

A Case Study of Leadership Pedagogy in an Organizational Behavior Class

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand if selected leadership pedagogy (hands on activities) utilized in an organizational behavior classroom contributed to the development of workplace readiness skills. Since successful organizational behavior classes and hands on learning can lead to successful graduates, the importance of leadership pedagogy emerges. In the case here, the participants in one organizational behavior class were followed through a single semester providing feedback to the instructors on the perceived effectiveness of the participatory activities. The researchers found that, in this case, the students shared mixed reactions to the activities, but were able to share positive impacts and gains they felt they received from participating in those activities. Readiness skills were developed, however recommendations for further research and practice are included.

Introduction

Employers are looking for people who have leadership, communication, and other behavioral skills (McEvoy, 2011; Alsop, 2004). The capability to perform these skills is considered when hiring, especially when employing college graduates (McEvoy, 2011; Merritt, 2004; Porter & McKibbin, 1988). To gain this skill set, instructors can provide hands-on experiences. According to Hearn, Miller, and Nelson (2010), hands-on experiences enhance observation, concentration, and memory. McEvoy (2011) shares that the desire for future employees to have leadership, communication and interpersonal skills should increase the need for, and importance of, the courses that work to impart those skills.

Theoretical Framework

When thinking about skill development, it is imperative to remember the myriad ways that learners can learn. Because of that notion, the theoretical framework for this study was Conger's (1992) four approaches to leadership development:

- Personal growth approach: based on the assumption that leaders are the people who know their own goals, and will do what it takes to get those goals accomplished

- Conceptual understanding approach: grounded in theory and based on students' understanding of the same.
- Feedback approach: through effective feedback all learners can discover strengths and challenges; capitalize on our strengths and diminish the challenges.
- Skill building approach: learners are taught important identified leadership skills
- When discussing the ideal program Conger said it would contain the following attributes:

“[the program] would begin with a conceptual overview, then provide feedback on where participants stand relative to the skills associated with the conceptual model of leadership. This would be followed by skill building, for skills that are teachable...personal growth experiences would be used along the way as powerful opportunities for reflection” (1992, p. 53).

The same ideas certainly hold true for organizational behavior courses. In the case of this study, the course was patterned after Conger's suggestion.

Conceptual Framework

Marzano (2007) stated that pedagogy can be defined into three areas: effective instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and program design. In order to be successful, educators must match course objectives with the theories being taught, then find the best way to deliver the content (Rosch & Anthony, 2012). Those authors go on to say that strategies relating to knowledge, skills and attitudes can all play into leadership education development including organizational behavior.

Employers can drive the skills taught in the higher education classroom (Dunne, Bennette and Carre, 2000). This could be because new hires lack basic skills in communication, collaboration and critical thinking according to Dwyer, Millett, and Payne (2006). Skills like these are needed to be an effective team member, problem solver and key player in organizations (Brungardt, 2011). Students expect that these types of skills will be taught in their college classes (Rosenberg, Heimler, and Morote, 2012). So it is no surprise that Rynes, Trank, Lawson, and Ilies (2003) tell us how important it is that students actually take the kinds of courses that provide opportunities to develop those skills. After all, employers tended to hire students who had taken those types of classes (Rynes, et al., 2003).

Contextual Framework

In order to have a deeper understanding of this study, it is key to understand pedagogy at the college level. Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, and Johnson (2005) said that “the real challenge in college teaching is not covering the material for the students; it's uncovering the material with the students” (p. 2). Pedagogies such as teaching-learning, cooperative learning and problem-based learning were found to be successful methods of reaching students in a college classroom. When teaching using methods of engagement, Smith et al.'s (2005) study found that it was essential that students were developing a community of learners, within the classroom, who would be a source of support and engage all students in greater learning.

Review of Literature

Lack of Graduate Workforce Readiness. Many employers are discovering that college graduates lack skills that are necessary in the working-world. Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) conducted a study of 400 employers from across the United States to better understand skill sets that new hires need in order to succeed in the work place. The researchers found that 42.6 percent of employer respondents believe that college graduates are don't have necessary leadership skills. Casner-Lotto and Barrington believe that one possible reason for the lack of skills may be that college students have no sense of the reality of the business world and lack an understanding of what it means to be ready to enter the work world. These researchers found that more than two thirds of the employers surveyed also believed that the responsibility of educating new hires should fall on four-year colleges and universities.

