



Using the World Café Approach for Class Discussion Participation and Engagement

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Abstract

The selection of suitable pedagogical tools can make a significant difference in student engagement and learning performance. The World Café is an intentional way to create a living network of conversations around questions that matter. It is a creative methodology for hosting authentic discussions in groups of all sizes. The World Café technique has been used in various settings, including both graduate and undergraduate classrooms. Its classroom use has proven to be a robust pedagogical tool for active learning, including class discussion, participation, and student engagement. In this proposal, we will demonstrate the World Café classroom approach and how instructors can facilitate the process.

Keywords: Active Learning, Participation, Student Engagement, World Café

Introduction. *Provide a brief introduction that establishes a need for this type of exercise and identifies the target usage. Include potential course applications and explain for whom the exercise is designed: early undergraduate, late undergraduate, graduate, etc.; traditional, non-traditional, cross-cultural, etc.).*

Keeping students engaged and involved in the classroom as active participants in class discussion week-in and week-out can be daunting. However, as student-centered learning is an up-and-coming trend and student-led classroom discussions are at the heart of it, we must continue to search for effective means of engagement. Of course, all student-led classroom discussions do not result in effective learning. That is, classroom discussion may range from terribly unproductive at times to extremely productive at others; it is not the number of times students are engaged in classroom discussions that determine productive learning, but the quality and approach that matters (Croninger, Li, Cameron, & Murphy, 2017). We propose the World Café approach to energize and shake up classroom discussions.

World Café is a participative process which allows participants to have creative and productive conversations while sitting cafe-style around small tables (Brown, 2002). It is an easy to use method for creating consequential and mutual dialogue around questions and issues of importance. “As an organizational or social design process, the World Café offers a practical way to enhance the human capacity for collaborative thought” (Schieffer, Isaacs, & Gyllenpalm, 2004). The World Café process was created in response to the worldwide interest in dialogue methodologies suitable for organizations and communities (Brown, Isaacs, Margulies, & Warhaftig, 1999). It has the potential of facilitating the transformation of dynamic conversations and unlocking new potential for action if it is appropriately used (Schieffer et al., 2004).

As a pedagogical tool, the World Café’ can be used in any class where you need all students to participate. The exercise is designed for all categories of students including early

undergraduate, late undergraduate, graduate, etc.; traditional, non-traditional, cross-cultural, executive education, etc.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications. *Briefly specify the relevant background literature that the exercise is based upon and how your session contributes to effective teaching and learning in the field of management.*

There are many techniques for student engagement from which to choose as an instructor, such as lectures, group projects, in-class exercises, student journals, instructor-led discussions, student-led discussions, computer simulations. These pedagogical activities can be grouped under two broad classification - passive learning or active learning (Hamer, 2000). And, while there is an abundance of literature expounding the advantages of active learning, traditionally, passive learning has been the predominant approach to instruction. This is because lecture, the traditional instructional format of college and university educators, promotes passive learning. Students often push back at our request to put down their electronic handheld devices, arguing that they are taking notes. This is because learning occurs while students passively listen to and take notes on a lecture without application of the lesson, or active learning. However, this traditional lecture-only format is losing its prevalence in the classroom, as it is replaced with mixed delivery methods which utilize group discussion, dyadic work, and peer review, to name a few, all of which minimize passive learning (Rocca, 2010). In-class participation and student-led discussion have become increasingly important with the current student population who demand more interaction from their classroom experience (Rocca, 2010).

The World Café is an active-learning approach, which helps reinforce the content while also developing specific skills such as using reflection, summarization and reporting to understand different topics. The World Café is an approach that creates a sense of community engagement in the classroom that encourages students to engage in reflection and dialogue in a

relaxed and comfortable atmosphere (Estacio & Karic, 2016). In essence, World Café creates a platform that helps students value respect for diversity of perspectives and cross-fertilization of ideas.

Learning Objectives. *Specify the learning objectives for the exercise by articulating the expected changes in knowledge, attitude, or skill that are associated with participation in the activity. What teaching topics are relevant to your session?*

1. Student engagement and classroom participation

“Despite the high value placed on oral participation, about 20% of students account for about 80% of participation” (Frymier & Houser, 2016, p.84). This exercise is aimed at equipping instructors and teachers with a tool to flip this percentage and be able to facilitate classes where students fully participate. The sessions are powerful experiences for the participants and enable a professor to re-create the competencies of listening and critical thinking in a large class that is usually only capable of expression within a smaller class (Hornett, 2007).

