



Intervention for stimulating creativity and facilitating learning through group work

Harjot Singh

Associate Professor, LM Thapar School of Management, Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology, Patiala, India

Email: harjot.singh@thapar.edu

doi: [10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si4.1175](https://doi.org/10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si4.1175)

Abstract: The paper describes an intervention related to outcome-based education. The intervention was carried out as part of 'New Directions' program conducted jointly by Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology, India, and the Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL), Trinity College, Dublin. It was carried out in a course entitled 'Marketing Management' taught to the first-year students of the MBA program. The intervention had three objectives, namely, stimulation of creative instincts, facilitation of group work, and familiarity with the concept of peer assessment. The students participated in a group-based class activity. Each group was required to make a presentation to depict its philosophy (what the group stood for) and the mission (what the group intended to achieve in the two years of the MBA program) through brand elements like a brand name, a logo, a tagline, and a jingle. The groups were ranked on the basis of peer assessment.

Keywords: Assessment, Activity, Intervention, Outcome-based education, group work, creativity, peer assessment

1. Introduction

Outcome-based education (OBE) is a widely prevalent approach which is used across the world to impart, assess and improve the teaching pedagogy. OBE is expected to be implemented at various levels, including the level of the course, the program and the institution. (Martin et al.,1998). Accreditation agencies require that the institutions which apply for accreditation must have an OBE framework in place (Bush and Sjolander, 1996).

OBE means that some specific goals or outcomes are articulated while designing the curriculum or while preparing the teaching and assessment plan for a course. It is a requirement that the desired outcomes should be measurable. Only the outcomes which can be measured should be considered. The outcomes which may be difficult to measure or are not measurable should be excluded. The achievement of learning outcomes is measured against certain standards. (Martin et al.,1998).

OBE has the greatest impact at the level of a course. The desired outcomes for a course, or the Course Learning Outcomes (CLO), as they are usually referred to, are the most important points which the student is expected to imbibe during the learning process in the course. The number of CLOs for a course is generally 3-5, typically 4. (Martin et al.,1998).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Group Work

People have a general tendency to work individually rather than to work in groups. Students do work in informal groups while performing co-curricular activities, but less so in formal classes. Social existence is shaped by coordinated human action within and between social groups (Simon et al.,2003). Group activity is found in all spheres of work, academic and social activities (Mishra and Sahgal, P, 2005).

Group activities are commonly used across various courses in the domain of management education (Houldsworth and Mathews, 2000). The activities are used for teaching and assessment even though various student groups may vary from each other in terms of the set of abilities possessed by the members of the group (Mishra and Sahgal, 2005).

The students are not routinely asked to discuss problems together with peers (Cartright et al., 2005). Group-based learning is a student-break between segments of a lecture and provides experiential learning (Nilson, 2010). Retention, after a duration of 24 hours, is more than 7 times in case of 'practice by doing' as compared to 'lecture' method (Sousa, 2001). A common challenge for the faculty is the assessment of individual contribution to group work (Brown et al., 1994; Mello, 1993).

2.2 Creativity

Bilton (2007) contends that creativity enables a professional to act on opportunities resulting in generating competitive advantage for an organization. Creativity is a social phenomenon that relies on interaction among knowledgeable individuals (Dunbar, 1995). Teaching based on creativity is expected to result in greater engagement of students.

2.3 Peer Assessment

Peer assessment makes the students 'assessment literate' and ensures that students have the opportunity to practice that assessment (Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet, 2007). As peer evaluation is conducted in academia, the industry also uses multisource assessment practices (Conway et al., 2001; Drexler et al., 2001).

3. Objectives of the Intervention

The objectives of the intervention were as follows:

- To stimulate creative instincts of the students
- To facilitate group interaction and motivate students to work in groups
- To make students familiar with peer assessment

4. Methodology: Description of the Intervention

An intervention was carried out in the year 2016, in one of the classes, as a part of a program called the 'New Directions' program, conducted jointly by Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology and the Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL), Trinity College, Dublin. It was carried out in a course entitled 'Marketing Management' taught to the first-year students of the MBA program run by LM Thapar School of Management, Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology. It was executed in one section of the first-year students.

