported level of student learning with the flipped classroom strategy?
3. For those students who had not experienced a flipped classroom, what is the predicted level of student engagement with a flipped course?
4. What is the reported student preference for flipping the business communication course at their institution?

Methods and Procedures Used to Collect Information/Data

After reading the professional literature, a 10-item survey was developed and reviewed by three business educators. Based on feedback received from these educators, wording of two items was modified for clarity. The survey was piloted to determine if the items were sequenced correctly. No changes were needed after the piloting of the survey.

During the Fall 2013 term students enrolled in seven sections (n=194) of business communication courses at two universities in the Western United States were surveyed about their experiences with and perceptions of the flipped classroom. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used to calculate the statistics.

At both universities the business communication course is required of all business majors and is a writing intensive junior level course. The gender of the respondents was 76 females (39%) and 118 males (61%).

Results

The text of the first survey question explained the elements of a flipped classroom as follows: “In a flipped classroom, students complete reading and background assignments outside of class. During the class time, the professor guides students as they apply the new concepts to assignments such as writing, presenting, and completing projects.” After reading this explanation, 95 respondents (49%) indicated they had taken a course that contained some elements of a flipped classroom, while 99 respondents (51%) reported that they had not taken a flipped class.

Research Question 1: What is the reported level of student engagement with the flipped classroom strategy?

Table 1 shows the level of engagement for students who had taken a course that contained some elements of a flipped classroom. Please note that the percentage total exceeds 100% due to rounding.

Table 1. Level of student engagement						
Students	More engaged		About the same engagement		Less engaged	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Students who have taken flipped classes	52	55%	32	34%	11	12%

Of those respondents who had experienced a flipped activity, over half of the respondents indicated they had been more engaged in the course.

Research Question 2: Of those students who had completed a flipped course, what is the reported level of student learning with the flipped classroom strategy?

The respondents were asked to describe their level of learning in the flipped classroom in comparison with a regular classroom. Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents who had taken flipped classes had learned more in the flipped classroom than in a traditional classroom.

Table 2. Level of student learning						
Students	Learned more		Learned the same		Learned less	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Students who have taken flipped classes in comparison with a regular classroom	52	55%	31	33%	12	12%

Research Question 3: For those students who had not experienced a flipped classroom, what is the predicted level of student engagement with a flipped course?

Respondents who had not experienced a flipped classroom were asked to predict their predicted level of engagement if they were to experience a flipped classroom in comparison with

their perceived level of engagement in a traditional classroom. Table 3 shows the responses about perceived level of student engagement.

Table 3. Predicted level of student engagement for students who had not experienced a flipped classroom						
Students	More engaged		About the same engagement		Less engaged	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Students who had not taken flipped classes	65	66%	20	20%	14	14%

Those respondents who had not experienced a flipped classroom reported a predicted level of flipped course engagement that was more engaged than in the traditional classroom.

Research Question 4: What is the reported student preference for flipping the business communication course?

When asked if the business communication course at their campus should be flipped to maximize learning, 30% of the respondents indicated yes, 30% of the respondents indicated no, and 40% of the respondents reported that they did not know whether the course should be flipped.

Statistical Analyses. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between genders in response to whether or not the business communication course at their campus should be flipped. No statistically significant difference was found with $F = .684$ and $p = .508$. Therefore, it appears that gender does not influence the respondents' preference about having a flipped business communication course at their campus.

Another ANOVA was performed to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between respondents who had experienced a flipped class and those who had not experienced a flipped class in response to whether or not the business communication course at their campus should be flipped. A statistically significant difference was found with $F = 5.676$ and $p < .01$. Further post hoc tests were conducted, and the Tukey HSD indicated that a statistically significant difference ($p = .05$) existed between respondents who reported yes and those respondents who reported no. The Tukey HSD test further indicated a statistically significant difference ($p = .003$) between respondents who reported yes and those respondents who reported don't know.

