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ABSTRACT

This seventh issue of a national refereed journal in business and training education contains the following articles: "Integrating Cultural Diversity into Business Classes at the Secondary Level" (M. Marie Dent, Glynna E. Morse, Melinda M. McCannon); "Using Student Quality Teams/Total Quality Management to Improve Teaching and Learning" (Wayne A. Moore); "Improving the Learning Environment During Corporate Distance Education: Some Theoretical Perspectives" (James F. Moshinskie); "Improving Business Writing Quality with a Process-Based Participative Approach" (Jensen J. Zhao, Daniel Wunsch); and "The Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities" (David W. E. Cabell). Articles include abstracts and references. (KC)

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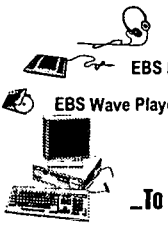

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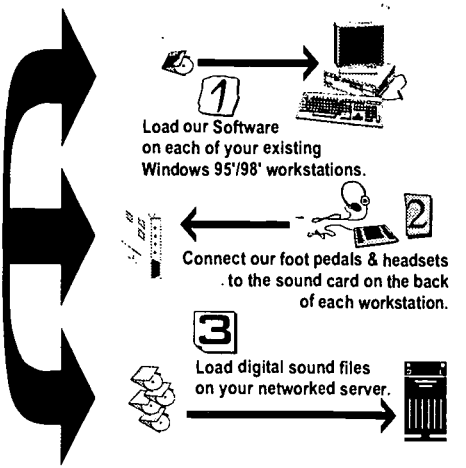

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EDITOR'S NOTES . . .

The members of the Louisiana Association of Business Educators voted in 1995 to change the title of our Journal from the Louisiana Business Education Journal to the Journal of Business and Training Education, and to adopt a national focus. The Journal is listed in the Cabell's Directory of Pubishing Opportunities in Management and Marketing and will be listed in the next issue of Cabell's Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Education. A description of these directories is provided, here within the Journal, along with information on how to order copies of the directories.

The manuscripts presented in this issue were accepted under a blind review process. Each was read by three reviewers from the Journal's editorial review board.

The seventh issue of the Journal contains articles on a wide variety of topics, beginning with Marie Dent, Glynna E. Morse, and Melinda M. McCannon's discussion of the importance of integrating cultural diversity into secondary business classes. This topic is especially important for students with limited experiences and/or preparation in dealing with culturally diverse issues and situation. Today, employers of high school graduates expect their employees to exhibit behavior that embrace diversity in the work place. These authors provide relevant teaching suggestions on how to incorporate diversity components into different courses.

Applying total quality management (TQM) to education is the focus of the second article by Wayne A. Moore. This article provides an overview of TQM and strategies for incorporating this philosophy into the business education curriculum. The author illustrates how the student quality team concept can be applied in the classroom.

As technology continues to impact the learning environment, James F. Moshinskie offer some theoretical perspectives on using electronic distance learning to provide training to workers worldwide. The author provides a review

of the current and emerging trends in business-related distance education and presents techniques for corporate trainers and business educators to used these new technologies better.

To help students improve their business writing skills, Jensen J. Zhao and Daniel Wunsch share ideas on how a process-based participative approach can be used by business communication educators and trainers. The authors present their classroom-tested teaching and learning method for improving the quality of students' writing skills.

Sincere thanks is extended to all authors for their professional contributions to this issue. Appreciation also is extended to the editorial review board and associate editor, Betty Kleen. Acknowledgment must be given to Sandra Cash of Louisiana State University for her patience in keying the Journal and to James E. Bartlett, II, who performed a variety of tasks necessary for publishing a journal. Sincere appreciation goes to our advertisers for their support.

Donna H. Redmann, Editor

JOURNAL PROFILE

Journal Description

The Journal of Business and Training Education is a national refereed publication published annually by the Louisiana Association of Business Educators. This refereed journal includes articles on various aspects of business and training education dealing with research, theory, trends and issues, curriculum, teaching methodology, technology, and personal/ professional development. Manuscripts are selected using a blind review process. Each issue contains approximately four to ten articles,. The first issue of the journal was circulated in Spring 1991. Volumes 1 - 4 were entitled Louisiana Business Education Journal . All volumes of the Journal are available in the ERIC database.

Circulation/Readership

The readership is comprised of business teachers, administrators, supervisors, teacher educators, college and university students planning to become business teachers or trainers, and trainers in business & industry. The journal is distributed to all LABE members as part of membership dues and sent free of charge to the NABTE (National Association of Business Teacher Education) institutions throughout the country.

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The Louisiana Association of Business Educators invites business educators and trainers to contribute articles for publication in the Journal of Business and Training Education, a national refereed publication. Manuscripts should deal with topics of interest to educators (at both the secondary and post-secondary levels) and to trainers in business and industry. Submission of manuscripts dealing with practical topics are encouraged, as are research based or theoretical papers. Occasionally, invited authors' papers will be published. Book reviews are also accepted.

Manuscripts will be selected through a blind review process. Manuscripts should not have been published or be under current consideration for publication by another journal. **Five** copies of the manuscript, including a title page and a 50-100-word **abstract**, should be submitted to the editor. The manuscripts should range from 6 to 15 double-spaced typed pages of 12 pitch type-size, including tables and references. Manuscripts must be prepared using the style format in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fourth Edition, 1994 (ISBN 1-55798-241-4). The **title page** is to include the title of the manuscript and the running header. The following information on each author needs to be included on the title page: full name, position title, place of employment, city, state, zip code, telephone numbers and e-mail address.

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Journal of Business and Training Education
Vol. 7, Spring, 1998

INTEGRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY INTO BUSINESS CLASSES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

M. Marie Dent
Glynna E. Morse
Melinda M. McCannon

Abstract

Managing a diverse work force is a requirement for today's companies. To ensure that their graduates can perform as expected, colleges and universities have integrated cultural diversity content in many business courses. Secondary schools, on the other hand, have been slower to introduce diversity concepts in business courses. Diversity education is especially important for those business classes that prepare students for entry in the work place. This article provides a number of practical suggestions for teaching diversity that instructors may incorporate into business courses at the secondary level.

Dr. M. Marie Dent is an Assistant Professor, Mercer University School of Medicine, Macon, Georgia; Dr. Glynna E. Morse is an Associate Professor, Department of Information Systems and Communication, and Dr. Melinda M. McCannon is an Assistant Professor, Department of Information Systems and Communication, at Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, Georgia

Workers no longer have a choice about whether they accept, welcome, and value individual differences in the work place--continued employment demands this awareness. Companies have recognized that managing a diverse work force is a competitive requirement of today's business environment (Abbasi & Hollman, 1991; Cox & Blake, 1991). A number of changes will confront today's worker:

- an increasing number of women will be on the job
- one-third of new workers will be nonwhite
- the average age of workers will rise so that the 35- to 45-age group will make up 50 percent of the work force
- there will be a shortage of skilled information workers (Griggs & Louw, 1995).

In addition to the changing work force, the customer base of many businesses becomes more diverse as increasing numbers of companies seek ISO 9000 certification and traditionally local businesses expand their customer base with home pages on the world wide web. Businesses provide training and continuing education on diversity topics and team building to enable their employees to survive and thrive with these changes in the work place. Companies expect that their new employees have entered the work force with the human and interpersonal skills to successfully manage relationships with coworkers and customers who may be different from themselves. Fitzpatrick (1997) listed components important for successful diversity leadership for companies: (1) acknowledgment and support of diversity by top management, (2) identification of how diversity enhances performance, and (3) establishment of management organizational structure to oversee diversity. This article will provide suggestions for the business instructor to increase student sensitivity in responding to diversity issues in the work place.

Importance of Diversity Training

Colleges and universities have recognized the importance of diversity in course content for both life skills and work skills. Accrediting agencies at the college level are incorporating diversity education requirements into business curriculums. For example, in its accrediting standards, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business specifies that the business curriculum provide content on the impact of demographic diversity in organizations (AACSB, 1994). The literature indicates that not only business schools (Brewer & Brewer, 1995; Ownby & Cunningham, 1992), but the health (Fischer, 1995) and education (Jackson, 1994) professions, as well, have included diversity issues in their curricula, an indication of the importance of training their graduates to recognize and be sensitive to diverse customer and work populations.

