

PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM LEARNING ACTIVITIES AMONG ADVANCED MARKETING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Whithead (1929) and Goretsky (1984) suggest that discovery and involvement are critical to effective education. Marketing educators should endeavor to construct learning environments where students actively engage marketing knowledge. An understanding of student perceptions of the learning activities commonly used by marketing educators is needed to see whether the learning environment provides for the "engagement" necessary for effective marketing education to occur. This paper explores the underlying structure of student perceptions of various learning activities.

BACKGROUND

A variety of learning activities can be used to accomplish a marketing educator's learning objectives. Excellent summaries of the goal orientations and benefits of many learning activities can be found in Henke et.al. (1988) and Goretsky (1984). Discussion offers involvement and may tap affective as well as cognitive domains. (Berdine, 1987) Both multiple choice and essay tests can measure any of the cognitive goals, but essays are more typically associated with the higher level ones. (Weaver, 1985) Term papers may also reach higher level cognitive goals, however they tend to be highly abstract. Cases add realism but they are static and not fully "real-life." (Frey and Keyes, 1985; Madden, 1983) Guest speakers and role plays add more realism. (Hite et.al., 1985) Projects and simulations link theory and practice along with developing a variety of skills. (De los Santos and Jensen, 1985; Goretsky, 1984; Henke 1985).

Learning activities have been seen as being structured in terms of: cognitive information processing attributes; skill oriented attributes; and degree of involvement. Henke et.al. (1988) proposed that participativeness, personal involvement, time required and applicability of knowledge were the attribute dimensions for organizing learning activity perceptions.

Much of this prior work has been based on the views of instructors. There is a need to have student generated, unconstrained understandings of learning activities. This paper addresses this need.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey of students in the capstone marketing course was employed. An anonymous, structured-undisguised, self-administered

questionnaire was given to the students about one week before the close of the term. The questionnaire used bi-polar scales to measure: perceptions of the pair-wise similarity of 11 learning activities; preference ratings; and attribute ratings.

A convenience sample of 19 undergraduate marketing students was used. There was a 100% response rate. The sample was made of seniors, most working 10-20 hours per week in addition to being full-time students. Most of the sample reported their GPA to be a B, the remainder reported A level GPA's. The students had participated in 1-2 simulation games and 3-4 client-sponsored field projects.

RESULTS

The unconstrained similarity perceptions of the students were averaged and factor analyzed. After varimax rotation, the factors were named: Concrete Experiences; Verbal Interaction; Analytical Writing; Reading; Observing. Only the first three factors, which accounted for 73% of the variation, were kept for further study. It appears that skill and cognitive attributes are used by students to organize their perceptions of learning activities.

The students' attribute ratings show that class discussion, guest speakers, simulation games and client projects were seen as practical, personal, helpful and stimulating. Simulation games were seen as somewhat more quantitative. Client projects were seen as requiring a high level of effort while guest speakers required little effort. The students did not have strongly polar views on films, cases, lectures and term papers. They were seen as moderate on practicalness, stimulation, helpfulness, personalness, and qualitiveness. Films were seen as requiring little effort as opposed to term papers which require much effort. Multiple choice and essay tests along with text/readings were seen as relatively theoretical, more impersonal, less helpful, less stimulating and more quantitative. Essay tests and readings were seen as requiring more effort and multiple choice tests as requiring a moderate level of effort.

Guest speakers were the most preferred and multiple choice tests the least. Activities which gave the students the opportunity for participation and gave them relevant challenges were preferred.