Open-Ended Question

The final survey question asked students to "Please write your comments about the flipped classroom strategy." Approximately 60 percent of the respondents provided comments. Some examples of positive comments included, "It would be a nice experience to try it out and compare with the way classes are now." Another student wrote, "I feel that a flipped classroom strategy would be effective. Some of the hardest parts about college courses are the projects and written assignments. We can read about the concepts all we want, but sometimes it's necessary

to have the interaction with the professor to really show how the concepts are applied." Of those students who expressed negative sentiments about the flipped classroom, one theme resonated with many respondents in this category as illustrated by the comment, "A flipped classroom would be challenging for procrastinators."

Discussion

Those respondents who had not experienced a flipped classroom reported a predicted level of flipped course engagement that was more engaged than in the traditional classroom. This increase in course engagement was similar to the increase reported by respondents who had experienced a flipped classroom.

The preference of students for flipping the business communication course was mixed suggesting that some students may not possess familiarity with the flipped or inverted classroom strategy as suggested by the statistically significant results of the Tukey HSD test. Perhaps students who have said no to flipping the course or who don't know whether the business communication class on their campus should be flipped do not have sufficient knowledge about flipped classes to evaluate fairly whether or not they would want to have a flipped class on their campus. Additional education about flipped classrooms may make a difference in how these students might answer this question.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The research questions should continue to be studied with additional sampling. Because the flipped classroom strategy is still in its beginning stages, students may not understand the benefits of flipping the classroom. As a result, instructors should introduce the concept of flipped or inverted classrooms to students.
2. A study should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the flipped classroom with business communication students at both universities. While the reported study was a good first step in determining student experience with the flipped classroom as well as their perceptions of the flipped strategy, assessing the effect of flipping the classroom on student learning by gathering student performance data would add to the business education literature.
3. A study should be conducted to determine the influence that student demographics (gender, age, and class level) have on the effectiveness of the flipped classroom with business communication students at both universities.

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Student Assignment Feedback: Do We Give Them What They Really Want and/or Expect?

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Often instructors spend hours grading students' written assignments without knowing whether students only look at the grade at the top of the paper or if students expect, and actually look at, detailed feedback provided by the instructor. In reality, this study indicates students look both for the grade as well as for comments explaining the major errors in the paper. The desire for extensive feedback also varies by classification as freshman, sophomore, junior or senior.

Introduction

Assessment of student work is an integral part of the education system. The purpose of this assessment is often seen as just the means to an end. That end being the grade assigned to the work of the student. However, there is another reason for this assessment, and, for true educators, this additional purpose is even more important than the grade. The assessment aims at determining what the student has learned and what is still needed by the student in mastering the concepts. The desired outcome of assessment is to improve rather than just audit the student's knowledge.

It is no secret that instructors spend a significant amount of time grading student work and providing feedback. It is unlikely that there are many of these instructors who have not at one time or another asked the question of whether or not the time spent marking the papers is worth the effort. Does the time and effort expended really add to the education of the students? Do students really look at the feedback provided in order to improve on future assignments or do they simply care about the grade? This study was conducted with undergraduate students enrolled in both traditional on campus and online business courses at a mid-sized university in the central part of the United States and who were, for the most part (72.5%), business majors. Results of the study indicate students, both on campus and online, desire some feedback along with the grade on their written assignments, but they may not want extensive feedback throughout the paper. Rather, the majority (75%) of respondents indicated they expect the grade and comments to explain major errors in the paper.

Review of Literature

Since written feedback provides students with the rationale behind the grade assigned and information on how to improve future performance, there is certainly value in it (Ackerman & Gross, 2010). According to Ramsden (2003), making constructive comments on student work is a characteristic of good teaching. Hounsell (2003) found that when students are provided a clear understanding of how well they are performing and what improvements are needed, they tend to learn more effectively. Generally speaking, most students indicate that they deserve feedback on submitted assignments (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002). Additionally, instructor feedback

that is timely and high in quality is one of the most powerful tools available when it comes to student learning (Metcalf & Kornell, 2007).

According to Carless (2006), students are often not satisfied with the feedback they receive. Most notably, the feedback may lack specific advice on how to improve (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2001), it may be hard to interpret (Chanock, 2000), or it may have a negative impact on how students perceive themselves and on their confidence (James, 2000). It is also noteworthy that there is disparity between what instructors and students view as helpful feedback (Carless, 2006).

