

MGMT 4813: TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN A CAPSTONE COURSE

A POSTER PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

I briefly outline the objective, motivation, and achievements of my multistage efforts to redesign the capstone course, Strategic Management, MGMT 4813.

Objective

The primary objective of redesigning the capstone course is to provide students with a transformative learning experience through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. The redesigned course will hopefully contribute towards refocusing the curriculum's emphasis on training students to develop skill-sets for creativity-oriented jobs. The evolution of the US economy into a globally integrated knowledge-intensive economy has drastically altered the skill-sets required of its workforce increasingly being referred to as knowledge-workers. The redesigned capstone course will therefore provide substantial complementary benefit to the educational efforts at the College of Business, University of Central Oklahoma.

Motivation

My course redesign efforts are primarily motivated by my [subconscious] theory of instruction. This theory is underpinned by both elements of the transformative teacher-scholar model: pedagogical expertise and disciplinary knowledge. The pedagogical element of the teacher-scholar model, which underpins my [subconscious] theory of instruction, influences me to design and teach my courses in such a way that my students evolve into tomorrow's discerning consumers of strategy theories. My course design draws on the two approaches proposed by Christensen and Carlile (2009) to provide students with two types of hands-on experience with theories: (a) Inductive course architecture, and (b) Deductive course architecture. On the other hand, the scholarship element influences me to design my courses in such a way that my teaching supports my research instead of detracting from the same. I borrow Christensen and Carlile's (2009) idea of "course researchers" to explain how students' participation in term-projects serves as potential source of support for faculty research. For instance, my efforts to guide the students to complete their 'strategic analysis project' provide me with very valuable insights into various corporate phenomena. I often employ the knowledge of such phenomena to develop discipline-based knowledge, which in turn undergirds my ability to engage my students in transformative learning. My [subconscious] theory of instruction borrows quite a few foundational assumptions and propositions from extant prescriptive theories of strategy instruction (e.g., Bower, 2008; Grant, 2008). However, I have also developed a few other assumptions and propositions over the last several years as I taught strategic management to undergraduate and graduate students. I hope the continuous feedback from my own learning while teaching strategy will eventually result in its evolution into a much-needed descriptive theory of instructing strategy (e.g., Greiner, Bhambri, and Cummings, 2003). I expect that such a descriptive theory of instruction will guide strategy instructors in designing and teaching a range of highly effective strategy related courses. These include such courses as competitive Strategy, Corporate strategy, Global/ International Strategy, Technology Strategy, Innovation Strategy, Turnaround Strategy, Corporate Growth, and so on.

Progress

The first stage, which has already been implemented, resulted in the conversion of MGMT 4813 into an innovative, case- and project-based capstone course. The course now provides students with two types of hands-on experience with business theories. First, the inductive course architecture involves students in the process of theory building. For instance, students engage in a semester-long team-based “Strategic Analysis Project”, wherein they identify a firm-specific phenomenon that they would be interested to explore. Having identified a phenomenon, they proceed to formulate the strategic problem, collect data, conduct analysis, and develop unique constructs to explain the phenomenon. Second, the deductive course architecture involves students in the process of theory improvement. We use a number of cases in the course. Each case matches a theory in the textbook. The students are required to use a relevant theoretical framework to analyze the case and recommend managerial actions that would lead to desired outcomes. The proposed managerial action(s) were to solve an underlying strategic problem, which the students were required to identify prior to analyzing the case. While one student group presents the case, the instructors and the rest of the class challenge (a) the application of the framework, and (b) the managerial actions recommended by the group. The basis of the challenge is supposedly an anomaly or two that the rest of the class [and the instructors] are required to identify.

Future Work

The second and third stages requires me to create mechanisms for voluntary (and interdisciplinary) transformative learning opportunities for students who have already taken the capstone course. In the second stage the redesigned course will provide the basis for various transformative learning experiences by integrating extra-curricular activities into the learning process. In the third stage the redesigned course will hopefully match the interested graduates of this course students with academic internship programs in the private sector.

SELECT REFERENCES

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