The intervention had three objectives, namely, stimulation of creative instincts, facilitation of group work, and familiarity with the concept of peer assessment. Another objective was to expose the students to a fresh pedagogical technique in the form of a class activity.

The intervention was planned to reinforce the learning of previous class sessions on the topic of branding through a group activity which would encourage the students to discover their own creativity and be exposed to the creative instincts of other students in the class. The title of the intervention, as communicated to the students, was a 'Branding Contest' between the groups of students.

The section of 56 students was divided into 14 groups of 4 students each for a class activity. The students were given the liberty to form the groups on their own. A purpose of the activity was to make the students learn to work in groups well before they entered professional work situations. Each group was required to represent its philosophy (what the group stood for) and the mission (what the group intended to achieve in

the two years of the MBA program) through a brand name, a logo, a tagline and a jingle. The students were asked to sing the jingle against the backdrop of music which they could play.

Each group was required to make a presentation, in the PowerPoint format, representing the brand elements of the brand name which they had to choose to represent the group. The presentation was required to consist of the following 4 sides:

- 1) A brand name of the group and reason(s) of selecting the brand name
- 2) A logo and a tagline representing the group philosophy and what it stood for
- 3) A jingle representing the group philosophy and its mission, which they also had to sing against the backdrop of music played by them
- 4) The mission of the group and what the students intended to achieve in the two years MBA program

In the process, the students also got introduced to the concept of peer assessment as they were required to assess all groups, including their own. It helped the students learn to assess themselves and other groups in a fair, impartial and objective way.

5. Discussion: Results and Feedback

The duration of the intervention was 1 hour and 30 minutes approximately, including generic and specific feedback to students on their efforts and performance. The preparation time of each group for the class activity was approximately 3-4 hours, as per informal feedback received from them.

The objective of stimulation of creativity in the students was achieved by encouraging the students to coin distinctive brand names, logos and punch-lines and by motivating them to sing self-created jingles.

The groups were ranked on the basis of the peer assessment. Each group evaluated the presentation of all 14 groups, including that of their own group on two parameters, namely, creativity and impact. Each of the two parameters carried 10 marks, resulting in a total of 20 marks. The evaluations of 14 groups thus added to a total evaluation of 280 marks for each group.

The group which ranked first scored 244 marks, while the groups ranking second and third got 225.5 and 222 marks respectively. Since the activity was a contest between the students, all the students belonging to the three groups ranked first, second and third were given encouragement through token prizes. After the intervention, feedback was given to the students about their efforts and performance. Specific feedback was also collected from the students regarding the beneficial effects of the activity.

1) Feedback to the students:

Specific feedback was given to each group about the positive points and improvement areas.

2) Feedback from the students:

The feedback from the students was collected informally as well as through formal means.

- a) Informal feedback: Some students were randomly asked about the way they prepared for the intervention, their learnings and usefulness of group dynamics, reflections of their own work and learning from seeing the work of other groups.
- b) Formal feedback: It was collected from the students by means of a google form, asking them to fill in the responses, to the following five statements, on a 5-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree; 5-strongly agree; 2,3 and 4 are in between in terms of agreement).
 1. I have learnt that working in groups is interesting and useful.
 2. I, as part of a group, have learnt to assess our own group as well as other groups.
 3. I feel good to have created an output for branding our group.

4. It gave me a fresh and different experience in the class.
5. I enjoyed the group activity.

6. Reflections, Conclusions and Implications

It was observed that students learnt from each other in addition to what they gathered from the books and from the teacher or the facilitator. Also, when they interacted and worked in a group, they picked up fine threads related to group dynamics and also gathered various ways to coordinate different activities.

One of the biggest challenges faced was the motivation of students to make their best efforts since the evaluation of the activity was not a part of the formal evaluation of the course. This challenge was met by positioning the activity as a contest having prizes. Another challenge faced was that some of the students were hesitant to participate actively in the group activity for some or the other reason. To encourage and engage the hesitant students, this intervention was positioned as an inter-group contest which carried prizes for the three best performing groups.