The topic of cultural diversity should be an important one for the secondary schools also. Diversity education is particularly important for students with limited experiences and/or preparation in dealing with culturally diverse issues and situations. All of us have developed stereotypes from the cultural messages, values, and attitudes to which we have been exposed during our lives. As the diversity of the work place increases, students will encounter the challenges of multicultural environments which require that they value "differences" in their coworkers, managers, customers, and potential customers. As mentioned, students who go on to college may have an opportunity to increase their sensitivity to diversity issues and develop a more encompassing view of the world. However, employers of high school graduates also will expect their employees to exhibit behaviors that embrace diversity in the work place.

Studies (Bruder, 1992; Bryant, 1996; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1995; Solomon, 1995; and Taylor & Fox, 1996) have indicated that secondary teachers are trying to integrate diversity into the curriculum. Secondary business classes, especially those classes which prepare students for entry in the work place, offer a controlled environment in which to introduce simulated situations and experiences which prepare students to work with both diverse work forces and customer groups. However, literature regarding diversity for business classes has focused on teaching methodologies for college classes, especially in business communication (Brewer & Brewer, 1995; Foxman, Easterling, & Fodor, 1995; Ownby & Cunningham, 1992). What is lacking, however, is specific teaching suggestions on how to incorporate diversity components into different courses. Though many activities prescribed for college students can be adapted at the high school level, the following activities are specifically suggested for teaching cultural diversity at the secondary level.

Teaching Suggestions

Business instructors may wish to introduce diversity as a module or unit or integrate diversity issues throughout the entire course. At this level, the focus of instruction should be on awareness-based training rather than skill-based training (Cox & Blake, 1991). Awareness-based diversity training would focus on the cognitive issues that heighten the individual's awareness by providing information about changing demographics, changing personal values, and increasing sensitivity to attitudes and stereotypes. Fischer (1995) suggested a cultural module for college health administration students incorporating three parts: (1) theory presentation, (2) small group discussion, and (3) student presentations to the entire class. Business instructors can incorporate diversity

content within modules or units by using some of the following teaching suggestions.

Define the Concept of Diversity

Probably the first instructor consideration would be to establish what is meant by "diversity." Diversity in the work place can be described as multiformity, variety, or differences among employees. Initially, the diversity movement limited the definition of diversity primarily to issues related to gender, race, and constitutionally protected classes. However, the broader view of diversity addresses both the primary dimensions of diversity as well as its secondary dimensions. Primary dimensions are those immutable human differences such as gender, race, age, physical abilities/qualities, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Loden & Rosener, 1991). The secondary dimensions, or those aspects we can acquire, modify, and/or discard, include such aspects as educational experience, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, and work experience. The business instructor may wish to provide this information through lecture and/or discussion, a handout, or by introducing the topic through a videotape on diversity. Videotapes such as *The Tale of O, On Being Different in an Organization* by Goodmeasure (revised from Rosabeth Kanter's 1980 production) or *A Class Divided* which was produced for *Frontline* by PBS Video are widely used.

Class Discussion

An interchange of ideas can occur at any point during the instruction. Resources such as Workplace Diversity (1995) by Esty, Griffin, & Hirsch provide discussion topics that could be modified for high school classes. Examples of instructor developed questions that facilitate discussion include:

1. What does diversity mean?
2. Beyond differences of gender, race, age, religion, ethnic or national heritage, what could also be considered diversity characteristics? (occupation, job title/status, marital status, political persuasion, educational level, etc.)
3. Why are diversity characteristics often used as a basis for exclusion?
4. Why is it important that individuals understand and respect diversity on the job?
5. Have you experienced feelings of being an "outsider" or different?
6. How do individuals respond in situations in which they feel different or a minority?

Videos or Films

Many different videos are available on diversity topics from a number of commercial sources. As mentioned earlier, *The Tale of O, On Being Different in An Organization* and *A Class Divided* can be used to introduce the definition of diversity and concepts of diversity. Two popular video series are *Bridging the Cultural Gap* and *Valuing Diversity* by Copeland Griggs Productions; these videos give specific examples of multicultural diversity issues and ways to support diversity in the work place. *America: A Cultural Mosaic*, a collection of 75 videos by Modern Talking Picture Service, provides a cultural overview and examines the degree of cultural diversity in the U.S. today. If a significant number of students have culturally diverse heritages, videos or films about their heritage might be appropriate and used for class discussion.

On-line Activities

There are numerous Web sites devoted to cultural diversity. Many resources are available to instructors on the web such as diversity teaching resources prepared by Iowa State University (http://teach.admin.iastate.edu/CTE/diverse.html), Louisiana State University Libraries (http://www.lib.lsu.edu/diversity/weblio.shtml), and Ohio State University (http//www.cob.ohio-state.edu/~diversity/index.htm). Miller (1997) found three of the best Web sites:

1. *The Multicultural Pavilion*. (http://curry.edschool.Virginia.EDU/go/multicultural). This is a one-stop source for the K-12 educator that includes information and links to resources about racial minorities in the United States, religious minorities, women, and the disabled. Links are provided to statistical databases, such as census data, on-line journals and articles, and on-line libraries around the world. Texts of religious and historical documents enhance the learning possibilities. Links are provided to the literature of various cultural groups, including a link to African American literature, and to sites with lesson plans. Four activities promoting cultural awareness and acceptance are highlighted.
2. *History and Social Studies Web Site*. (http://www.execpc.com/dboals/boals.html). Choose "Diversity Sources" from the index to access information about most racial minorities, religious minorities, women, and the disabled. Some of the topics duplicate those available at the Pavilion, but this site presents the topic with a different focus.

3. *The Embassy Page*. (http://www.embpage.org/). This Web site is a gateway to the home pages of embassies and consulates around the world. It provides links to updated information about governments, business, and general information about the sponsoring and host countries with links to additional information. While not always as complete as standard print sources, these sites provide information on relations between countries that is not usually included elsewhere.

Speakers

Within the community, resources exist who can add additional dimensions to diversity discussions.

1. Executives can be invited to discuss diversity within the organization, the need for sensitivity to diversity concepts, and why diversity training is important.
2. Representatives of college or university minority affairs/multicultural affairs offices can discuss diversity concepts and training requirements within the higher educational setting.
3. Exchange or international students within the community are usually responsive when asked to speak about cultural differences and experiences.

Observation

Request that students make observations to be written in a log or journal. Questions such as the following can then be discussed in class or submitted as a written assignment:

1. Observe students in your school; what are some characteristics of diversity?

2. Observe individuals at a mall or business setting; what are some characteristics of diversity?

Interviews

Students can be assigned to interview others with the results to be presented to the class or written as a report. A list of possible questions to guide the interview should be constructed before the interview, perhaps as part of the introduction to the material.

1. Interview a human resource management director or executive of a local organization. Ask questions about diversity among the employees, the importance of diversity for the organization, and training for diversity.
2. Interview a relative or neighbor and ask about diversity among that individual's co-workers and diversity training at work.

Exercises or Simulations

Simulations enable the instructor to provide realistic experiences in dealing with diversity issues. Simulations should be used in the classroom as often as possible to teach students about cultural diversity issues. Simulations allow students to exercise problem-solving skills, use acquired knowledge, and experience some of the feelings that occur in a real event (Anderson, 1994). Business teachers may select from a variety of activities. These simulated activities may be designed by the teacher or purchased from commercial sources:

1. Teacher-Prepared Group Exercise. Prepare 3 x 5 cards for the class by writing "Oak" on approximately 75 percent of the cards and "Maple" on the remaining 25 percent of the cards. Randomly hand out the cards to the students.

Have the Oak group meet and give them written instructions stating: "Deliberately ignore any questions or statements made by members of the Maple group; talk only to members of your own Oak group." Written directions for the Maple group will direct three members of the Maple group to ask three questions of the Oak group: "When is this assignment to be completed? What directions were you given? What do you think diversity means?" Instruct the Maple group questioners that if they do not receive an answer from the first Oak group member to go to a second member of the Oak group and repeat the question. Regardless of the answer received from the Oak group, the Maple group members are to come back to the Maple group and share the results of their questions and answers. After a few minutes, the teacher should ask members of the Maple group (the ones ignored) how they felt. Both groups should be asked what they felt was the purpose of the exercise.