Not only are employers concerned about the lack of skills college graduates are displaying on the job, but recent graduates are concerned about their lack of preparation for the workforce. Laudrum, Hettich, and Wilner (2010) conducted a study of 78 college alumni (psychology majors) in relation to their workforce readiness. Results of the survey showed that there was a high level of preparedness expected in categories including works well with others, setting priorities, problem solving, and managing several tasks at a time. In the same survey, alumni also provided suggestions for college classes hoping to prepare students for the workforce. The results from the alumni led Laudrum, Hettich, and Wilner to form three patterns to better generalize the suggestions:

“that professors should have higher expectations for classroom performance and timeliness, expect more work from students (especially group work and research projects), and offer classes targeted at the transitions that alumni eventually face” (p.101).

Organizational Behavioral Classes. According to Andre (2011), “in organizational behavior and management survey courses, students are likely to maximize certain career-appropriate knowledge when their classroom groups are leadered rather than leaderless” (p. 596). Further, the author went on to say it is important for the instructor to establish a learning environment in which students have the opportunity and responsibility to lead. Andre concluded that leadered group projects are “an integrated, semester-long experience that significantly enhance student learning of important applied skills” (p. 617).

McEvoy (2011) said that “surveys of employers typically find that ‘soft skills’ such as communication, leadership, interpersonal, and team skills (‘behavioral skills’) are rated as very important in the evaluation of job candidates” (p. 469-470). Interestingly, these are skills that can be learned in organizational behavioral classes. However, while the need for organizational behavior classes rise, the value of these classes come into question. In his research, the author said that there seems to be a question of course credibility that could be eliminated by course evaluation and improvement. Because of this, McEvoy deemed it important to study Organizational Behavior classes and how to increase students’ intrinsic motivation to learn in those classes. McEvoy used parts of the Learner Empowerment Scale, an adaptation of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, and other forms of measurement to explore the perceived efficacy of his course. Looking at two classes of students, the researcher found that

one set of students rated the course usefulness more highly than did the other. In deciding how to change his class for the following year, the researcher suggested that incorporating both fun and meaningful materials in the class that discuss organizational behavior and its role in the work force. He also concluded that “universities need to be more responsive to the calls for evaluation and accountability in all coursework, but particularly in the arena of behavior skills and capabilities given the persistent credibility problem that OB courses face” (McEvoy, 2011, p. 497).

Leadership Pedagogy at the College Level. Leadership is both learned and taught in a variety of ways (Buschlen & Dvorak, 2011). These researchers did a study to discover what skills students develop when taking a leadership course, in order to accomplish two purposes; “to assess the learning outcomes of the introduction to leadership course and to compare two non-equivalent groups test scores for the Social Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS)” (p. 43). Buschlen & Dvorak hypothesized that students would show positive growth in both the class and when compared through test scores. The population for the study included 260 students that formed two groups – a control and experimental group. One group was in the leadership department and one group in the psychology department. All of the participants took the pre test of Social Responsible Leadership Scale in the fall semester, with the post test following after 16 weeks. Data was collected and means were established for each of the constructs. The researchers found significant differences in the averages of the tests for each group. Since differences were found, Buschlen & Dvorak concluded that “it is time for leadership educators both co-curricular and academic based to embrace newly emerging paradigms. These newer ideas see leadership as a skill to be nurtured and fostered both inside and outside of the classroom” (p. 51).

Allen and Hartman (2009) used Conger’s (1992) approach to leadership development and Allen and Hartman’s (2008a) sources of learning to conduct a study on “sources of learning in student leadership development programming” (p. 6). For their study, the researchers collected information from two sample populations. The first sample was 171 undergraduate business students were given 20 sources of learning and were asked about their preferences. These students did not participate in any of the sources of learning, but the second sample did. The second sample included 522 undergraduate students that participated in one of three opportunities for leadership development. These students were asked after participating in the opportunity, their preferences for sources of learning. Once the data was collected, Allen and Hartman found that students from sample 1 “preferred observing effective leadership, creating individual and organizational vision statements” (p. 11) while the second sample preferred “openly discussing leadership concepts in a small group was their preferred activity” (p. 12). After studying the findings, the researchers concluded that there are a variety of ways students can learn leadership in each of the categories set forth by Conger (1992).

Jenkins (2012) sought to “identify the instructional strategies that are most frequently used by instructors when they teach courses in the leadership discipline and identify potential signature pedagogies” (p. 2). His study was based on Allen and Hartman (2008a, 2008b, & 2009a) as well as Conger (1992). In his study, Jenkins sought answers to two questions: what strategies are leadership instructors using, and is one strategy more prevalent than any others. After conducting a review of past literature, the researcher conducted a nation-wide survey of

instructors who identified themselves as instructors of a face to face undergraduate leadership course within a two year time block. Jenkins found that class discussion, interactive lecture and small group work had the highest rankings.