Research supports the notion that not all students desire feedback equally. Sinclair and Cleland (2007) found females and high achievers are more likely to seek feedback than males or low achievers. Additionally, they found that students performing more poorly tend to less frequently use feedback as an opportunity to learn.

In a 2010 study, Ackerman and Gross found that offering a significant number of comments may be received negatively by students and that students may view receiving substantial feedback no more positively than receiving no comments at all. As such, giving students too much feedback may prove to be counterproductive when it comes to students' performance (Ackerman & Gross, 2010).

It is not uncommon for instructors to try to save time by focusing only on the negatives. Holmes and Smith (2003) note that comments should address both strengths and weaknesses in the work. What students did right should be reinforced and methods of improvement should be suggested as well. Smith (2008) also emphasizes the importance of balanced comments, noting that student may struggle to separate criticisms of their writing from criticisms of themselves.

Crews and Wilkinson (2012) studied immersive feedback. They found that 48.92% of interviewed business communication students (N=186) rated feedback with the instructor providing video and audio explanation along with handwritten corrections in the document through the use of a tablet PC as "most helpful" and "second most helpful." Track changes was ranked by students as third most helpful, and handwritten feedback was rated least helpful. The sample group for the study (Crews & Wilkinson, 2012) included 52.74% seniors, 41.38% juniors, 5.5% sophomores, and 0.55% freshmen. The authors concluded the use of software packages such as Camtasia, Captivate, Adobe Connect Professional, and Jing to capture instructor's handwritten as well as visual and auditory feedback on a tablet PC maximizes student learning and may be a time saving device for business communication instructors (Crews & Wilkinson, 2012).

Fairness in grading and feedback is another important element to consider. According to a study conducted by Ackerman and Gross (2010), students indicated that they value fairness and helpfulness in the feedback or comments made by instructors on assignments. Holmes and Smith (2003) suggest starting with clear grading objectives that are communicated to the students and using grading rubrics or matrices. Smith (2008) found that students viewed the use of rubrics as providing clarity to what was being graded, being less judgmental, and reflecting standardization for all students.

The goal of this study was to determine feedback preferred by undergraduate business communication students on written assignments, as differentiated by (1) extensive comments throughout, (2) the absence of comments altogether, or (3) comments about the major errors only.

Methods and Procedures

Students enrolled in both on campus and online sections of writing intensive business communication courses at a mid-size, four-year public university served as participants for this study. Participation was completely voluntary. Students in seven class sections participated (N=108) and were provided a URL for an online survey that was developed using Qualtrics data collection software. The online survey was approved through the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine how students respond to feedback provided by the instructor on written assignments, the expectations of students about feedback they will receive on graded assignments, and the level of feedback they would provide students if they were in an instructor position.

Procedures

A survey was developed using Qualtrics to determine how students respond to teacher-provided feedback on written assignments, what level of feedback students expect to receive on their written assignments, and the kind of feedback students would give if they were the instructor. Three instructors of undergraduate business communication courses provided their students with the URL to the online survey. Information was gathered, as well, about gender, ethnicity, classification, business or non-business major, and grade point average. Primary questions were as follows:

1. When you receive a graded paper or assignment, indicate which answer below best describes how you respond to the feedback provided by the instructor: (a) I only look at the grade, (b) I look at the grade and glance to see what I missed, (c) I look at the grade and thoroughly read all of the instructor comments.
2. Indicate which answer below best describes the type of feedback you expect on graded assignments: (a) I expect the grade and no comments, (b) I expect the grade and comments to explain major errors in the paper, (c) I expect extensive comments and feedback throughout the paper to explain the grade.
3. Reflecting on how you review graded papers, if you were the instructor, indicate below which answer best describes how you would best use your time in providing feedback to students: (a) I would give the grade without any comments, (b) I would give a grade and comments to explain major errors in the paper, (c) I would give extensive comments and feedback throughout the paper to explain the grade.

