

USING INTERACTIVE APPROACHES IN THE CLASSROOM

THE ART OF INTERACTIVE PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

Cases, Simulation, Games and other interactive teaching methods are receiving revitalized interest and recognition as an effective teaching methodology. For example, the need for change in accounting and management education, has been extensively debated and reported as the profession and academe react to the changes called for by the Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC), The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International) and others. Interactive tools and techniques are an important part of all disciplines' struggle to attract, retain and educate effectively "the best and brightest" students available. We can enhance student learning by stimulating the mind through interaction and team-work processes. The main need is for professors to implement interactive methodologies in classrooms that are composed of students with diverse backgrounds, learning preferences and experiences.

INTRODUCTION

During the last 30 years the case method has enjoyed a steady and continuing increase in popularity and use. For example, applications in the field of education have increased in the past several years and continue to increase dramatically. The International Association for Management Education (AACSB), the American Accounting Association and many leaders in university-level business education encourage the use of the case method and other interactive techniques to more effectively reach students, especially undergraduate accounting students who, in recent years, have turned to more exciting fields of study.

In its Preamble to the Business Accreditation Standards (<http://www.aacsb.edu>) adopted on April 25, 2003, the AACSB states:

- *The complex demands on management and accounting education mirror the demands on organizations and managers. Challenges come from:*
- *Strong and growing global economic forces.*
- *Differences in organizational and cultural values.*
- *Cultural diversity among employees and customer*
- *Changing technology in products and processes.*

In this environment, management education must prepare students to contribute to their organizations and the larger society and to grow personally and professionally throughout their careers. The objective of management education accreditation is to assist programs in meeting these challenges.

Accreditation focuses on the quality of educational activities. Standards set demanding but realistic thresholds, challenge schools to pursue continuous improvement, and provide guidance for improvement in educational programs. is important to note that accreditation does not create quality learning experiences. Academic quality is created by the educational standards implemented by individual faculty members in interaction with students. A high quality degree program is created when the students interact with a cadre of faculty in a systematic program supported by an institution.

AACSB member schools reflect a diverse range of missions. That diversity is a positive characteristic to

be fostered, not a disadvantage to be reduced or minimized. Therefore, one of accreditation's guiding principles is the tolerance, and even encouragement, of diverse paths to achieving high quality in management education. Thus, the accreditation process endorses and supports diversity in management education.

Just as managers face rising expectations for their performance and the performance of their organizations, programs in management education also should anticipate rising expectations, even within a given mission. No fixed curriculum, specific set of faculty credentials, single type of faculty performance, or approach to instruction will suffice over time. Accordingly, programs in management education, and the accreditation process, must focus not only on the present, but also on the preparation for the future. The processes used to strengthen curriculum, develop faculty, improve instruction, and enhance intellectual activity determine the direction and rate of improvement.

DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

In light of the increasing diversity among the student populations in classrooms across America and current educational reforms, it has become increasingly necessary for teachers to revisit/re-evaluate their traditional classroom practices. In 1993 the state of Texas surveyed 10,000 Texas educators to determine the proficiencies which are important for all educators to possess as the 21st century begins. [Texas Education Agency, 1995]. By this time educators were aware of the fact that there are many types of learning styles and that not all learners process information in the same way. Of those surveyed, 95% rated the proficiencies on the survey as of "great importance" or "very great importance." From this survey began the Texas learner-centered school. [TEA, 1995]

Learner-centeredness means that learners will be involved in their own education. Lessons will be centered on the student and the teacher will be mainly a facilitator and a model. What this means is that the teacher must have certain proficiencies and that all teachers had to revisit their teaching practices. The proficiencies for Teachers are:

1. Learner-centered Knowledge: The teacher possesses and draws on a rich knowledge base of content, pedagogy, and technology to provide relevant and meaningful learning experiences for all students.
2. Learner-centered Instruction: To create a learner-centered community, the teacher collaboratively identifies needs; and plans, implements, and assesses instruction using technology and other resources.
3. Equity in Excellence for All Learners: The teacher responds appropriately to diverse groups of learners.
4. Learner-centered Communication: While acting as an advocate for all students and the school, the teacher demonstrates effective professional and interpersonal communication skills.
5. Learner-centered Professional Development: The teacher, as a reflective practitioner dedicated to all students success, demonstrates a commitment to learn, to improve the profession, and to maintain professional ethics and personal integrity. [TEA, 1995]

In a learner-centered classroom the teacher is a coach who observes, evaluates and is able to change directions if a strategy is not working, she is a facilitator who helps students link ideas in the content area to their own prior experiences and relevant problems. The teacher is also a manager who effectively acquires, allocates and conserves resources and most importantly the teacher is a guide who encourages self-directed learning, and by modeling respectful behavior manages the learning environment so that optimal learning occurs. The teacher selects materials that are developmentally appropriate for all learners. Although the teacher is the one who has a vision for the destination of learning, the students set their own individual goals and plan how to reach the destination. As a result, they take responsibility for their own learning, develop a sense of the importance of learning for understanding, and begin to understand themselves as learners. They do this with the encouragement of the teacher through active engagement, manipulation, and examination of ideas and materials. Critical thinking, creativity, and

problem solving further the learning and thus, learners are led to an appreciation of learning as a lifelong process that builds a greater understanding of the world and a feeling of responsibility towards it. The teacher, as a compelling communicator, can show the students how to appreciate the importance of expressing their views clearly. The teacher does this by using verbal, nonverbal, and media techniques so that students explore ideas collaboratively, pose questions, and support one another in their learning. To strengthen the effectiveness and quality of teaching, the teacher actively engages in a variety of exchanges of ideas with colleagues, maintains the highest standard of professionalism and bases daily decisions on ethical principles. The teacher creates an environment in the classroom that is relaxed, exciting and conducive to learning for all learners.

INTERACTIVE, INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

WACRA® - The World Association for Case Method Research & Application has provided 20 years of innovative, educational leadership in interactive, interdisciplinary, inter-cultural teaching and learning approaches. Founded in 1984, WACRA® evolved from contacts between professors, researchers, policy-makers, professionals and business executives into a worldwide, interdisciplinary organization of professionals and academics from sixty countries. The organization's objectives are to advance the use of the case method in teaching, training, and planning; to encourage research using the case method; to coordinate case writing and case application activities; and to encourage cooperation between the public sector, the business community, and other case-oriented professions. Its initial focus on the case method has broadened to include games and simulations and other interactive learning and teaching methods as corollaries to cases.

WACRA® organizes forums, symposia, workshops, training sessions, and conferences, including an annual international meeting at which participants have the opportunity to exchange ideas, present their research, and share the results of case writing and case method applications. Previous conference sites have included Lausanne, Switzerland; London, UK; Enschede, Netherlands; Boston, U.S.A., Berlin, Germany; Limerick, Ireland; Bratislava, Slovakia & Vienna Austria; Montreal, Canada, Leysin, Switzerland, Warsaw, Poland, Edinburgh, Scotland, Marseille, France, Cáceres, Spain, Budapest, Hungary, Lund, Sweden, Mannheim, Germany and Bordeaux, France. Since 1998, WACRA® and ACT - The Academy for Creative Teaching - cooperate in a series of winter conferences on *Creative Teaching*.

WACRA 2004 at UCES - Universidad Empreaiales y Sociales, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, will present itself as an international, intercultural, interdisciplinary, interactive, innovative and... interesting 'life case' of building networks and exchanging ideas and experiences. WACRA® 2004 will add new initiatives to complement the highly successful pre-conference WACRA® **I**nteractive **C**ase **S**essions (WICS). The conference language for WACRA 2004 is English with tracks in Spanish and French.

Papers, proposals, workshops, simulations, panels etc. (in English, French and Spanish) are invited to address the conference theme: "*Interactive Teaching & Learning: Two to Tango*". Details on www.wacra.org

REFERENCES

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