Purpose

Since successful organizational behavior classes and hands on learning can lead to successful graduates as well as successful teaching methods, the importance of leadership pedagogy emerges. According to Rosch and Anthony (2012) a “successful pedagogy, then, means educators should conceptualize pedagogy as larger than teaching strategies, where educators serve as leaders themselves in helping students learn and grow” (p. 38). Therefore, “knowledge of college student development and specifically college leadership development, as well as research in leadership theory and practices, can help college leadership educators become more effective” (p. 37). Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand if selected leadership pedagogy (hands on activities) utilized in an organizational behavior classroom contributed to the development of workplace readiness skills. By understanding how effective activities are in teaching students about organizational behavior and imparting those workplace ready skills, the researchers will be able to improve future classroom lessons. In order to direct this study, guiding questions were created:

1. How do students react to hands-on learning based on the lessons taught in class?
2. What types of activities do students deem “useful” in a real life setting?
3. How do activities influence students understanding of organizational behavior?
4. How do in-class activities influence students?

Methodology

Using Conger’s (1992) four approaches to leadership development, a case study of leadership pedagogy in an organizational behavior classroom was conducted. Case studies take place in a bounded system, or within a single unit (Merriam, 2009; Smith, 1978). Because this study took place within the confines of a specific organizational behavior class, it was considered a case study.

Bias Statement & Researcher Contextual Connection. Merriam (2009) said both readers and authors of case studies “need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product” (p. 52). Therefore, it is important to note that the researchers of this study were teachers of the participating students. Thusly, the researchers’ knowledge and experiences gained as teachers of [CLASS] influenced the reasoning and analysis of this study.

Research Design. Qualitative researchers are interested in “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). The design for this case study was a document analysis of student reflections from an organizational behavior class. The class was a Tuesday/Thursday class that lasted for an hour and 15 minutes. Each Tuesday was considered a “lecture” day with each Thursday being an “experience” day. After each activity on Thursday, students would fill out note cards to answer five questions related to the guiding questions.

Population. The population for this study was junior and senior level students enrolled in the [CLASS] Organizational Leadership Development in Agricultural and Life Science class. These students were all majoring in an agricultural related discipline and were using the class to fulfill a requirement for the college's leadership minor.

This course was selected because the students who take it are about to enter the workforce as first time employees. It is also taught from the "worker" perspective, and content is delivered in a way that focuses students on the steps needed to prepare for their first "real" job after the college career is over. It seemed then a place to start when discovering if the kinds of skills discussed in the literature were actually being developed.

Participant Selection. According to Patton (1990), a purposeful sampling can be used with a homogeneous sample group in order to "describe some particular subgroup in depth" (p. 173). Dooley (2007) affirms the use of a purposeful convenience sample when the sample is based on time, money and/or location. A convenience sample was used in this study because it was limited to just the students enrolled in [CLASS]. The total number of participants was 19 students ranging from sophomores to graduate students.

Data Collection. For this study, a document analysis was conducted. Lincoln and Guba (1985) said documents provide contextual relevance as well as enhance the richness of information. The researcher first received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. After receiving approval, the researcher created five reflection questions related to the three guiding questions. Data collection took place for eight weeks for eight different lessons. On each Thursday, the researcher would bring one 3x5 note card to class for each student. After each activity, the five reflective questions were displayed and students wrote their answers to the questions on the cards.

Students dropped off note cards into a basket before leaving class. The basket was left by the door so professors could not see which students dropped in note cards. The note cards were the main form of data collection used in this study. Note cards were collected then coded (NC for note card, number for activity week, letter for position in which note card was placed in).

Data Analysis. Data collection and analysis took place simultaneously by using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009). By constantly comparing new data to old data, bias was kept in check. Throughout the process, categories were developed and constantly reviewed, combined and rearranged to form updated categories. Creswell (1998) said to complete a "general review of all information, often in the form of jotting down notes" (p. 140) first when analyzing data. Second, developing codes by reducing the data and sorting information into categories is necessary (Creswell, 1998). Finally, categories were combined and rearranged to form a theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). As part of the constant comparative method, content analysis was completed. The three parts to content analysis included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 1998).