2. Textbook exercises. Some of the best sources of group exercises or activities relating to diversity may be found in management or organizational theory resources. For example, Baker & Paulson (1995) give detailed instructions for a group exercise on the effects of cultural behaviors, cross-cultural encounters, and cultural attitudes. Instructors can use or modify these exercises for high school business classes.
3. Commercial simulations. Two simulations available that have proven to be popular with both students and teachers are BAFA-BAFA and Broken Squares. In the BAFA-BAFA simulation, students are divided between two cultures with very different cultural norms. They exchange members, and those members must learn the rules of their

new culture by observing and trying to interact with the members of that culture (Shirts, 1973). In the Broken Squares simulation, students must cooperate with others in a project for the "good of all societies" (Anderson, 1994).

Papers or Reports

Papers or reports could be written on many of the topics suggested previously. These assignments could be made to individuals or for group projects. In addition, the written reports could also be given as oral presentations in class. Additional topics assigned by the teacher might include:

1. Write or report briefly on the composition of the work force by the Year 2000. How have the diversity characteristics of the work force changed?
2. Compare the concepts of work place diversity and affirmative action. How are they alike? In what ways are they different?
3. Using the print or electronic sources (*Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature,* or *Business Periodicals Index*, CD-ROM databases, World Wide Web, or Internet information), find at least one recent article on diversity. Summarize the information in the article(s).
4. Using books or resources from a list provided by your instructor, develop a paper on the topic of "What is Diversity?"

Conclusions

Although the college business curriculum provides diversity training, many business students begin jobs in the work force after graduating from high school; others are employed part-time while going to college. High school as well

as college business instructors must provide diversity training as part of the preparation to enable students to enter the increasingly culturally diverse work force.

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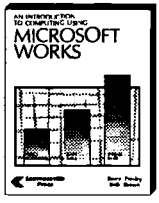

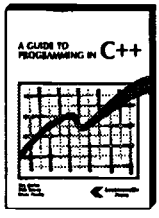

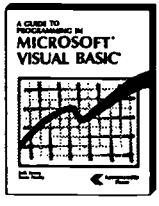

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USING STUDENT QUALITY TEAMS/TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Wayne A. Moore

Abstract

The primary goals of a student quality team are to provide an awareness of quality; to discover new ways to improve learning; to enhance learning; and to improve student awareness of the educational system's concern for learning. The process for developing the student quality team begins by selecting a student group, meeting with the group to explain the goals, and then brainstorming areas of concern relating to classroom instruction. The student quality team develops, administers, and analyzes an assessment instrument. With the information gained, the instructor has the opportunity to adjust methodology to enhance learning and improve quality of instruction.

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Since the mid-1980's, many United States businesses have had to embrace the total quality management (TQM) philosophy to remain competitive in the global market. The competition from both Japan, with TQM, and Europe, with the International Standards Organization (ISO 9000), has increased significantly and will only continue. If only to keep the United States competitive in today's economy, TQM should be a concern to education. If students are not taught how to perform in a TQM environment, businesses may be reluctant to hire them as they are not familiar with these methods. The challenge facing education is how to develop high performance schools to improve the quality of performance and cost effectiveness to meet or exceed world class educational standards. Educators continually review and revise curricula to maintain quality. Unfortunately, revisions too often focus on additional content requirements and fail to address creativity or innovations in teaching and learning strategies.

The primary focus of this paper is to provide an overview of total quality management and to illustrate how an educator can incorporate the philosophy into the curriculum for reflective practice.

Overview of Total Quality Management

Total quality management is a business philosophy which believes that the road to long-term success is through customer satisfaction. This is achieved through the participation of all members of the organization to improve the processes, products, services, and culture in which they work. It must be understood that TQM is systemic; the entire organization must be viewed as a whole, and any change in one aspect of the operation will have ramifications elsewhere (Fusco, 1994).

There are three individuals who have been instrumental in the development of TQM. They are W. Edwards Deming,

Joseph M. Juran, and Philip B. Crosby. Deming's contributions have been developed around two principles: (1) an emphasis on a systematic approach to insure a quality product and (2) an insistence that management, not labor, bears the primary responsibility for making quality happen (Zemke, 1993). Deming devised a structured approach to analyzing and solving problems which is PDCA-- Plan, Do, Check, Act. PDCA begins with a complete analysis of the process, identifying where improvements in the system can be made. Once the areas of improvement are identified, plans are established for change in the process. The changes are then tested (do), and the process is checked to insure that the change is having the expected improvement. If the change has the expected improvement, implementation becomes a part of the standard operating procedure (act).

Juran and Crosby built on Deming's foundation. Juran's focus is to manage for quality rather than to inspect (check) it into the finished product. Juran also emphasizes the idea of training groups of employees in problem-solving techniques, brainstorming, group dynamics, and teamwork. The major point of the training is to enable people to work in groups to determine cause and effect relationships in work-place problems. Juran's specific technique for identifying problems utilizes Pareto analysis, a process for separating major problems from minor ones. A Pareto analysis looks for 20 percent of the possible causes that lead to 80 percent of all the problems. Crosby's emphasis is that management must be committed to quality goals and must respect their employees and their efforts. Crosby also introduced the concept of benchmarking, which involves the examination and careful study of an outstanding company in order to establish a standard against which to measure and seek improvements (Zemke, 1993).

These three individuals believe that customer satisfaction is the cornerstone of TQM. As such, it is

imperative to identify the customer, both internal and external. Juran was the first to identify the internal customer, the person in the next office who should be looked upon as a customer and who should be treated accordingly. Only if the customer is satisfied will the company remain viable; dissatisfied customers will take their business elsewhere and, in all probability, not return no matter what inducements are offered.

Applying TQM to Education

Applying TQM to education can be difficult because the terminology and principles have in the past been business oriented rather than education oriented. However, Deming's fourteen points for management have been translated by Armand A. Fusco in his article, "Translating TQM Into TQS" in *Quality Progress* (May, 1994) for application to the educational system as follows:

1. Think and plan for the long term and build quality effort into school policies.
2. Improve the quality of the system rather than try to change the behaviors of the people in the system.
3. Teach everyone to evaluate his or her own work for quality as the work is being done.
4. Determine what the school is getting for the price in the long run.
5. Improve the process (system) even if it isn't broken.
6. Constantly provide training for all members of the organization. Make sure they all know their jobs and why the people on the jobs are needed.
7. The responsibility of leadership is to create an environment so that the system can improve.
8. Encourage the truth, respect the truth, and trust the truth.

9. Get everyone to understand that cooperation benefits everyone.
10. Fancy words do not improve quality.
11. Concentrate on improving the process.
12. The most important organizational asset is people and what they bring and can do for the organization.
13. Create and encourage a learning organization and culture.
14. Develop brainpower through teamwork.

Utilization of these basic management concepts forms the foundation for applying TQM to education. Many in the educational environment do not recognize the need to change the system as it now exists. In the past, the educational system in the United States was one of the best in the world in addressing the needs of an ethnically diverse population. Current data, however, reveals that in comparison with foreign counterparts, the American student ranks at or near the bottom in academic performance. The findings have been recognized by the Federal government as documented in the SCANS report and with the passage of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act. Businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to find qualified workers and will not be able to compete in a global market without recognizing the quality standards (ISO 9000) which are being held as the hallmark for excellence. Students are not being well served by the current system as they are ill prepared to enter a technology-based workplace. Many educators view TQM as the latest management fad -- a universal answer to the ills of education and society. The concept of meeting the needs of customers is the most critical part of TQM; and, if applied properly, could help to improve the educational system so that organizational behaviors would be improved and quality outcomes would be achieved (Fusco, 1995). In discussing the educational system, few have tried to identify the customer whom it is trying to service. The external customers are comprised of school boards, higher education, businesspersons,

taxpayers and parents. The internal customers are educators, students and administrators.

For TQM to work in education it must be incorporated in small steps. As an educator, it is important to focus on the teaching of content. Are the students gaining the proper knowledge, skills, and attitudes to grasp the subject matter? A beginning to evaluate the teaching and learning process could start in the classroom by organizing TQM in the classroom.

Using TQM to Improve Teaching and Learning

Educators continually review and revise courses to maintain quality. Unfortunately, revisions too often focus on additional content requirements and fail to address creativity or innovations in teaching and learning strategies. Traditionally, if an instructor wants students' opinions about teaching effectiveness, he/she waits until the end of the course. In a post-secondary environment many educational institutions use formal instruments for students to have the opportunity to provide instructional feedback. The disadvantage to the formal instrument is that feedback at the end of a course tends to make little difference on the improvement of the instructor for the next time the course is taught. Receiving empirical information from students during the course is more effective rather than from a summative evaluation at the end of the course. A method to achieve this is through a student quality team. This concept is built around the goals of TQM where goals are established and individuals are involved in the total process. In addition, individuals from all levels, including students, parents, teachers, community and administrators, are part of the planning and initiating of the established goals.

