Ensuring student buy-in for pre-learning in Flipped or Team-Based Learning classes

Abstract

Experience for yourself how to get student buy-in and engagement with teaching methods that expect students to pre-learn materials before a classroom session. In this interactive session, you are taken through the first session of a course that comprises exercises to help students identify for themselves their learning responsibilities and learning contracts. This session engages students in entrepreneurship courses, and gets effective student buy-in to a pre-learning teaching method – in this case, Team-Based Learning.

Rationale for this workshop

"Flipped learning" is becoming increasingly popular as a teaching method across a range of disciplines. It shares similarities with Team-Based Learning (TBL); both are forms of active learning, where students "do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing", and where core elements are "student activity and engagement in the learning process" (Prince 2004, p.223). These are also student-centred learning approaches that lead to a deeper approach to learning by students (Marton & Säljö 1997). Both methods require students to pre-learn course materials before classroom sessions during which course content is developed and applied through a range of individual and team activities. (The main difference is that TBL provides a useable framework for in-class learning activities.)

Student "buy-in" and engagement is important, as students often experience a "culture shock" when they have only experienced traditional lecture delivery, and do not expect to be asked to work with material that has not been already presented in lectures.

The literature does not provide structured guidelines on approaches for educators to obtain student buy-in and engagement with either of these methods (that contrast with student expectations and experience of lecture-only course delivery). Also, problems experienced by students with these teaching methods are addressed only in a cursory manner in the literature.

The presenter has written a paper describing this workshop. It presents a structured framework for starting a pre-learning class. The framework is anchored in good educational theory and practice, and provides an approach that addresses documented difficulties and problems experienced by students. This paper is currently "awaiting reviewer invitation", after completing two rounds of "revise and resubmit".

Workshop overview

This is a highly interactive workshop. Participants play the role of students, and are taken through a structured sequence of exercises used in the first preparatory session of an entrepreneurship course to get student buy-in for a teaching approach where they pre-learn materials for application or development in classroom sessions. This approach is effective for "Flipped Learning" or for Team-Based Learning (as both require students to pre-learn course material before a classroom session).

The preparatory session starts with a simple yet purposeful activity that forms participants into teams and carry out an exercise that gives them insights into the range of learning motivations and expectations in the class. This is important information for course development and delivery and for setting and managing student expectations.

In this session, students then carry out an exercise to identify learning priorities (content learning, applications learning, metacognition). This allows students to identify which aspects of learning they can effectively carry out themselves outside the classroom,

and to understand the purpose of pre-learning and the complementary role of classroom learning. This helps to create an active-learning environment.

The next exercise involves students identifying critical success factors for themselves, for their teams, and for the lecturer. Students identify their own learning obligations and learning contracts, as well as the mutual learning obligations of teams and the lecturer. This exercise reveals the learning contract in the students' own words, and helps to create a learner-centred environment.

Finally, students carry out a reflective activity on each of these exercises that helps them understand the learning process in this first classroom session. This exercise helps to make explicit the key aspects of the teaching method, and gives students an insight into important aspects of learning. It prepares them for the remainder of the course.

The workshop concludes with a summary of research findings drawn from the use of this session with undergraduate entrepreneurship students. Grounded research analysed using concept mapping provides a picture of course/subject buy-in as perceived by students. This shows student engagement and the very positive impact of this first class session.

Workshop deliverables

Workshop participants experience for themselves how to manage student transition from lecture-based to teaching methods that expect students to pre-learn material before teaching sessions. In particular, they experience novel processes for identifying student learning motivations and expectations, student perceptions of learning, and student perceptions of critical success factors in their studies. Participants are given access to a website that includes an "implementation kit" that includes:

- A PowerPoint presentation that they can use to start their own class

- A pre-publication copy of the presenter's *Education+ Training* paper describing and explaining this session.

The presenter

The presenter has conducted this workshop several times at universities in Australia. He has been invited to conduct this workshop at two separate Team-Based Learning Collaborative Annual Conferences (US), and at a recent International Entrepreneurship Educators Conference (UK).

As a result of these presentations, more than 70 "implementation kits" have been sent to educators in UK, US, Middle East, Russia, Canada and Australia. Fields of study included anthropology, entrepreneurship, marketing, tourism & hospitality and health management. The presenter is providing support and additional advice to a number of these educators.

Feedback from participants who attended this workshop at a recent International Entrepreneurship Educators Conference (UK) included:

"Interactive, educative

Great information

Have a better idea how it works

Can see application

Good interaction

Wanted more – longer session!

Good to know [the presenter] can also be of help

Enthusiasm

Very charismatic (presentation)"

References

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Prince, M 2004, 'Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research', *Journal of Engineering Education*, vol. 93, no. 3, pp. 223-231.