Trustworthiness. The researcher took four overarching steps to protect the trustworthiness of this study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Dooley (2007) said that credibility is the "truth value" of qualitative research –

“‘truth value’ is based upon one reality; qualitative research assumes...multiple realities... Thus, the term internal validity is not appropriate. The concept of truth value is nonetheless important. In qualitative research it is called credibility” (p. 38).

For this study, credibility was established using two different methods: triangulation and peer debriefing. Krefting (1991) explained that research is transferable when “the findings fit into contexts outside the study situation that are determined by the degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts” (p. 216). One method of establishing trustworthiness was creating “rich, thick description” which allowed readers “to make decisions regarding transferability” (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). Thick description means explaining more than just words.

As explained by Golafshani (2003) the term “dependability” in qualitative research closely relates to the idea of “reliability” in quantitative research. The researcher took two steps to insure dependability in this study. First, the researcher constructed a dependability audit trail. Second, journaling helped maintain objectivity for the researcher, which is important in qualitative research (Dooley, 2007). By keeping a journal, the researcher was able to express thoughts and opinions of how data collection was conducted. Journal entries were completed before every class period, after every activity day and throughout the week to keep researcher bias in check and keep the researcher on track. Journaling allowed the researcher to review data and reflect on personal variables that may have affected the data collection. According to Seale (1999), confirmability is “designed to replace the conventional criterion of neutrality or objectivity” (p. 468). As with dependability, a confirmability audit trail was constructed in order to authenticate the confirmability of the study.

Results

Results are presented by research question. But first a greater introduction to the population is provided for clarity and transferability.

Introduction to [CLASS] and the Students. The 19 students in [CLASS] are pursuing a degree in some form of agriculture with a minor in Leadership. This class was a requirement for their Leadership minor. The students range in age from 18 to more than 25 years old. They were juniors and seniors. Both males and females were represented in the class. About half of the students were holding down part time jobs, but none of those who were working believed that those part time jobs would be their career path post graduation.

Content for the course included, but wasn’t limited to the nature of work, personality and perception in the workplace, culture, communication, workplace design, and motivation in the workplace. Students took part in lecture and then participated in experience days during the following class period. Experience days included hands-on activities, physical activities and/or discussion-based activities that coincided with the lesson of the week.

Research Question One

How do students react to hands-on learning based on the lessons taught in class?

Students were given the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities. Approximately one third of the activities were individual activities where students completed tasks on their own, then came together for discussion. Another third of the activities were small group (3-5 students per group) activities where they would work together to complete assigned tasks before coming together for discussion and debrief. Finally the last third of the activities were whole group activities where the entire class would come together to complete a task and then participate in discussion. Some activities were very well received while, predictably, others were not. Many student responses centered around enjoying the thought provoking nature of the activities (questioning their own behaviors to the behaviors of their classmates was a reoccurring theme within this grouping), the contributions of the activities to solidifying their own understanding of course content, and the applicability of the activities' outcomes to real world experiences.

Thought Provoking (Questioning self and others)

"It was interesting to see how there are a wide variety of personality types within a small group" (NC2I)

"This activity was fun and helped us get to know our classmates better" (NC3Q)

"I like that this activity challenged my normal personality" (NC4F)

"It was eye opening to people's tendencies – including my own" (NC4H)

"I like that it was simply complicated because it had a catch that was simple, but complex and hard to accomplish" (NC8N)

"Liked how it was interactive with the class" (NC3N)

Understanding Course Content

"I liked that it [the activity] helped me understand the structures [of organizations] better" (NC5B)

"Helped me remember [organizational] structures" (NC5C)

Real World Outcomes

"I liked that I had to ponder what sort of job I'd truly enjoy" (NC1B)

"I like that this activity b/c [because] it made me think about what I wanted out of work" (NC1E)

"I liked the thought process behind it and the reward" (NC4N).

We also had many students who shared frustrations with themselves or their own learning. However, they were also able to see some real world problems when confronting multiple or differing ideas.

Personal Frustrations

"I didn't like that I am not on the path to my dream job" (NC1B)

"[The activity was] Time consuming" (NC1N)

"It was hard to think with all the chaos" (NC3Q)

“I could not express my ideas” (NC4B)

“I didn’t like not feeling like I had time to think about it” (NC4F)

Real World Problems

“I don’t think everyone got equal amount of ‘needed’ supplies and the do’s and don’ts were not real clear” (NC3O)

“I felt some people took things personally when discussing each group differences, which shouldn’t happen, this is all constructive” (NC4D)

“I didn’t like chaos [when working]” (NC8C)

Research Question Two

What types of activities do students deem “useful” in the classroom to relate to real life?