The primary goals of a student quality team are to provide an awareness of quality, discover new ways to improve learning, enhance learning, and improve student awareness of the educational institution's concern for learning. The process

for developing the student quality team and for establishing the mission incorporates six steps:

1. determine opportunity for improvement
2. establish a student quality team
3. survey current process
4. develop goals for evaluation
5. evaluate goals
6. develop methods for improvement.

Deming's first step in the TQM approach is to create constancy of purpose for improvement of products and services. As an educator, one must review empirical data from the past and envision where improvement can be obtained.

The next step in the quality team process is selecting a group of no more than six students from a specified class. After the group has been selected, the instructor should meet with the group to explain the goals of the student quality team and then brainstorm areas of concern by the students and the instructor. They should develop a timeline and work sessions should begin.

Once the goals have been set, it is important for the quality team to give the entire class the goals and the methods for meeting the goals. Using the feedback from the entire class, the quality team should develop and administer an assessment instrument that will meet the goals for evaluation.

When evaluating the goals the quality team needs to analyze the assessment result and share a summation with the instructor and then with the entire class. The ultimate goal from the work of the quality team is for the instructor to take the information obtained from the assessment and implement the changes in the classroom.

Student Quality Team Applied in the Classroom

The student quality team was tested in a business communications class composed of junior and senior college of business students. A major component of the course was group work so the idea of quality teams and the methodology of TQM was established from previous management classes. Six students were randomly selected, and the instructor met with them to discuss the goals of the quality-team concept. The four goals suggested were: raise awareness for quality, discover new ways to improve learning, enhance learning, and improve student awareness of the university's concern for their learning. These goals were parallel with Deming's philosophy of TQM in creating constancy of purpose, improving constantly, instituting leadership, breaking down barriers, and taking action to accomplish the transformation.

After a brainstorming session, students met with the entire class for ten minutes to have them become a part of the group process and to understand the purpose of the student quality team. The quality team met again to develop a survey that would be distributed to the class and analyzed. Questions on the survey range from "Have your expectations of the instructor been met?" to "How effective is group work to your learning the course content?" The quality team included ten questions on the survey. The team administered the survey, compiled the statistics, met with the instructor, and discussed the results with the class.

With the use of the student quality team, the instructor now has the opportunity to adjust methodology to enhance the learning environment in the class. This is only the beginning to use a management tool such as TQM in organizing the classroom and ultimately the educational institution. For an educational institution to be considered as quality, it is imperative that everyone be involved from the Superintendent/Provost to the lowest level of the organizational

structure. At each of these levels, individuals must change the way they approach their jobs. For transformation to take place, it must be led. People need guidance as they change their ways.

Based on the small scale integration project of TQM in the classroom, the author has provided faculty members and administrators with the basic concept of bringing TQM into additional classrooms as a reflective teaching tool and then ultimately as a philosophy to direct the educational institution.

TQM Applied to Secondary Education

TQM at the secondary level may take on a different approach. TQM has been proven to work very well at the secondary and post-secondary levels, but the results vary according to the stakeholders. John Marsh (1997) summarized the different philosophies of the stakeholders in a high school. He stated, "Students want schools to equip them to deal with very uncertain futures. Rather than being stuffed full of information, [they] need to leave their formal education with a love of learning and an understanding of how they learn best. Parents want greater choice and involvement in their children's education . . . Employers require greater learning skills, teamwork and self-motivation based on a good grasp of the basics." In order to achieve the desired goals/mission of the institution, educators must question their core processes and methods. Total Quality Management in a secondary-level school needs to redirect the focus on the internal customers (staff, students, parents) and external customers (employers) rather than the owners of the school system (school board). A high school in Brooklyn, New York, incorporated the TQM philosophy and began to see improvements such as the following: students became more involved in the school, dropout rate declined, parent involvement grew, faculty became more involved in multi-disciplinary projects and programs have been redesigned incorporating all stakeholders.

TQM Equals Quality Education

A featured speaker, Myron Tribus, at the 1994 AAHE Annual Assessment and Quality Conference listed eight elements that impact quality in education:

1. No aim, no sense of direction
2. No philosophy, no followers
3. No vision, confusion
4. No strategy, false start
5. No resources, frustration
6. No skills, anxiety
7. No rewards, bitterness
8. No organization, no coordination.

These eight elements provide the foundation for developing a framework for incorporating TQM in education. Many educational institutions remain stagnant because things are running smoothly and they fear change. To be a success with quality as a goal, the educational system must set a direction with a vision and mission targeting teaching and learning. The educational system needs to examine and reflect business models to assist in redesigning the process to provide quality throughout the curriculum.

Conclusions

Educators, administrators, and students are involved in a shared process called education, and together they create learning. Teaching and learning can be improved by examining the process and involving stakeholders (students, parents, educators, administration, community) in the ultimate goal of quality education. Quality is what makes learning a pleasure and a joy. Many times it takes hard work to accomplish something. However, joy in learning produces positive results which reflect on quality.

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IMPROVING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DURING CORPORATE DISTANCE EDUCATION: SOME THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

James F. Moshinskie

Abstract

Electronic distance education technologies offer opportunities to provide synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (delayed time) training to workers worldwide. Unless corporate trainers use these new technologies wisely, trainees may become confused and frustrated in technology-enriched videoconferencing classrooms or at elaborate training websites and either quit the course or miss the intended message altogether. For distance education to be effective, trainers should use instructional methods where the technology bends to the instruction, rather than vice-versa. This article reviews current and emerging trends in business-related distance education and presents techniques for corporate trainers and business educators to use these new technologies better.

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The rising star on the ever-changing technology horizon is electronic distance education, which is already impacting corporate training and business education in many fundamental ways. As corporate trainers and business educators race to jump upon the distance education bandwagon, they are learning - and perils. Distance education is a chaotic, confusing, and complicated topic with a limited theoretical consensus on how to develop and use the technologies effectively. The purpose of this article is to review current uses of distance education in businesses and schools, and then present some theoretical perspectives on designing and developing distance education courses. Specifically, the article is divided into six divisions: (1) distance education examples in business and school, (2) distance education technologies, (3) instructional design models, (4) distance education delivery techniques, (5) distance education learners, and (6) future trends in distance education.

Distance Education Examples in Businesses and Schools

Distance education offers corporate trainers multiple opportunities to educate, communicate, access information, and share resources with employees in their homes, at their worksites, or in corporate classrooms anywhere on the globe (DiPaolo, 1996). Early adopter corporations, such as Motorola, Sun Microsystems, and Xerox, have developed corporate universities within their organizations and use distance education technologies to prepare employees for global market pressures, changing technologies, emerging jobs, and increased diversification in the workplace (Meister, 1994). Other businesses have formed partnerships with educational institutions to provide distance education opportunities to their employees. An example is the Executive Corporate Network which links eight business schools with such companies as Eastman Kodak, Walt Disney, and Texas Instruments (Bassi et al, 1996).

Secondary and post secondary business educators also have begun incorporating distance learning technologies during business classes. Examples include the University of Houston which delivers business courses to Native-American students on Oklahoma reservations using a satellite-based network. Students at National Technology University and Mind Extension University regularly videoconference with corporate executives and discuss business case studies during classes. Executives who are unable to give up an entire day to travel to a university and speak are readily available to walk down the hall to the corporate videoconferencing center and interact "face-to-face" with students (Schneider, 1996). High school business education teachers are also finding corporate partners who are willing to videoconference with students, including Motorola University which has started K-12 training initiatives built around learning apprenticeships for business students (Serritella, 1996).

Some school districts are receiving business courses through their state distance education networks. In Mississippi, the Star Schools Project presented two high school business courses, Entrepreneurship and The Legal System in Business, during the Fall of 1997 over a state-wide videoconferencing system. The classes were so successful that they will be repeated in 1998, and an accounting class is also being planned. In South Carolina, the Governor's School for Math and Science is offering a business statistics course through distance education. (Chris Jones, Vtel Corporation, Personal Communication, February 13, 1998).