An attempt was made to involve all the students in the class in the activity. All the students were present in the scheduled session and all of them participated in the activity. The students were actively engaged because it gave them an opportunity to stimulate their creative buds, to play music and to sing the self-composed jingles. Student involvement and enthusiasm was clearly palpable during the moments when they were singing the creatively written jingles. They also came up with very distinctive brand names, explaining the rationale of having chosen the brand name and other brand elements like the logo and the tagline.

The activity also presented an opportunity to the facilitator and the students try out the tool of peer assessment. This tool enthused confidence in the students that they could evaluate the work of their groups as well as that of other groups.

The students expressed joy at having been actively engaged in an activity which was different, fresh and creative. The initiative proved to be very interesting for the facilitator too who felt very nice by playing a role in stimulating the creative instincts of students and by making them excel without a formal evaluation mechanism.

53 out of 56 students filled the form for the formal feedback. The mean scores of the responses of the students to the five statements were calculated as 4.40, 4.13, 4.40, 4.55 and 4.43 respectively. This implied that most of the students strongly agreed or at least agreed to each of the five statements. The students agreed the most to the statement 'it gave them a fresh and different experience in the class'. It was followed by the statements 'I enjoyed the group activity', 'I feel good to have created an output for branding our group', and 'I have learnt that working in groups is useful and interesting', in that order.

7. Limitations and Recommendations

A limitation of this intervention was that it was carried out only in one section of only one course of the first year of the MBA program. Possible improvement areas in such interventions could include giving more preparation time to students and collecting feedback on the spot in the class rather than collecting it later.

In courses across different programs, it is recommended that the students are exposed to various activities through which creative instincts of the students are enhanced. It is also recommended that the students are encouraged to work in groups in at least some of the evaluative and non-evaluative activities. Another recommendation is that the technique of peer evaluation is used wherever it is possible and implementable.

References

- Bilton, C., 2007, *Management and Creativity: From Creative Industries to Creative Management*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Brown, S., Rust, C. and Gibbs, G., 1994, *Strategies for diversifying assessment in higher education*, Oxford, England: Oxford Centre for Staff Development.
- Bush, Ronald F. and Sjolander, Richard J., 1996, Outcomes-based Education is here. Are you ready? *Marketing Educator*, 15(Spring), 1.
- Cartright, R.N., et al., 2005, *Adv. Physiol. Educ.* 29, 1007.
- Conway, J.M., Lombardo, K. and Sanders, K.C., 2001, A Meta Analysis of Incremental Validity and Nomological Networks for Subordinate and Peer Ratings, *Human Performance*, 14(4), 267-303.
- Drexler, J.A., Beehr, T.A. and Stetz, T.A., 2001, Peer Appraisals: Differentiation of Individual Performance on Group Tasks, *Human Resource Management*, 40(4). 333.
- Dunbar K., 1995, in *Mechanisms of Insight*, R.J. Sternberg, J. Davidson, Eds. (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA), 365-395.
- Gibbs, G and Dunbar-Goddet, H, 2007, *The effects of programme assessment environments on student learning*, York: Higher Education Academy.
- Houldsworth, C. and Mathews, B.P., 2000, Group composition, Performance and Educational Attainment, *Education + Training*. 42(1), 40-53.
- Martin, Gregory S., Kimball Bob and Bush, Ronald F., 1998, Evaluating the Success of Outcomes-Based Education at the Course Level: A Unique Application of the SOCO Scale in a 'Professional Selling' Course, *Marketing Education Review*, 8(2), 9-18.
- Mello, J., 1993, Improving Individual Member Accountability in Small Group Work Settings, *Journal of Management Education*. 17(2), 253-259.
- Mishra, Sumita and Sahgal, Punam, 2005, The Efficacy of Group Method in Management Education: A Case Study on Social Conformity, *Decision*, 32(2), 113-138.
- Nilson, L. B., 2010, *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Simon, B., Aufderheide, B. and Kampmeir, C., 2003, The social psychology of minority-majority relations. in R. Brown and S. Gaertner (Eds), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Inter group processes*, 303-324. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Company.
- Sousa, D.A., 2001, *How the brain learns: A classroom teacher's guide* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.