Students participated in a variety of activities that required them to work with different numbers of people (divided into thirds, they worked individually, in small groups, or as a whole class depending on activity). Group work and reflection work resonated with this group and emerged as the main thematic elements from this research question.

Group activities made up approximately two-thirds of the course activities. Depending on the activity, students were either assigned groups, or were allowed to choose their own group members. Students used group activities as a way to get to know fellow classmates and to work on skill development.

Getting to Know One Another

“Got to work with other people/interact” (NC2Q)

“Cool to look at our personalities and how we work with others” (NC2N)

Skill Development

“We can learn to negotiate with other people. So it is important to talk and keep a good friendship in the business cycle” (NC3B)

“Learn to work in groups” (NC3G)

“I will make relationships more [a priority]” (NC3J)

“I will use this in daily life because we always need help from others” (NC3Q)

“I will try to adapt my leadership quality for those I work with” (NC4F)

“I will definitely be more respectful towards people that may have different backgrounds than me” (NC6F)

“Able to interact with people that had different cultural norms” (NC6G)

Reflection activities allowed students to step back and review the course materials and how they would apply it to their lives. These experiences included both small (pair share) and large (full class) discussion and personal reflections. Students shared personal reflections that included a willingness to broaden their own world view and be more mindful of their own leadership behaviors.

Broadening Their Own World View

“Think about others views” (NC1D)

“Made me think deeply about my future and challenge us to not settle for meritocracy when the rest of the world tells us too” (NC1Q)

“Gave me some more insight into what to think about” (NC1P)

“[I need to] Think about other cultures” (NC6O)

“It made me think about how [other] people communicate” (NC8K)

Their Own Leadership Behaviors

“I’m going to think before I decide instead of feel” (NC2G)

“Force me to think more about my decisions before I jump into something” (NC2H).

“Think more thoroughly” (NC3O)

“Help me to consider consequences for actions or results” (NC4H)

Research Question Three

How do activities influence students understanding of organizational behavior?

The activities influenced the students in a variety of ways. They were able to apply theories in simulated settings in a “safe” classroom environment. They were also able to reflect and review the content they had learned in light of their own behavior and the behavior of others. From developing necessary skills for the 21st century workplace, to “life lessons” they gained and benefited from in the course, students were able to articulate their understanding of course content and its connection to real life.

21st Century Skills

“Communication is an important part of success in work-place” (NC8J)

“Nice activity to learn how to manage a certain job having limited resources” (NC3B).

“It will help me when I negotiate for things such as salary, benefits...” (NC3S)

“At work, I will be a better worker or manager by applying the things we learned” (NC4F)

“I will respect other cultures to get deals done” (NC6K)

“I’ll be more aware of my workplace environment” (NC3P)

“Better communication skills are a must” (NC8G)

Life Lessons

“I now know what kind of structure I wanna work for” (NC5B)

“I’ll be more prone to analyze a boss’s or coworker’s communication style before I decide how I will communicate with them in the future” (NC8H)

“Sometimes you’re a chief, and sometimes you’re an Indian” (NC4B)

“I think that it [organizational behavior knowledge] will influence relationships with co-workers, people in general” (NC3A).

“I will strategize before working” (NC4D)

“This will influence my future choices [because] now I know how to handle these [different] types of leaders better” (NC7D)

Research Question Four

How do in-class activities influence students?

Beyond course content, an important tenant of any course is student personal development. These activities influenced students in more ways than just discussing organizational behavior. Students were able to share anecdotes of personal growth specifically dealing with future decision making, and development of life skills.

Personal Growth

“Hopefully [I’ll] apply this in my future career and with people I work with in the future” (NC2F)

“Treat others the way I would like to be treated” (NC3F)

“Has me thinking of ways to turn my negatives into positive” (NC2Q).

“Learn to talk to people without drowning other people out” (NC3R)

“It will help me when trying to accomplish both work and personal goals” (NC3S)

“I will consider cultural norms” (NC6B)

“Don’t judge stereotypes” (NC6C)

“Respect other people’s norms and understand them more” (NC6F)

Life Skills

“Respect others” (NC3H)

“Everyone is important” (NC3I)

“Communication is key in getting things done” (NC4G)

“Treat people equally” (NC6L)

“Try and accomplish tasks most effectively” (NC7I)

“I will communicate better” (NC8B)

“Try to be more patient” (NC8I)

Discussion

Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) reported that college graduates are unprepared for the workforce they will soon enter. They claimed that it may be due to graduates having little grasp of the reality of the business world. This study provides an example of how to combat the students’ lack of knowledge by providing an environment with hands-on practice and real-world thinking. Our students were able to make application jumps to life after the classroom as shown by their responses. Participants in this study discussed working in real life situations, learning life skills needed for the workforce and gave examples of how to use materials learned in class for life outside academia.

