

EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY FOR COLLABORATIVELY-AUTHORED STUDENT WRITING PROJECT IN A UNIVERSITY-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL MARKETING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

College and university teachers in business-related disciplines are increasingly assigning collaboratively-authored writing projects in their classes. Collaboratively-authored student writing projects sometimes have free-riders forcing other collaborators to put in more than fair share of their workload thereby lowering the overall quality of the projects. This case study revolves around the exploring of pedagogical techniques for a collaboratively-authored project situation, which will assist student collaborators to contribute effectively.

Our investigation asked students to evaluate the relative usefulness of numerous pedagogical tools, all used by the same instructor in the same undergraduate international marketing class to guide their collaboratively-authored projects. A survey was administered to all of the students during the last week of two consecutive semesters. The sample size was 45 students for the first semester and 21 students for the second semester.

The semester-long collaboratively-authored projects for the aforesaid classes aim at assessing the export feasibility of a consumer item to a given foreign country. Student-teams evaluate the innovative characteristics of the product; analyze environmental constraints; identify business opportunities and challenges in the foreign market; develop export marketing strategy; perform cost-benefit analysis; estimate budget; and, provide final recommendation to enter or not to enter the foreign market.

The projects require gathering information from nearby libraries, domestic and foreign governmental agencies, private consulting firms, export intermediaries, firms engaged in allied but non-competitive product lines, shipping companies and international non-profit agencies. The team for each collaboratively-authored project in the class consisted of 3 to 4 students.

The nine pedagogical tools used in the classes to guide the project are: (1) Group Project Outline - given to the students by the instructor during the first week of the semester, (2) Initial Intensive Guidance - provided

by the instructor to the students at the beginning of the semester explaining various sources of information, tactics to gather information, and methods to handle likely problems, (3) Work Allocation Sheet - required of every student-team identifying workload of every team member to complete the project, (4) In-class Exercise to help students understand thoroughly the Project Outline - required of every team identifying a minimum of 25 questions which the group project would answer, (5) Written Progress Report - submitted by every team during the middle of the semester indicating each team member's efforts and subsequent results in gathering information for the project (the contents of the progress report were discussed between every team and the instructor, and the suggestions were offered by the instructor to strengthen the project), (6) Assistance from Peer Group - one-to-two page summary of two major portions of the project submitted by every team and reviewed by another class team who provided their feedback and suggestions (the first semester class only), (7) First Draft of the Project - required of every team during the 12th week of the semester, and subsequently returned to the team with the instructor's reactions and detailed comments, (8) Oral Presentation - made by every team with an understanding that the resulting discussion and comments could be addressed in the revised final project, and (9) Personal Journal - required of every student indicating his/her nature of efforts, and the total number of hours spent on the project.

The usefulness of the tools was measured through a four-point scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The measure was multi-dimensional. It assessed, among other aspects, whether or not each of the pedagogical tools contributed substantially to the overall quality of the project, and whether or not it enabled every collaborator to pull his/her fair share of the work.

Two pedagogical tools - instructor's response to initial draft of the projects (Tool 7) and project outline (Tool 1) - are found to be useful for enhancing the quality of international marketing term-long projects, and for encouraging students to pull their fair share of workload. Instructors in complex, business-content courses are suggested to consider using these tools.