Since distance education is expanding so rapidly, secondary and post secondary business educators need to update their curriculums to prepare future corporate trainers — and leaders — on the correct usage of these technologies. Corporations, especially those with expanding corporate universities, need techno-savvy graduates who can mix technology and training correctly. To fulfill this need, Baylor

University in Waco, Texas. has started a new major in the Hankamer School of Business entitled Performance Improvement Technologies (PIT). These students receive a bachelor of business administration degree with an emphasis on a systems approach to competency-based performance improvement and the use of web-based training (WBT), computer-based training (CBT), and videoconferencing-based training (VBT) in the workplace.

Distance Education Technologies

Electronic distance education technologies are divided into categories based upon the complexity of the technology. Currently, there are five major categories: audio conferencing, audio/graphic conferencing, videoconferencing, computer conferencing, and desktop videoconferencing (Table 1).

For the purposes of this article, these five technologies are divided further into two subdivisions: synchronous (real time) training and asynchronous (delayed time). In some instances, trainers combine synchronous instruction and asynchronous technologies to form virtual continuous learning spaces. To conduct training in these cyber-classrooms, trainers utilize the asynchronous capabilities available through e-mail, newsgroups, telephone help lines, fax, internet, beepers, videotapes, and groupware to support the synchronous, two-way instructional methods.

Synchronous Technologies

Currently, the most common synchronous technology is two-way videoconferencing. The typical videoconferencing classroom includes cameras, monitors, and microphones connected to a computing center. Inside this center, an electronic device called a video codec (short for Coder/DECoder) converts the analog video signals and the audio input

Table 1

The Types of Electronic Distance Education Technologies

Audio conferencing	Two-way voice only comminications using telephone lines and speaker telephones.
Audio/graphic conferencing	Computer and telephone linkages that allow two-way voice communications with transmission of graphics.
Video-conferencing	Two-way exchange of voice, graphics, and images using a videoconferencing center consisting of monitors, microphones, and cameras.
Computer conferencing	Training delivered by the internet or by groupware.
Desktop video conferencing	Networked personal computers that exchange audio, video, and data. Each computer has a video camera and microphone attached.

so they can be transmitted digitally to other classrooms. This transmission can be conducted by either wireless satellite signals and/or wired telecommunications lines.

The world wide web (WWW) also provides opportunities for synchronous training. Trainees and trainers can participate interactively in such activities as chat sessions, LISTSERVs, and collaborative groupware (Table 2). Desktop conferencing, another rapidly-evolving synchronous technology, allows live-

Table 2

Technologies to Support Distance Education

E-mail	Learners send and receive messages to trainers and fellow learners.
Chat areas	Learners join an on-line discussion and participate by sending and receiving messages synchronously.
Audio and Video streams	Software that delivers a continuous stream of audio and video so it can be played almost immediately on the internet.
CU-SeeMe	Software allows learners to see and hear each other synchronously.
Newsgroups	Messages are posed to an internet server and made available for members to read and respond.
LISTSERVs	Automatic distribution of e-mail to everyone on training lists.
Web pages	Internet sites containing syllabus, handouts, exercises, and links.

motion video, audio, and data exchange between trainers and trainees (Korzeniowski, 1996).

Asynchronous Technologies

In the past, corporate training was considered to be a scheduled event at a single location. Trainees went to a

corporate classroom, received manuals, and took the training together. Now, electronic distance education allows trainers to present training asynchronously. In this asynchronous environment, employees do not have to be on the system at the same time in order to take training. The fastest growing asynchronous technology is the internet, where employees can take on-line courses at their own pace insensitive to distance -- and time. For business trainers, these web-based training (WBT) courses offer many advantages and disadvantages that must be considered when planning such instruction (Table 3).

Table 3

Advantages and Disadvantages of Web-based Training

Advantages:
1. Time and Place independent
2. Learner controlled
3. Opportunity for interaction
4. Multi-platform capabilities (Windows, Mac, and UNIX)
5. Variety of support such as e-mail and newsgroups
6. Ability to update content easily
7. Ability to control who enters the site
8. Options available to bill learners

Disadvantages:
1. Technical limits such as bandwidth may slow down performance for sound, video and intense graphics.
2. Access to an internet provider needed.
3. Internet links may be unreliable.
4. More reliance on student's initiative to complete the training.

Some corporations buy corporate licenses for web browsers and establish their own in-house web sites that only

their employees can access. These secure, internal "intranets" open new avenues for corporate trainers. For example, NCR uses an intranet to deliver asychronous technical training courses to technicians who repair the company's hardware products. Webb (1996) reported that such on-line instruction provides easy delivery of training, speedy interaction with trainees, and a reduction in production costs. Some corporations plan to extend their private intranets to other corporate intranets to form elaborate electronic extranets which allow the associated corporations to collaborate on business and training projects and share information securely (Bickel, 1996).

Even computer-based training (CBT) can incorporate internet links during asynchronous training. Some authoring languages allow instructors to develop CBT that can read data files stored on any web site while the learner takes the course. By automatically accessing a pre-determined internet address, the CBT can deliver up-to-the-minute information to the trainee. The technology works smoothly enough that the learner is unaware that the CBT software is accessing the internet connections.

Instructional Design Models

For business trainers who choose distance education technologies, multiple issues must be addressed. Ahern (1996) lists registration, intellectual property rights, copyright issues, ergonomics, diversity issues, special needs learners, program management, trainer preparation/training, bureaucracy, gender sensitivity, cost benefits, and on-going maintenance as concerns that require careful attention. In particular, the instructional design of a distance education course poses new challenges to corporate trainers. Leidner and Jarvenpaa (1995) identified two major learning models available. The first is the objectivist model (objectivism), which promotes trainer-centered, trainer-led instruction. The second, the constructivist

model (constructivism), suggests a learner-centered approach. An offspring of the constructivist model is called collaborativism, which advocates group learning activities.

Objectivist Learning Models

Terrell (1994) found that early distance education trainers simply duplicated the objectivist techniques used in the traditional classroom, resulting in disappointing "talking-head programs." In these classes, the emphasis centered on the trainer, and the trainees became isolated, passive observers. Terrell blamed such approaches for the lower cognitive performance and the increased attrition found in his initial studies. Furthermore, Fraser (1996) complained that early distance educators used the technology simply to automate and decorate the instruction, creating bulleted text screens supplemented by colorful, graphic images and fancy, pointless screen transitions. Norman (1993), who dubbed such designs as "edutainment," believed that while the technology enthralled and entertained learners similar to their spending time at a video game arcade, it only provided lock-stepped instruction that failed to give learners time to reflect, make inferences, and develop chains of reasoning.

Constructivist Learning Models

The constructivist model assumes trainees learn better if they discover things for themselves, rather than being told by a trainer or machine. O'Loughlin (1992) advocated a constructivist environment where the learners hypothesize, manipulate objects, pose questions, research answers, imagine, investigate, and invent in order for learning to occur. To improve distance education, corporate trainers began using these ideas increasingly, and studies by Payne and Stoddard (1994) indicated that these constructivist learning models improved the efficiency and effectiveness of distance education significantly. Bolstered by the initial successes of constructivist

models, trainers have created some deviations, notably the collaborative, or group-centered, model. Collaborativism means learners work together to accomplish shared training goals (Barker & Dickerson, 1996).

These conflicting instructional strategies may confuse corporate trainers trying to design distance education courses. Leidner and Jarvenpaa (1995) suggest that no particular model is the best approach. Instead, they feel that mixing learning approaches will be appropriate depending upon the course's content and training goals and the learners' experience, maturity, and intelligence. The authors point out there is a time for presenting basic information in an objectivist approach and for allowing trainees to explore and discover in constructivist environments.

An example of this mix is the web-based training site developed for the FisherScientific Corporation to train over 1,000 employees using the VuePoint Performance Learning System (PLS) model. After employees log onto the site, they can choose either My Way, Learn, Research, or Communicate (Figure 1). My Way presents a pretest geared to learning objectives. Depending upon the learner's responses, the software automatically displays a personalized study roadmap in the Learn and Research sections. These two sections follow linear, objectivist designs which present material to the employees interspersed with frequent multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and true-false exercises to keep the learners involved. In the Communicate section, employees enter more of a constructivist environment where they can participate asynchronously in ongoing discussions on the company bulletin board about the training topics. Trainees can exchange messages with experienced salespersons and gain insights on different sales approaches or discuss new products. The Communicate section also offers collaborative opportunities where trainees join synchronous chat areas with fellow employees and trainers. These discussions can be divided into

specific topic areas and can be archived for future classes. During chat sessions, the trainer can electronically push additional study screens to one or more learners who request remediation. This model is being studied by other corporations, including Hartford Insurance, Bell Atlantic, Mobil, MCI, and British Airways. Baylor University and Babson College in Boston are using the model to develop online courses in business education.