Laudrum, Hettich, and Wilner (2010) tell us that college graduates are, themselves, worried about being properly prepared for life after graduation. Particularly working well with others, setting priorities, problem solving, and managing several tasks at a time are all of concern. In the case of this class, our students were able to get real world practice in these skills in the safety of a classroom and identified their own learning in these areas. By starting every experience with the expectation that students would connect the opportunity with the course

content, and then provide examples of real life application, we believe that the three prong approach of theory to hands-on experience to real life application was more effective than had students been unclear of the expectations for the class activities. This matches the philosophy shared by Laudrum, Hettich and Wilner (2010).

Connecting class material to real life situations was found to be important in a study by Rynes, Trank, Lawson, and Ilies (2003). In the case of this study, we discovered that the three pronged connection of theory to activity to “real life” allowed for a deeper understanding of course material, and a situation ripe for personal growth and later application. Our students were able to use both large and small group activities and discussion to cement their understanding of course materials and develop leadership skills. These findings were congruent with Andre (2011) who found group work enhances student learning and skills. In this case, group size was not a factor in student learning, as both large and small groups were mentioned in helping make connections. However, we would put forth that because the class size was limited to 25, that setting enhanced the classroom environment such that instructors and students were able to do more reflection and debriefing than in larger class sizes.

McEvoy (2011) suggested that organizational behavior class instructors incorporate both fun and meaningful materials in classes to better equip students for life after academia. In the case of this class heavier and lighter class activities that related to the topics of organizational behavior were provided. Even though there were many opportunities to laugh with each other during the hands-on experience days, this community of learners was still able to gain “life lessons” from the activities that they could apply to work-life.

Allen and Hartman (2009) utilized Conger’s (1992) categories of leadership to conclude that students can learn leadership in a variety of ways. This study found similar results through feedback from the participants. Discussion, reflection, and hands-on activities all contributed to student learning of skills. While every student participated in the same activity, there was room for each student to reflect and learn in their own way.

It is no surprise that any course activity will engender a wide variety of reactions from the students. Required tasks, student self efficacy, and presentation of material, all affect student reactions. We conclude that, in this case, even when students’ reactions weren’t wholly positive to an activity, it did not preclude those students from being able to see the connection to course content and more importantly to develop skills to apply later. As teachers, we often find ourselves evaluating course content and activities. We want our students to enjoy what we present and the experiences we provide. We would espouse that teachers should be fearless in their selections of student activities/experiences/opportunities, and confident that even when a student may not jump for joy at an experience, there is still an opportunity for learning.

Recommendations

Even though we were able to learn something about this particular group of students in this class, there is more work to be done and more to learn. First recommendations for further practice followed by recommendations for future research are shared here.

Further Practices

- Instructors should utilize an interactive class design, with focused time for content delivery, and separate time for hands-on experiences to reinforce what is discussed during lectures, and reflection time to apply content to real world situations. That expectation should be spelled out clearly at the outset of each course day so that students develop an application mind set at the beginning of the course that will carry through an entire semester.
- Instructors should evaluate what types of activities work well for their class content and then provide a variety of those types of activities while reinforcing real world application. Evaluations can and should be both formal and informal to give a variety of different kinds of feedback. Each class of students should be looked at individually as what works for one group of students may not work for another.
- In accordance with Rosch and Anthony (2012), instructors should prepare lessons for a diverse audience, with a variety of life experience, in order to relate to different types of students. However, we would add that whole student individual differences should always be honored, it is important to take heed to always provide the clear expectation of application to life outside the classroom for each and every student.

Future Research

- Study other types of classes that are designed and delivered similarly (lecture day and experience day) to deepen the understanding of this format of delivery and how it fits into the larger leadership pedagogy.
- Study the same [CLASS] class over the course of several semesters to discover if there is a pattern to the way students understand and utilize organizational behavioral concepts and see the application to “real life” situations.
- Apply similar interactive teaching methods to both large and small sized classes to discover if there is a difference in learning or application of materials based on class attendance.
- Use Conger’s (1992) four approaches to leadership development as framework for studying skill development and application in different courses.

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