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Title: *An Experiential Digital Global Engagement (EDGE) Exercise*

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Abstract

This interactive session explores the ways we use internet-based communication tools to cultivate global aptitude in our students. Sophisticated web conferencing and learning management systems enable students to access technologically facilitated global learning. Creatively collaborating with partnered institutions across the world through technology, I design a high-impact experiential learning environment for students, engaging them in internationalization while recognizing and respecting their local contexts. Students are involved in conducting joint assignments that engage them in real life global work environments and challenges. I invite faculty at all levels to join us in this conversation.

Keywords: Experiential, Digital, Global

An Experiential Digital Global Engagement (EDGE) Exercise

Introduction

In global economy, students need to be equipped with the understanding, skills, and values needed to cooperate in the cross-cultural context. However, students are not actively engaged in experiencing the global issues such as cultural differences and internalizing relevant skills through traditional pedagogies (de Andreotti 2014; McCall 2002). Using internet-based communication tools, students can jointly complete exercises and projects with peers at partnered universities abroad. They can learn to collaborate and contribute in a geographically diversified team. Consequently I design these joint assignments in the way that students can leverage and share their cultural background to provide a powerful and meaningful understanding of global issues and cross-cultural communications.

The exercise presented in this paper can be used in the undergraduate or graduate business classroom in a very real, dynamic and impactful way in a variety of delivery modes including face-to-face, hybrid and fully remote. This experiential exercise was designed to partner undergraduate or graduate students with their peers at foreign institutions in multiple joint assignments. One of these assignments is on cross-cultural communication, which engages students meaningfully and deeply with peers in a different culture for the aim of raising students' awareness of cultural differences and broadening their understanding of diverse perspectives. Both domestic students and their counterparts in foreign institutions benefit from sharing their perspectives and experiences in their home countries. This design can be replicated in other course and programs at other higher education institutions to internationalize their curricula.

Theoretical Foundation and Teaching Implications

The ability to work effectively in the cross-cultural context has become

increasingly important with increasing globalization, workforce mobility, and international assignments (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Joy & Poonamallee, 2013). Cultural intelligence (CQ) training helps employees to increase their competencies in cross-cultural management (Ramsey & Lorenz 2016) because CQ is "the capability of an individual to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008). Educational programs that enhance intercultural competencies can prepare students to succeed in the global workplace (Mosakowski et al., 2013); however, cross-cultural training programs through traditional pedagogies proves inadequate (Earley & Peterson, 2004) because they rarely help students to develop and practice the capability of processing information during and after a culturally diverse experience. An Experiential Digital Global Engagement (EDGE) exercise attempts to address this challenge by providing a high-impact experiential learning environment for students.

The Experiential Digital Global Engagement (EDGE) learning was based on the State University of New York (SUNY) Collaborative Online International learning (COIL) model (American Council on Education, 2016). In this model, instructors in two or more countries collaborate in designing their course syllabi and joint assignments for students in each class to complete using sophisticated web conferencing and other internet-based communication tools. The COIL method connects classrooms across the globe and can be applied to many courses such as international management, communications, information technology, project management, etc. No particular type of technology is required in using the COIL method. It is "a new teaching and learning paradigm that develops intercultural

awareness and competence across shared multi-cultural online learning environments"
(State University of New York Center for Collaborative Online International Learning
2015).

Learning Objectives

- Develop knowledge in cultural dimensions and their impact on cross-cultural interactions in the context of international business operations.

- Develop skills in cross cultural communication through directly engaging with foreign peers to build rapport and deepen understanding of diverse perspectives.

- Develop your own view on international business and global strategy and generate your own solutions to cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Exercise Overview

Pre-Work for Cultural Interactions Exercise:

I established the partnership with an instructor at a foreign institution before the start of the semester. We identified the corresponding courses for the joint assignments and exchanged their course syllabi. Constant interactions were needed to design the details of assignments together. Each student was paired with a peer in the partnered class and assigned to individually read the assignment instruction and make the initial contact with the partner student.