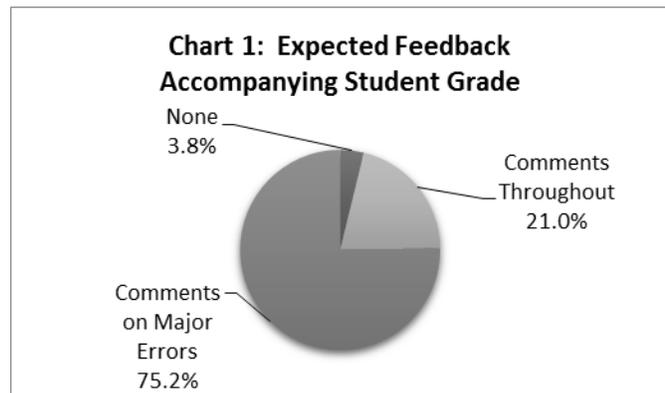
Findings

For this study students were surveyed to determine their preference in receiving feedback on written assignments, their actual utilization of feedback given by instructors, and the level of feedback they say they would provide students if they were in an instructor position. A total of 108 students responded to the survey. Of the 108 respondents, 92 indicated their gender. Of those 92 respondents, there were 43.5% male (N=40) and 56.5% female (N=52). Ethnicity was reported by 105 of the 108 respondents, with results of 74.3% White/Caucasian (N=78); 12.4% Hispanic/Latino (N=13); 8.6% Black/African American (N=9); 1.9% Asian (N=2); 1.9% Mixed (N=2); and 1.0% American/Asian (N=1).

Of the 108 respondents, 105 indicated their classification, which included 32.4% Seniors (N=34), 28.6% Juniors (N=30), 29.5% Sophomores (N=31), 9.5% Freshmen (N=10). In addition, 102 of the respondents indicated their status as either a business major (72.5%; N=74) or a non-business major (27.5%; N=28). The overall grade point averages were self reported by 105 respondents and included these results: below 2.0 (3.8%; N=4); 2.1 – 2.5 (28.6%; N=30); 2.6 – 3.0 (28.6%; N=30); 3.1 – 3.5 (27.6%; N=29); and 3.6 – 4.0 (11.4%; N=12).

In response to the question asking which type of feedback students expect on graded assignments, 105 students responded, and of those who responded, 3.8% (N=4) expect only the grade and no comments; 21% (N=22) expect extensive comments throughout the paper to explain the grade; and 75.2% (N=79) expect the grade and comments to explain major errors in the paper. These results are graphically displayed in Chart 1.

When looking at student expectations, as shown in Chart 1, the largest expectation was comments on major errors. Students classified as seniors (N=28) indicated more so than students of other classifications (freshman, N=4; sophomore, N=23; or junior, N=24) their expectation for not only a grade but also for comments to explain major errors in the paper.



When students were asked how they actually respond to feedback provided by an instructor, 104 students responded, and of those who responded, 1% (N=1) indicated he or she looked only at the grade, 38.5% (N=40) said they look at the grade and glance to see what was missed, and 60.6% (N=63) said they look at the grade and thoroughly read all of the instructor comments.

Students' responses to and reflection on feedback varied based on classification. Seniors (N=21) indicated more so than students of other classifications (freshman, N=6; sophomore, N=18; or junior, N=18) that they look at the grade and thoroughly read all of the instructor comments.

When asked how they would provide feedback to students if they were in the instructor position, 104 students responded, and of those who responded, 1% (N=1) said he or she would give a grade without providing any comments, 26% (N=27) indicated they would give a grade and provide extensive comments and feedback throughout the paper to explain the grade, and 73% (N=76) indicated they would give a grade and provide comments to explain major errors in the paper.

So, while 75% (N=79) expect feedback to include the grade and comments to explain major errors in the paper, 60.6% (N=63) also said they look at the grade and thoroughly read all instructor comments provided in the feedback. There was a smaller number of students - 38.5% (N=40) – who said they look only at the grade and glance to see what was missed. As the literature indicated, not all students desire feedback equally (Sinclair & Cleland, 2007).