2. Knowledge creation through collective intelligence

World Café adapts very well to the classroom situation and can readily be modified from dialogue around a societal or community issue to a shared experience such as a movie (Hornett, 2007) providing the co-creation of knowledge, by harnessing the collective intelligence of students. Collective Intelligence has been defined as a group of individuals doing things collectively that seem intelligent (Secundo, Dumay, Schiuma, & Passiante, 2016).

3. How to get Extroverts, Introverts, and Ambiverts to be on the same wavelength in a cordial classroom discussion

It is universally acknowledged that not all students feel comfortable speaking openly in class. Even in online groups’ discussions, for example, the perspectives of some students may become marginalized because of their communication style. The World Café method, in contrast,

recognizes differences in people's preferences regarding how they like to express their views and opinions (Estacio & Karic, 2016).

Exercise Overview. *Provide an overview of the activity/exercise, including the logistics of running the exercise (e.g., timing, materials, class size), the flow of the exercise, variations or alternate applications, debriefing guidelines (e.g., questions to ask, how students generally respond). The goal is to give the reviewer enough information so that they understand what the activity is that you plan to present in your session.*

World Café Process. There are multiple ways to conduct a successful and effective world café, and different researchers and organizations have adapted it to suit their purposes. There are, however, seven core design principles that have proven their value over the past years and are normally expected if the process is to be classified as a World Café approach (Brown, 2002; Schieffer et al., 2004).

1. Clarify the context;
2. Create a hospitable environment;
3. Explore questions that matter;
4. Encourage everyone's contribution;
5. Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives;
6. Listen together for pattern, insights and deeper questions;
7. Harvest and share collective discoveries.

The classroom preference for this activity is the type with movable chairs and tables. Experiences of practitioners who have used the world café in their classroom indicate a classroom with portable chairs as the most suitable; an issue which undoubtedly has been extensively discussed in education in general (Yawson, 2014). This exercise requires a minimum of 50 minutes of class time. We are, therefore, requesting a 60-minutes time allocation for this exercise. Notepads, pens, and flip charts will be provided by us (the facilitators). Every

participant in the room will be involved in the exercise. Questions and facilitation is described in the next section

Session Description. *Provide an overview of what you will actually do in the MOBTS conference session. Include a timeline for the session and how participants will be involved. Remember, reviewers are looking for participant engagement in these sessions.*

Session World Café Process. In this proposed session, the World Café process will adhere to all the seven design principles.

We will briefly explain the core philosophy of World Café, and the seven design principles. Then, four broad categories of questions, corresponding to café tables will be created and each table labeled according to the issue to be discussed on that table as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Discussion topics at the tables.

Table	Focus	Questions
1	What does student-led classroom discussion mean to you?	Have you used any student-led classroom discussion approach in your classroom? How beneficial has it been?
		Do you think student-led classroom discussion is an effective pedagogical practice? How?
2	Challenges associated with classroom discussion participation	What issues do you face when it comes to engaging your students in class – both onground and online?
		Are there any issues related to student-led classroom discussion that you think are specific to your university?
3	Solutions to issues and ideas to promote effective class discussion participation	How can we address some of the challenges related to student class discussion participation
		Do you know of any examples of good practices in relation to effective class discussion participation?
		Do you have any ideas or strategies to promote active learning in the online classroom?
4	Open discussion table	There will be no set questions on this table. Participants will be asked to talk freely about anything to do with class discussions and student engagement

Participants would be asked to join a café table at the start voluntarily. Each table will have a minimum of 4 people and a maximum depending on the number of participants present. Each table will select a chairperson and a rapporteur. Individuals at the table will spend approximately 8 minutes discussing the table's question, and then the chairperson and participants will be asked to move on (individually) to a different café table. The nominated rapporteur will remain at the café table for the whole time, whereas other participants move around. This rotation of participants continues until all participants have moved to and reflected on each of the four discussion questions.

As each new set of participants approach the table, the rapporteur offers the results of their 'predecessors,' as a starting point. Participants will then discuss the 'new' topic, selecting a chairperson to guide the discussion. After four iterations of movements (e.g., all questions have been discussed by all participants, approximately 32 minutes), the rapporteurs on each table will then present the summaries of the discussions at each of the various tables (12 minutes). The final 8 minutes will be used for a general classroom summary discussion of other ways to use World Café for case discussions, or other topical discussions. The summaries and flip charts of raw data and will be collected, summarized and shared with participants later through email.

Table 2: Timetable for Exercise

Timetable	Topic
3 minutes	Brief Overview of World Café, 7 principles
8 minutes	Discussion Round 1
8 Minutes	Discussion Round 2
8 minutes	Discussion Round 3
8 Minutes	Discussion Round 4
12 minutes	Summary of Table Discussions
8 minutes	World Café Debrief

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