To equip students with knowledge about cross-cultural differences, I spent at least four class sessions on cultural dimensions – individualism vs. collectivism; universalism vs. particularism; specific vs. diffuse; affective vs. neutral; and achievement-oriented vs. ascription-oriented (Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars 2012). At the start of every class session, I asked students to respond to a few real-life situations and making a choice

based on their own cultures. Then I explained cultural dimensions on the basis of their responses. These situational questions actually provide opportunities for students to experience cultural shocks. Three sample questions are attached below for the illustration purpose.

1. Two people were discussing ways in which individuals could improve the quality of life. Which of the two ways of reasoning do you think is usually best?

A. One said: "It is obvious that if individuals have as much freedom as possible and the maximum opportunity to develop themselves, the quality of their lives will improve as a result."

B. The other said: "If individuals are continuously taking care of their fellow human beings, the quality of life will improve for everyone, even if it obstructs individual freedom and individual development."

2. A defect is an installation. It was caused by negligence of one of the members of a team. Responsibility for this mistake can be carried in various ways. Which one of these two ways of taking responsibility do you think is usually the case in your society, A or B?

A. The person causing the defect by negligence is the one responsible.

B. Because he or she happens to work in a team, the responsibility should be carried by the group.

3. A boss asks a subordinate to help him paint his house. The subordinate, who does not feel like doing it, discusses the situation with a colleague. Which one do you think is true in your culture?

A. The colleague argues: "You don't have to paint if you don't feel like it. He is your

boss at work. Outside, he has little authority."

B. The subordinate argues: "Despite the fact that I don't feel like it, I will paint it. He is my boss and you can't ignore that outside work either."

Cultural Interactions Exercise:

In this exercise, students were required to interview their peers at the partnered foreign institution, to understand their cultural values and assumptions. A list of questions were provided (see Appendix A), but they are intended just as guidelines. They may ask whatever questions appropriate to their learning (75 minutes).

Students used a variety of internet-based communication tools for the interviews, including Whatsapp, Skype, Outlook, etc. They prepared the interview reports using the following format:

1. Provide the person's name and national background and the date of the interview

2. Describe your experience of the interview, e.g., what attracted your attention, how you felt asking the questions, interactions that were interesting

3. Note the questions asked and their answers

4. Describe three types of learning that resulted from the interview:

    a. What you learned about another culture

    b. What you learned about yourself as an individual and/or manager

    c. How your learning reinforces one principle of international business operations studied in this class

Following the interview, the students were organized into small groups to share their reports. The group discussions were facilitated by the instructor, so that students were encouraged to apply cultural dimensions to the interactions during the interviews. In the end,

groups reported the insights from their discussions to the entire class (75 minutes).

Session Description

The MOBTC session will engage participants in a robust discussion of the exercise, its relevance, and replicability. Using a classroom-style approach, I will introduce the exercise and organize the discussion of cross-cultural interactions in the context of using internet-based communication tools. Using a variety of visual media, I will describe the process (including the pre-work and interviews) and address the lessons learned and future steps/implications. I will use role play to actively engage MOBTC participants in the learning experience, and discuss innovative ways that participants can use this exercise in their own classes.

- Introduction of the exercise and pedagogy (10 minutes)
- Creative role play (10 minutes)
- Discuss implications and application for participants (10 minutes)

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Appendix A: Cultural Interactions - Sample Interview Questions

Sample questions for the interview are listed below. You don't need to ask all of these questions, and please feel free to ask whatever questions appropriate to your learning.

• Tell me a little bit about your country and your national background and culture.

• What do you believe to be the values in your culture? (What is valued in your culture?)

• What do you know about the U.S.? Have you ever come to the U.S.? How many American friends do you have?

• Have you ever handled any conflict with someone from a different culture? How did you do it? Frustration? Stress?

• Describe an unforgettable situation and something you gained from the experience.

• What are your previous international experiences? What have you found most interesting/difficult about these experiences?

• How did you learn English? How comfortable do you feel about interacting in a foreign language?

• Describe a situation where you have encountered difficulty in interacting with an American or anybody else from a different culture. How did you deal with this?