Again, students who were classified as seniors (N=26) indicated more so than students of other classifications (freshman, N=5; sophomore, N=21, junior, N=24) they would, if they were

the instructor, provide feedback to students in the form of a grade and comments to explain major errors in the paper.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Technology should serve as a platform for promoting collaboration and learning processes, and obviously must in an online course. Results generated from the study indicate that students do read the comments that are provided to them to a rather large degree. Very few of the students reported that they look only at the grade and ignore the comments on the work. When looking at the expectations of the students, it was clear that students expect to receive feedback. Further, they indicated that if they were the teacher, that they would expect to provide this feedback as well. The primary conclusion is, therefore, that adequate feedback is necessary, desirable, and expected.

Recommendations

As previously declared, feedback on student work is very time consuming. In order to make best use of the time the teacher has for grading, careful attention should be paid to the assignment for determining how to most effectively provide the feedback students appear to desire and expect.

Technology has afforded many new and innovative ways to provide feedback for both on campus and online classes. Unfortunately these do not always translate into quicker, easier, and/or better solutions. When it comes to online, however, there is virtually no other option. It is recommended that consideration be made to trying out some of the technology solutions now available on campus as well.

As a result of this study, the researchers involved reconsidered the feedback currently being generated for students. One of the authors decided after the study to utilize the electronic feedback mechanisms in the course management system to comment on major errors on the paper. The electronic comments, both on the text and through audio recording, were generated in D2L through GradeMark, which is part of the Turn-It-In plagiarism detection software, to comment on major errors. Follow-up research is needed to see if students prefer the GradeMark electronic comments and audio feedback over text-based markings without any audio feedback.

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Get Ready for Generation Z: Teaching Methods That Address Different Learning Styles

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For the past 20 years, I have taught at two different institutions of higher learning and have observed that students have progressively changed across generations. This is certainly to be expected as my generational peers and I learn differently than our parents' and grandparents' generations. My students have ranged from Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and now Generation Z; although, these four generations have some commonality, they behave quite differently in the classroom environment. As educators we become aware of the context, characteristics, interests, personal experiences, and learning styles of our students; however, to teach effectively we must go beyond awareness and strive to adapt our teaching methods to benefit our students. Our current high school and college students are members of the generation referred to as Gen-Z; therefore, it seems logical that educators should respect our current students and help them become successful learners.

Generation Z Defined

Although researchers do not agree on the exact dates, in general Generation Z (Gen-Z) includes people born in the early to mid-1990s through 2010 (Renfro, 2012). The dates do overlap with Generation Y; however, Generation Z is the younger half of this cohort, and they possess some strikingly different attributes than their older siblings. Those born in 1990 were 11 years old on September 11 when the twin towers fell and have become accustomed to the U.S. being at war. They graduated from high school in 2008, just as the great recession began and they either entered the workforce (if they were fortunate enough to find a job) or entered college as tuition costs were spiraling upward (Bruce, 2012). Generation Z has also been referred to as Digital Natives, because they have no memory of a world without the internet; our current high school students' first phones are smart phones, and it is unlikely that they have ever used a landline with a circular dial or would recognize the "ring" of this antique type of phone. Other names for this generation are pluralist, re-generation, and homelander (Mihelich, 2013). Generation Z tends to lack patience for the typical lecture/test classroom utilized by the majority of college professors, and I have observed that they need graphics, want learning to be fun, and crave constant feedback.

Cohort Theory

Generational cohort theory explains changes across generations (e.g., Edmunds & Turner, 2005; see also D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). According to this theory, important historical events and social changes in society affect the values, attitudes, beliefs, and inclinations of individuals. These events might include traumatic occurrences like wars, sizeable shifts in the distribution of resources, heroic figures such as Martin Luther King, or experiences like Woodstock that

symbolize an ideology (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). Events that unfold during the formative rather than later years of individuals are especially consequential. Therefore, individuals born during a particular time, and thus corresponding to the same cohort, will often share specific inclinations and cognitive styles. Furthermore, these effects are assumed to persist over time (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Although the dates defining generations vary, generally speaking Generation Y are individuals born between 1982-2000 (last generation born in the 20th Century) and Generation Z are individuals born between 1990-2010 (digital natives); therefore, these two generations share some characteristics, but members of Gen-Z demonstrate their uniqueness particularly regarding multitasking. Earlier defined generational cohorts include the Silent Generation born between 1925-1945, Baby Boomers born between 1946-1964, and Generation X born between 1965-1980 (Mihelich, 2013).