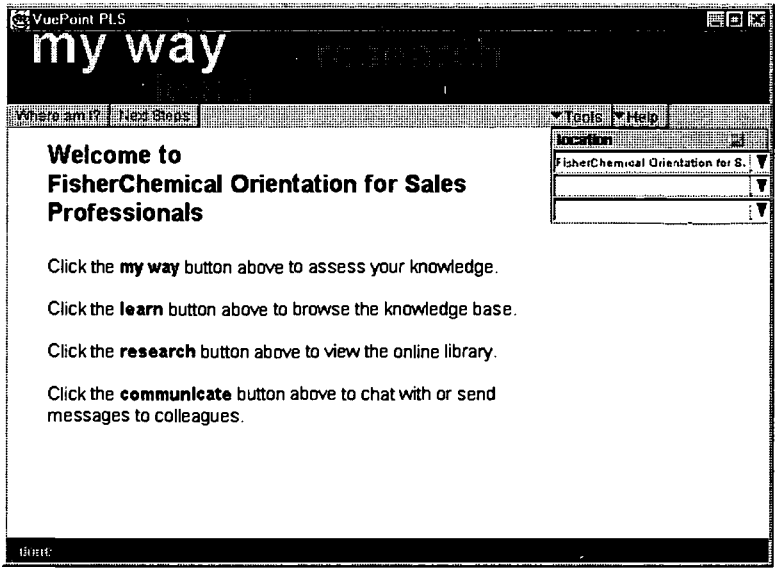

Figure 1 - FisherScientific's training site allows employees to take a pretest in My Way, browse topics in the Learn and Research sections, or use the Communicate feature to access bulletin boards and chat areas. Copyright 1998 by VuePoint Performance Learning System. Reprinted with permission.

Distance Education Delivery Techniques

To mix learning approaches effectively in distance learning, the trainer must devise creative experiential learning opportunities that mesh the learners, task, trainer, and technology together seamlessly. This should be done in an environment that humanizes the instruction and downplays the technical presence, encourages spontaneous and planned interactions, promotes listening to understand, and provides on-going feedback to learners. What follows are instructional delivery techniques that business trainers can use to incorporate these ideas in both synchronous and asynchronous distance learning environments.

Synchronous Training Methods

Johnson and Johnson (1996) discuss a synchronous approach in which the trainer first introduces the topic and presents any introductory information (objectivism). After reviewing the objectives with the trainer, the trainees are given time to reflect on the material and decide how the information applies to them and their work responsibilities (constructivism). Then, trainees are separated into smaller, manageable groups and given a clear, measurable task based upon positive goals that require interdependence to accomplish (collaborativism). The trainer outlines the joint rewards for success and holds the group and each individual accountable for completing the project. During the process, group members exchange ideas, monitor each other's efforts, give feedback/support, and challenge each other's reasoning.

Repman and Logan (1996) recommend that during synchronous classes the trainer should monitor group progress, offer feedback, and then evaluate the results. In such approaches, they feel the role of the trainer transforms from being the so-called "sage on the stage" to more of a "guide on the side." Ravet and Layte (1997) suggest that when the

collaborative activity ends, the groups could analyze how effectively they worked together and begin formulating abstract concepts that will serve as test models for future class projects.

In one synchronous distance learning study that involved videoconferencing, paramedic trainees at different rural sites viewed videotapes of accident scenes, then broke into groups and discussed how to approach the scenes, establish treatment priorities, and apply medical treatments. Groups sought out their own local resources to devise answers to the problems posed in the scenario, then defended their solutions to the other groups. This study credited the collaborative approach for reducing attrition and increasing cognitive achievement (Moshinskie, 1997).

Asynchronous Training Methods

At first, internet learners only viewed scrolling text and simple images, then e-mailed assignments back to the trainer. Now, programming languages such as java and common gateway interface (CGI) enable cyber lessons to incorporate multimedia applications with on-line interactivity and testing. Furthermore, the internet offers opportunities to individualize instruction further using asynchronous technologies such as e-mail and LISTSERVs. Research by Johnson and Johnson (1996) showed that using such support technologies resulted in improved cognitive achievement, higher level reasoning, and long-term retention.

To promote learner-centered instruction during asynchronous internet instruction, trainers can assign varying types of interactions. Some such activities suggested by Maise (1996) include:

1. Give learners off-line homework or reading. When there is content to read, allow them to print it out and take it home or to the worksite where a change of scene will help.

2. Send learners on assignments. Devise projects where the learners leave the screen, do some work related to the lesson, interview someone doing the task being learned, or do some research and then return. The learners can then e-mail a report to the instructor or post it on a LISTSERV.

3. Encourage off-line brainstorming. Give time for the trainees to reflect on how they can incorporate the new material in their workplaces. Their observations can be e-mailed to the trainer.

4. Provide an interactive website (Figure 2) where learners can find frequently-asked questions (FAQs), communicate with trainers and authors, and search for other related sites.

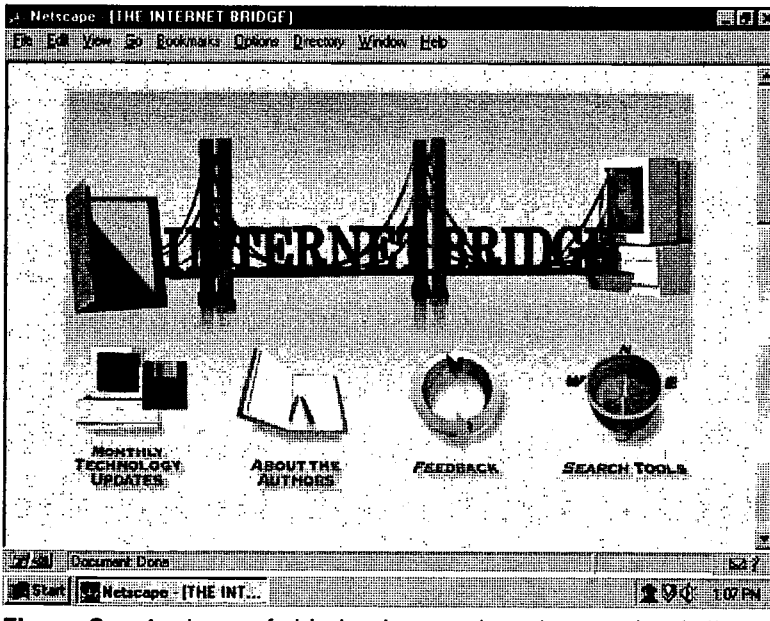

Figure 2 - Authors of this business education textbook (Long & Long, 1997) provide an interactive internet site <http://www.prenhall.com/~longlong> where learners receive technology updates and give feedback to the authors. Copyright 1997 by Prentice Hall. Reprinted with permission.

While these methods target individual learners using web-based training, there are opportunities to devise collaborative projects over the internet as well. Barker and Dickson (1996) recommend letting trainees work together on electronic field trips that require them to surf the internet for additional information. Fetterman (1994) suggests using case studies in which the trainer can present a business problem on-line, then allow student groups to work off-line and use e-mail to develop, share, and defend solutions.

Instructor Training

It is important to offer extensive training to the corporate instructional staff as they change from lecture- and chalkboard-bound trainers to interactive, digital-based facilitators. Trainers who plan to develop on-line lessons at least need to understand the rather simple Hypertext Mark-up (HTML) Language. Ironically, some of the best training on distance education is available through distance education. Table 5 presents internet links to some training sites that address distance education and other topics relevant to this article.

Table 5

Web sites related to topics included in this article

A Guide to Distance Education:
http://www.uidaho.edu/evo/distglan.html
Sample Curriculum for Teaching Distance Education:
http://hsb.baylor.edu/htm/tech
Sample Demo on FisherScientific's Model:
http://www.vuepoint.com/main_nav3.html
Emerging Trends in EDE:
http://www.techlearn.com/trends/

Distance Education Learners

Parisot and Warning (1994) felt that whether trainees appear as faces on a monitor at a distant classroom or as unseen participants typing messages in a chat area, they must be recognized as real people with the same problems as those in traditional classrooms. Some learners will naturally contribute and interact within their group, but others may be too shy or become social loafers who will only participate if a structured activity draws them into the dialog. Beadle (1996) found that even when actively involved in distance learning, employees often complained about "getting stuck" during training and not knowing what to do next. To resolve this, Schneider (1996) recommends that trainers keep electronic office hours or have user-friendly help available on-line if learners can not determine what is the next step.

