

MANAGING COLLABORATIVE CLASS PROJECTS: BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, AND ACADEMIA

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According to Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning, analysis and synthesis are the high levels of learning attempt to achieve with our students. Emphasis on assessment demands examining the concepts, activities in the classroom, and finding ways to determine success. Students often come to us as excellent multiple-choice test takers. As such, they can identify terms, define them, explain them, and describe them. However, applying marketing concepts to new and unfamiliar problems remains a challenge.

Many universities, departments, and classes use cases as a way to emphasize analysis and synthesis. The companies and situations in the cases are real so they become a tool to assist students in applying concepts outside the classroom. However, the situations in the cases have normally been resolved so students can find out what was done at that time. This approach negates the idea of being in the middle of a situation with pressure to make a decision not having perfect information.

To make the immediacy of analysis, synthesis, and decision making more immediate, many universities, departments, and courses work with companies on a real time basis. Whether the situation is a case context sponsored by an association or company, a formal class project, an institutionalized program that is required, a student-initiated idea, or a company-initiated challenge, having students work with a real company on a real issue does emphasize analysis, synthesis, and application of concepts. However, this type of collaboration poses a challenge for faculty, students, and outside organizations. When the collaboration includes business organizations, government entities, faculty, and students, the challenges multiply.

This type of experiential education is often called "service learning" or "community engagement." Generally, this describes a strategy that is "a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students. . . seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves. In the process, students link personal and social development with academic and cognitive development...experience enhances understanding; understanding leads to more effective action" (Eyler and Giles 1999).

The purpose of this position paper is to examine the unique challenges of a tri-party collaborative class project and to present recommendations for managing the process.

Unique Challenges

Since incorporating real projects into the classroom is not new, part of the paper will examine previous research to identify different models of community engagement teaching (Bandy 2014). What are the issues of the businesses or organizations? What are the issues of the government entity? What are the classroom constraints? What are the issues related to the students and student learning? What are the issues related to faculty instruction?

Recommendations

In this section, a matrix will be used to identify the variety of circumstances to be management: those inside the classroom, those with external members, short term decisions, and longer term decisions. A checklist of strategies for managing the circumstances in the matrix will be presented.

References

- Bandy, J. (2014) What is service learning or community engagement?. *Center for Teaching*, Vanderbilt University, Vanderbilt.edu, retrieved on Nov. 10, 2014. <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/>
- Eyler, J. & Giles, D. E. (1999). *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning*. New York: Jossey-Bass.