A Brief Generational Perspective

According to Mihelich, the Silent Generation lived through the Great Depression and World War II; therefore, they accepted (silently) that their lives would be challenging (2013). In contrast, Baby Boomers came of age after the end of World War II, grew up in a booming economy; however, they were the first generation to pursue social change during the 1960s by pursuing Civil Rights and Vietnam Peace movements. Many people who are members of Generation X were raised in one-parent households due to the strong trend of divorce. They are often described as cynical and savvy and tend not to trust authority figures. Generation Y or millennials have witnessed emerging digital technologies such as instant messaging by email and text messaging by cell phone; they are tech savvy, style-conscious, and brand loyal (Grail Research, 2011). Generation Z have never known a world without the internet, seem to be unprepared for the realities of life due to their over-indulgent and permissive parents; their attitudes are shaped by social media, and they are the most home-schooled generation yet (Renfro, 2012).

As students, Gen-Zs tend to multitask frequently and this always involves technology. I have observed students who search and use several internet browser windows at the same time or use several different software applications at the same time. They also use cell phones to contact other peers who are not physically present; however, they rarely use their phone for talking. They take pictures of notes and written information, rather than actually writing it themselves, and college-age students frequently do not buy books for class if PowerPoint slides for the text are available, as they seem to believe that reading an entire chapter or book is a waste of time and money.

As a group, high school and college age students are emotionally attached to their cell phones and many will experience a degree of anxiety when they misplace their phones (Renfro, 2012). It seems to me, from the perspective of an educator, that they cannot function without the use of social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. As they occupy virtual worlds and have “friends” they have never met in person, they also have trouble with team-building and dealing with difficult people; they are team-oriented, but not team players, because they lack the social skills of face-to-face interaction with others. As would be expected of teenagers and young adults from any generation, Gen-Zs do have a highly interactive social life; however, it is assisted primarily through the use of technology.

Gen-Z Personality and Behavioral Traits

Although the personality and behavioral traits certainly vary from one individual to another, common traits that I have observed in my students are their more short-term goal orientation,

lack of planning skills, and lack of persistence. This seems to be related to the tendency to have a short attention span and is manifested in an inability to focus on a strategy—in other words, Gen-Z students have difficulty completing a case study or research paper that is intended to be researched and written over several weeks, rather than a couple of days. Many of the papers I receive do not possess depth, seeming to touch only the surface of the topic I have assigned. Conversely, these students do have positive traits such as the ability to deal with greater amounts of information acquired via internet; they are more resourceful and creative than previous generations; therefore, the higher quality class work that I receive is based on giving them an open-ended assignment with a wide range of topics and issues to choose from. The Center for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI, 2007) describes the Flynn effect as the environmental changes seen with modern societies which have increased nonverbal intelligence scores in the latter part of the 20th Century. These changes are described as greater use of technology, more intellectually demanding work, and smaller families resulting in the ability to think more abstractly (2001). Generation Z students are smart (and they know it), and have been referred to as the education generation since they have been homeschooled at a rate never seen before (Trunk, 2012); moreover, they score higher IQs than any previous generation (Renfro, 2012). I believe that Gen-Zs have the intelligence to think strategically, but need to be given assignments allowing them to demonstrate this competency. For example, in my Small Business Management class, my students are instructed to write a company plan, marketing plan, financial plan, and organization plan as separately assigned papers throughout the semester. They receive their graded and corrected plans in two-week intervals and then combine them into one document culminating in a complete business plan at the end of the semester. This greatly improves the quality of work that I receive from students, and it helps them learn to create a strategy, follow a plan, and improve throughout.