To keep trainees motivated during distance courses, trainers should provide them with a high intensity of interaction and feedback, set specific goals and procedures, provide a continual feeling of challenge, provide appropriate tools, and avoid letting distractions interfere with the training process (Csikszentmihaly, 1990). Employee attitudes toward using distance education technologies to take corporate training require special attention. Areas of possible future research include investigating learner feelings toward using technology-based training, learning through the various distance education teaching methods, interacting with the trainer and fellow group members in virtual space, socializing on-line, and coping as remote learners without physical contact with the corporate training staff. Trainers need to examine these issues because distance education remains plagued with poor attrition rates, and the better those involved in developing distance education courses understand the trainer-task-learner-technology mix, the better the instructional outcomes (Price, 1996; Mize, 1996).

Trends in Distance Education

New technologies will bring more opportunities for trainers to use electronic distance education in corporations and schools. Emerging intranet software, called intraware, will allow trainers to use groupware-like programs for training, communications, and collaborations among corporate workers or business students anywhere. G-mail, for group mail, will allow trainers and learners to send and receive messages, faxes, voice mail, calendars, conference calls, workflow management charts, and documents. Web-based performance support systems not only offer training but also link to job aids, video sequences, communication areas, and related web sites.

No longer just for games anymore, virtual reality will give trainers possibilities for 3-D training and conferencing using digital robots, called avatars, that can present instruction, answer questions, give demonstrations, and administer interactive testing using Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) browsers. Capabilities for desktop video conferencing, which allows learners to see and talk with each other, share notes, display and annotate slides, and share files quickly, will be standard on new personal computers in the near future.

Summary

The ability of distance education technologies to present synchronous and asynchronous instruction to employees worldwide certainly has captured the attention of corporate trainers. Additionally, distance education has made its way into business classes at both the secondary and post secondary levels. As this technology grows, business educators should begin to develop curriculums that will prepare the next generation of corporate trainers -- and leaders -- who will be using these technologies even more in the next millennium.

For those who design distance education courses, careful attention should be made to mix instructional strategies appropriately. When disseminating information, linear objectivist designs are still needed. When there is a need to reflect on the material and develop new concepts either as individuals or groups of workers, constructivist and collaborativist approaches seem to work best. When distance education is delivered synchronously, such as through videoconferencing, asynchronous support technologies such as e-mail and LISTSERVs can expand the topic discussion and allow the exchange of ideas to continue long after the class ends. To keep distant learners motivated, interactivity and feedback must be planned purposefully -- and used continuously.

As corporate trainers and business educators continue to examine the issues related to distance education, a knowledge base will emerge eventually to guide future projects. However, the most significant influence on the evolution of corporate distance education will not be the development of elaborate distance education technologies, but rather the thoughtful, professional development of skilled corporate trainers and business educators who will use these new technologies wisely.

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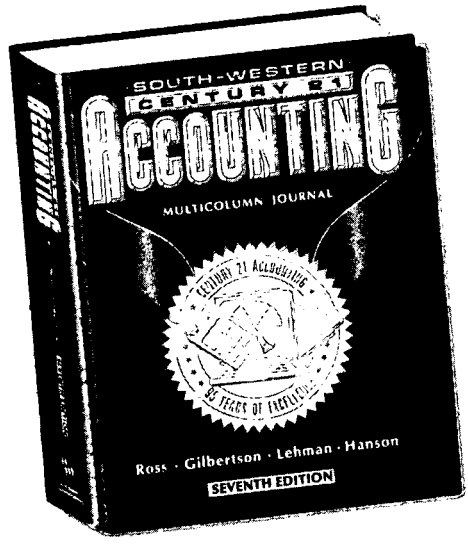

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IMPROVING BUSINESS WRITING QUALITY WITH A PROCESS-BASED PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH

Jensen J. Zhao
Daniel Wunsch

Abstract

This paper reports how a process-based participative approach was used to improve students' business writing quality. The approach consists of (a) involving students in developing a process-based evaluation guideline and (b) using the guideline to direct writing processes and communicate feedback for improvement. The findings of a controlled before-after experiment and a student survey indicate that the approach helped students develop appropriate writing strategies and significantly improve their business writing quality.

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Many business communication educators agree that business writing is a process and is more effectively taught as an interactive process rather than as a culminating product (Couture & Rymer, 1993; Hyslop, 1990; Mulcahy, 1993; Ober, 1992, 1995; Quible, 1993; Winter & Winter, 1995). To maximize the effectiveness of teaching business writing as a process, we propose a process-based participative approach that has proven successful in improving students' writing quality in our business communication classes.

This approach consists of (a) involving students in developing a process-based evaluation guideline and (b) using the guideline to direct writing processes and communicate feedback for further improvement. In this paper, we describe these activities and report the effectiveness of the approach with the results of a controlled before-after experiment and a student survey.

The purpose of this paper is to share our classroom-tested teaching and learning approach with business communication educators and trainers.

Development of a Process-Based Evaluation Guideline

As the related literature indicates, effective business writing is a recursive communication process that includes planning, drafting, and revising. These activities involve the writer in (a) defining subject matter/problem, purpose, and audience; (b) collecting needed data; (c) analyzing and discussing the data; (d) recommending or requesting action; (e) using language, style, organization, and format appropriate to the subject matter, purpose, and audience; (f) editing and revising for a final document that is clear, complete, concise, correct, and courteous to the readers (Ober, 1992, 1995; Quible, 1993; U. S. Department of Labor, 1991, 1992; Winter & Winter, 1995).

These workplace writing skills can form the foundation for developing a process-based evaluation guideline. To develop this guideline, we instructors first summarized the workplace writing skills into five principles and ten criteria. The five writing principles are clarity, completeness, conciseness, correctness, and courtesy, which are taught as five Cs in many business communication textbooks. The ten criteria include (1) problem, (2) purpose, (3) audience, (4) data collection, (5) analysis and discussion, (6) recommendation or request, (7) language and style, (8) organization and format, (9) revision, and (10) reader's overall impression. These five principles and ten criteria form the foundation for a process-based evaluation guideline. When evaluating a document, the writer would measure each criterion against the five principles. For example, "Is the purpose stated in compliance with the five Cs?"

Second, we incorporated Juran and Gryna's (1980) quality management techniques into the process-based approach. Juran and Gryna (1980) stated that to produce quality products, workers must have (a) the means of knowing what they are supposed to do, (b) the means of knowing what they are actually doing, and (c) the means for adjusting their performance. If workers do not have such means, they are bound to produce defective products.

Following quality experts' advice, we chose Ober's (1992, 1995) guided writing process for students as their means of knowing what they are supposed to do in writing business documents. Ober's approach includes clear descriptions of the problem, the process, and the product. The problem defines the situation and discusses the need for a particular communication task; it can be almost any relevant assignment. The process is a series of questions that provide a step-by-step guidance for accomplishing a communication task. Through this process, students obtain the product--the finished document.

To provide students with the means of knowing what they are actually doing, we engaged them in developing an evaluation guideline. Students participated in transforming the five principles and ten criteria of workplace writing skills into a process-based evaluation guideline. This guideline can measure business writing processes and can be used for student self-evaluation, peer evaluation, as well as instructor evaluation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

BUSINESS WRITING EVALUATION GUIDELINE

Directions: High-quality business documents communicate thoughts and information to readers in clear, complete, concise, correct, and courteous writing. (a) Clear writing conveys the writer's message so clearly that, after one reading, readers understand the writer's intended meaning. (b) Complete writing includes the information needed by readers to understand the rationale/logic of the document. (c) Concise writing eliminates unnecessary information, words and phrases. (d) Correct writing uses standard grammar and appropriate format. And (e) Courteous writing uses appropriate tone and style.

Please read the document once only. While reading, give a * next to the line(s) convincing you, a ? to the line(s) confusing you, and a X to the line(s) distracting you. Then evaluate the following criteria by circling the appropriate number on each scale, with 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Average, 2 = Poor, and 1 = Failing in applying the five Cs.

