

THE IMPACT OF COURSE DESIGN ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF BUSINESS STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of course design on student outcomes by examining data gathered over several semesters from 563 students at a major university. During this period of time, respondents were enrolled in one of three different business course designs: experiential, participative, and traditional.

Each investigator prepared and delivered courses for the three types of designs—experiential, participative, and traditional. Elements were infused into each course design to assure that students could differentiate between the designs and to insure that each design provided the appropriate type of learning experience. The *traditional lecture* courses were designed to present knowledge to the students through lectures given by the instructor. Evaluation of how students performed in these classes was based on reading the textbook, taking notes during lectures and performing well on exams, quizzes, and assignments, which were based solely on the textbook and the lectures.

The *experiential* courses gave practical experience that could be used by the student in an occupation related to the course. In these courses, students completed exercises and assignments that helped them understand how to apply the knowledge they gained during the semester. Also, they studied the actions of different companies through case studies and were tasked to apply their responses to similar situations. They also completed exercises and assignments that gave them insights about themselves and “hands on” experiences.

The *participative* courses allowed students to have a great deal of control over how they would be evaluated by including them in the decisions on how these classes would be conducted. Students participated in syllabus design and decisions concerning grading options, basically deciding how performance would be evaluated in the course. In addition, about two-thirds through the semester, the instructors came up with several different grading options from which each student could choose to help them focus on the last part of the semester and to reinforce their participation. Finally, instructors

utilized group work, presentations and in-class discussions providing opportunities for students to impart information to each other. The following hypotheses were considered:

H₁: Active course designs will result in more positive student outcomes than will passive course designs in the following areas: grades, overall satisfaction with a course, student perceptions of the usefulness of a course to their future careers, and student perceptions of how well a class was conducted.

H₂: An experiential course design will result in more positive student outcomes than will a lecture design, in the following areas: grades, overall satisfaction with a course, student perceptions of the usefulness of a course to their future careers, and student perceptions of how well a class was conducted.

H₃: A participative course design will result in more positive student outcomes than will a lecture design, in the following areas: grades, overall satisfaction with a course, student perceptions of the usefulness of a course to their future careers, and student perceptions of how well a class was conducted.

H₄: A participative design will result in higher levels of student satisfaction with a course than will an experiential design, but will result in more negative student perceptions of the usefulness of a course to their future careers. There will be no differences between participative and experiential designs on student grades and student perceptions of how well a class was conducted.

Results indicate course design influences student's course grades and student perceptions about how the class was conducted. To determine the degree to which professors are likely to use teaching designs that are more conducive to student learning, 522 responses to a survey of management and marketing faculty, across the country, were analyzed. Results indicate that management and marketing professors are utilizing some active course elements in the design of their courses, which should lead to increased student learning.