Effects of Technology

Within organizations, technology has invaded classrooms as Gen-Z students are often seen with laptop computers, tablet devices, e-readers, and smartphones. Most educators are well aware that these students are creators of content and comfortable producing this content with use of web applications and digital tools such as cellphone cameras; to that end, educators have observed how Gen-Z students are able to multitask at a rate never before seen. Researchers have conducted studies to determine the effect on student comprehension skills when technological devices are in use. In one such study, shared by Marvellen Weimer (2012) and conducted by Bowman, Levine, Waite, & Dendrom (2010), general psychology students were tasked to read an approximately 4,000-word essay. Prior to the reading assignment, one group of students took part in instant messaging and then read the essay; a second group utilized instant messaging while reading the essay, and the third group of students read the essay without participating in instant messaging. The researchers found that the second group of students, who read the essay and used instant messaging at the same time, took between 22 and 59 percent longer to complete the reading assignment than the students from groups one and three.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to prevent Gen-Z students from multitasking as they prefer websites and applications that allow them to use multiple features such as posting pictures, videos, text comments and they want to interact with media rather than remain passive. They consume most of their media via mobile devices, which also contributes to multitasking behaviors. In the collegiate classroom, I do allow students to use laptops, tablets, and e-readers for note-taking purposes; however, I reserve the right to ban these devices if they become distracting or are not used as allowed. In reality I cannot effectively police the use of these

electronic devices as easily as I can the use of cellphones. I hesitate to ban all electronic devices during lecture, because I do see these as an effective way to take notes or view the PowerPoint slides that I may be using during the lecture. Research of Gen-Z as learners does support the prevalence of a hands-on (kinesthetic) learning style in this group of students (Feirtag and Berg, 2008); therefore, as educators we cannot simply ignore the use of technology in the classroom. Students may complain that they are not allowed to use their smartphone in class for taking notes, taking pictures of white board information, or even other applications such as voting as a group which is similar to the i>clicker[®] use. There is not a simple solution; moreover, use of technology in the classroom should be balanced with face-to-face interaction with teacher and learner to lessen the temptation of students to multitask and the expectation that educators should entertain.

Gen-Z in the Classroom

As multitasking has become commonplace both in and out of the classroom, educators are facing socialization issues that manifest as disrespectful and inappropriate classroom behaviors. A newsletter from the James Madison University's Counseling and Student Development Center listed the following examples of common classroom behavior:

- monopolizing classroom discussions
- failing to respect the rights of other students to express their viewpoints
- carrying on distracting side conversations
- constant questions or interruptions that interfere with the instructor's presentation
- use of cellphones in the classroom
- eating and/or sleeping in class
- inordinate or inappropriate demands for time and attention (Galagan, 2010).

Although educators may view these behaviors as disrespectful and inappropriate, Gen-Z does not always realize they are doing anything wrong. We must remember that these students are accustomed to always being connected to their world of friends, media, and entertainment; therefore, when we remove this social outlet from their environment (no phones in class) they need to replace the connection with something else. Gen-Zs grew up with exposure to massive amounts of media and were generally raised by overprotective parents; therefore, they desire constant and/or immediate feedback and have a hypertext mind set, meaning they bounce from activity to activity and person to person (Feirtag and Berg, 2008). It is up to the instructor to manage the classroom by setting the rules and expectations early on; however, many of these inappropriate/disruptive behaviors can be avoided by realizing that Gen-Z needs activities to stay engaged.

Their short attention span is evident, so we must also bounce from one activity to another, rather than that long, boring lecture that puts students to sleep or tempts them to text. Keep in mind that they also filter information quickly so it must be relevant, and content must be applicable to them. Effective teaching is not just knowing your subject content; it is also customizing the presentation of the content to your audience. We earn their respect (which they really do desire) by using current trends, movies, sports, actors, and technology to relate and teach the subject material. Educators should coach and pull ideas and information from our students if we want to keep them tuned in and engaged in learning. Finally, the instructor in the classroom is the one in control of what is taught and Gen-Z is smart enough to know that what we have to offer is valuable and important. They really do want to learn as much as possible, but

our style of teaching must complement their style of learning if we want Gen-Z to become successful learners.

Conclusion

By accident of birth, we are all products of our generational cohort. To judge behaviors, characteristics and learning styles as good or bad is irrelevant—accept that “it is what it is” and approach teaching and learning as an ever-changing endeavor. This is what makes our jobs exciting, interesting, challenging, but never boring. Share your knowledge and expertise in a way that reaches current students and helps them succeed. By the way, the generation that follows Gen-Z is referred to as Alpha (Grail Research, 2011), and based on speculation, they may be like Generation Y on Red Bull!

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