1. Definition of the subject topic/problem.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Appropriateness of the writing to the audience.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Statement of the purpose.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. Collection of needed information.
1 2 3 4 5

5. Analysis/discussion of the information.
1 2 3 4 5

6. Logic of the recommendation/request for action.
1 2 3 4 5

7. Appropriateness of language and style.
1 2 3 4 5

8. Appropriateness of the revision.
1 2 3 4 5

9. Appropriateness of the organization and format.
1 2 3 4 5

10. Overall impression.
1 2 3 4 5

The total possible points = 50.
Please sum up all circled numbers: Total = _____/50

The guideline's five Cs and ten criteria represent a measure of the quality of a common business writing process. An equal weight of importance is assigned to each of the ten criteria. The 5-point Likert scale is used to evaluate how well a writer applies the five Cs while completing each activity in the business writing process. When evaluating business writing assignments, raters should read each document only once because a document that needs re-reading is considered ineffective and costly in the workplace. With this evaluation guideline in their hands, students have the means of evaluating what they are actually doing while writing business documents. Students are also taught how to adjust the guideline and their performance to the writing needs (Juran & Gryna, 1980). For

example, when evaluating an informational report that does not include analysis and recommendation, the fifth and sixth criteria should be omitted.

Use of the Process-Based Evaluation Guideline

To achieve measurement consensus among users of the evaluation guideline, we provided students with a one-hour training session. During the training, we first informed students that the same guideline would be used for self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and instructor evaluation at different stages of the writing process. Second, we gave students two unmarked sample documents of different quality and asked them to work in groups of three to evaluate the documents against the guideline. Next, each group reported its evaluation results and discussed in class why one document was better than the other and how the low-quality document could be improved. The discussion not only helped students reach agreement on the evaluation of the sample documents but also helped them internalize the rating scale by matching the criteria with samples.

Moreover, the training process helped students to realize the importance of planning and revising and to learn that they should never begin drafting a business document without having defined its problem, purpose, and audience. Students also learned that with nonroutine, complex business problems, they should consult their peers or instructors (or supervisors in the workplace) for immediate input or feedback during the writing process (Couture & Rymer, 1993).

When we gave business writing assignments, we required students to complete the exercises by following Ober's (1992, 1995) guided writing process and by using the evaluation guideline for self- and peer-evaluation. Students were first required to complete a self-evaluation and revision of their first draft. Then, their second draft was evaluated by their

group members in class. During the peer evaluation, peer evaluators commented on the draft using *, ? or X marks where necessary (see Figure 1), completed the rating part of the guideline, and then returned the marked documents and the completed evaluation sheets to the writers for group discussion.

In the discussion, group members first asked and answered questions about their documents, such as which parts of their documents convinced, confused, or distracted readers. Then, the group worked together to determine how each of their documents could be improved. Groups were encouraged to ask the instructor for help when they needed it. The instructor also discussed with the whole class some aspects that students would often neglect.

After discussions, students were required to revise their second draft using the results from the peer evaluation and the discussions. Next, students submitted their final documents attached with the first and second drafts as well as the completed evaluation sheets. The instructor evaluated students' final documents using the same evaluation guideline.

During the instructor evaluation, we also conducted the process-control analysis (Juran & Gryna, 1980). Having the final documents and attachments, we could identify the sources of strengths, weaknesses, and problems of a document. For example, if a final document did not include the needed information, which had been identified in the peer evaluation and discussed in class, the instructor knew what had caused the problem and how the student could correct it.

The next stage of this process-based participative approach was to return the graded final documents and attachments to students, which included a grade and specific comments regarding what students did well and what needed improvement. At the same time, the instructor illustrated a

chart of class performance relative to the evaluation guideline for both students and instructor to monitor performance. We also emphasized that students must avoid repeating errors in their future assignments because repetitive errors in business are more costly.

Effectiveness of the Process-Based Approach

The effectiveness of the process-based participative approach was assessed in a controlled before-after experiment of repeated measures during one semester and a student survey. To test how the process-based approach affects the quality of students' business writing, the experiment used the approach as the independent variable and students' business writing quality as the dependent variable. Subjects consisted of students enrolled in a college business writing course during one semester. Before the experiment, a pretest of students' basic writing skills was conducted, and its results showed no significant differences between the control and experimental groups ($df = 44$, $p = .146$). During the experiment, the process-based approach was implemented in the experimental group and the traditional approach (Zhao, Wunsch, & Scriven, 1995) was used in the control group. Three business documents (a persuasive memo, a persuasive claim letter, and a short analytical report) were used to measure writing quality at three different stages of the continuous implementation of the approach.

Three business writing instructors were invited to evaluate 138 written documents generated from three assignments without knowing which ones were from the control or experimental group and which ones were of the first, second, or third assignment, thereby eliminating the rater bias. The three raters also received a one-hour training session, the same as students had, to learn how to use the evaluation guideline. The mean of the three raters' scores for each business document was used for statistical analysis. Using

Rosenthal and Rosnow's (1991) intraclass *r* formula, a generalized, strong interrater correlation coefficient (.57) for the three written documents was identified at the .05 significance level. The mean scores of the three documents for the control group were 26.04, 25.32, 27.82 and for the experimental group were 29.83, 32.79, 32.68. As shown in Table 1, the repeated measures ANOVA reported that the experimental group had significantly greater continuous improvement than did those in the control group (df = 1, 44; $F = .0005$).

Table 1

Repeated Measures ANOVA for Differences Between the Control and Experimental Groups in Writing Tests 1, 2, & 3

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Signif of F
Between-Subjects Effect:					
Between GROUPS 1 & 2	992.97	1	992.97	31.77	.0005*
Within Cells	1375.41	44	31.26		

* The significance of F < .05.

The survey asked students to report anonymously their interest level in the class and team activities, the amount of effort they exerted into the course work, and their perceptions of how helpful the class was for improving their business writing skills. Perceptions were used because they are student observations and recognitions of reality. As Watzlawick (1978), Werther, Ruch, and McClure (1986) pointed out, people never deal with reality per se, but rather with perceptions of reality. Empirical studies on the reliability of human perception reported significant positive correlation between perception and reality (Cournoyer & Rohner, 1996; Slutske & Heath, 1996). In

addition, each statement in the survey questionnaire was clarified with students for consistent understanding.

As shown in Table 2, of 48 students, learning business writing process helped most of them (92%) develop appropriate writing strategies. Their professor's process-based teaching methods helped most students (88%) to improve their written communication skills. More than 85% of the students were interested in and exerted more-than-average effort into the course. The evaluation guideline helped 73% of the students improve their business writing skills, but 19% were still unsure in the midterm. Fifty-nine percent of the students agreed that using the peer evaluation of drafts helped them improve the quality of written assignments, while 35% disagreed. When asked about team activities, 54% agreed they liked team activities, 21% were unsure, and 25% disagreed. Obviously, students' likes and dislikes of team activities are related to their attitudes toward peer evaluation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of our classroom research, we have concluded the following:

1. Using the process-based participative approach helped students develop appropriate writing strategies and significantly improve their business writing quality.

2. Having learned the process-based business writing skills, students abandoned their long-held belief that writing is a single-step, first-draft task.

3. As a consequence of the process-based instruction and participative classroom activities, instructors spent less time grading and correcting students' final documents.

Table 2

Student Midterm Survey of the Process-Based Participative Approach Used in Business Communication Class (N = 48)

Evaluation Statements	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
1. Learning business writing process helps me develop appropriate writing strategies.	92%	4%	4%
2. Professor's teaching methods help me improve my written communication skills.	88%	6%	6%
3. I am interested in the class.	88%	8%	4%
4. I exert more-than-average effort into the course.	86%	4%	10%
5. The writing evaluation guideline helps me improve my business writing skills.	73%	19%	8%
6. Professor's teaching methods help me improve my oral communication skills.	67%	27%	6%
7. Using the peer evaluation of drafts helps me improve the quality of my assignments.	59%	6%	35%
8. I like team activities in the class.	54%	21%	25%

We recommend that business communication educators and trainers consider incorporating this process-based participative approach into their classes to help students improve their business writing quality more effectively. Replication of this study is strongly recommended for business communication educators and trainers to test the effectiveness of this approach in their classrooms. Further research should also explore how student gender, ethnicity, and work

experience would affect the implementation of the process-based participative approach in business writing classes.

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