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Research and innovation in teaching and learning are prime topics for the *Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning* (ISSN 1550-6908). The Journal was initiated in January 2004 to facilitate communication and collaboration among researchers, innovators, practitioners, and administrators of education and training involving innovative technologies and/or distance learning.

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Editorial

Obsolescence

Donald G. Perrin

There is a big difference between historic, antique, and obsolete. All relate to the past, but assign different values and distinct roles they play, or used to play, in teaching and learning. As we look at our traditional systems of education, we can assign one or more of these terms to many aspects of learning: environments, theory, practice, research and teacher training. In looking toward the future, we may relegate even more of our infrastructure and methods to the past.

Then what is the future for education? What are the agents of change that influence the world around us? At what point will those influences affect the way we teach and the way we learn?

The most powerful change agent in the history of mankind is technology. It began when we learned how to create fire, invent the wheel, create pottery, plant and irrigate crops, and forge tools. We studied the heavens and measured time. We built roads, railways, canals, ships, automobiles, airplanes, and spaceships. We created spears, swords, guns, and weapons of mass destruction. We built trade, cities, systems of government, financial empires, and electronic communications. We also learned how to destroy them.

Other than technology, innovations, and paradigm shifts, major drivers of change include famines, pestilence, disease, natural disasters and manmade influences such as wars, revolutions and social, economic, and political changes.

Tribal methods of education persist and continue to lag behind societal changes. Improved learning theories and practices have highlighted individual differences and some schools have adopted Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). With the possible exception of computers, attempts at technological innovation have not been sustainable without additional funding. As a result, the "campfire" model dominates all levels of education and training. The greatest departure is in distance learning, where students must be self-reliant, computer literate, and assume responsibility for their own learning. The following tables list changes in the physical, social and technological aspects of learning:

OLD EDUCATION SYSTEM	CHANGES LAST 50 YEARS
Teacher with lecture and textbook , and occasional slides, audiotapes, motion pictures	videos, interactive multimedia, computers, tablet PC, smart phones
Focus on teaching Passive learner; External discipline	Focus on learning Active learner; intrinsic motivation
One-size fits all Emphasis on group learning/one-way communication	Customized learning opportunities for small group and individual learning interaction and feedback;
Whole class teaching lecture and discussion - abstract and verbal	Diagnostic-prescriptive learning: activity based; explore web; participate in blog and social media
Learning is a variable; instruction is a constant	Instruction is a variable; learning is a constant
Competitive Rote-learning, recitation and practice	Collaborative Exploration, creative and constructive participation
Fixed curriculum; Teacher control	Flexible curriculum; Learner responsibility
Emphasis on knowledge (Bloom levels I & II)	Focus on problem solving & higher levels of learning
Measure seat time; Grade on Bell Curve Predominantly multiple choice and short essay	Performance objectives/Criterion based/Rubrics Measure performance, activities and portfolios

TRADITIONAL LEARNING	DISTANCE LEARNING
Classroom based – must travel to attend Time and transportation cost; Brick & mortar cost	Anywhere, anytime link by computer virtual environment reduces cost
Fixed schedule determined by institution	Flexible schedule managed by learner
Fixed curriculum resources limited by physical access	Flexible curriculum. Diagnostic-prescriptive Hyperlinked global resources via the Internet
Curriculum and presentations slow and expensive to update	Dynamic updates to network databases based on research, data links, & learner responses
Registration, learning and evaluation managed by teachers, parents, and administrators	Learning Management Systems provide direct 24/7 access to all aspects of learning and support
Class size limited by facility	Class size and sections easily scalable

Add your own list of areas to reexamine to determine their relevance to education in the twenty first century.

Editor's Note: This detailed study shows a wide range of opportunities for cheating and offers suggestions to reduce the impact of cheating on learning and performance.

Technology-aided cheating in open and distance elearning: What else do we need to know?

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Philippines

Abstract

One of the major concerns in online teaching and learning in a distance education context is academic integrity. Technology has made it easy for learners to cheat. While there are efforts to address this concern based on what teachers know, it is also important to take a closer look at how learners do it based on their own narratives. An open ended questionnaire was distributed to the students of the University of the Philippines Open University enrolled in a Computer Ethics course at the graduate level during the First Semester of the 2011-2012 term. The course, including the final exam, is fully online. Fifty-two (52) students accomplished the questionnaire. Specific examples and cases are presented to validate student responses. Results of this study will hopefully contribute towards development of a Learning Assessment System more appropriate to an Open and Distance eLearning (ODeL) context.

Keywords: Ethics, academic dishonesty, cheating, online classroom, distance learning

Introduction

Academic dishonesty has been a major concern of many universities because it cuts through the heart of the pursuit of knowledge and the purpose of higher education (Lambert, 2003). Many researchers in various institutions of higher education and in various countries have studied this social phenomenon in detail (Whitley, 1988; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006). Even the universities in the Philippines are no exception to this campus epidemic as evidenced by perceptions of faculty members themselves (Pe-Symaco & Marcelo, 2003).

With the advent of Open and Distance e-Learning (ODeL) this moral issue has not waned but has found its ugly claws clutching on to this new alternative format for higher education. Open and Distance e-Learning in its academic and fully online form is new to Philippine higher education. Although there have been many recent studies about academic dishonesty in ODeL from abroad (Vilchez & Thirunarayanan, 2011; Black, Greaser, & Dawson, 2008; Dietz-Uhler & Hurn, 2011; Stuber-McEwen, Wisely, & Hoggatt, 2010), there is still a need to explore more about this phenomenon in this country today. It would be interesting to hear what graduate students themselves have to say about this issue.

This study explored certain student perceptions on academic dishonesty in an ODeL environments: (a) its prevalence, (b) the manner it is done, and (c) ways it can be prevented.

Method

This research aims to explore participant response to the topic of academic dishonesty or more simply, cheating in an ODeL context. Being explorative, the paper aims to provide more data for further research within this given situation and context through the results of the survey.

In researching academic dishonesty, surveys were the most common method used (Whitley, 1998). At the end of the first semester (2011-12 school year) of the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), fifty two (52) Master of Information Systems (MIS) graduate students of the Computer Ethics course (IS 201) were given three open ended survey questions to be answered comprehensively in an unstructured response format (text field) within their course site.

The Computer Ethics course (IS 201) was fully online to enable the students to gain an ODeL experience necessary for a more valid and reliable answer to the survey questions given them. The questions were included as part of their limitedly proctored final examinations. The student responses then generated qualitative data which would be quantified and interpreted in this paper. Snippets of selected individual students will also be presented to validate the general student response. These student posts (snippets) will be in italics and indented to simulate their format in the course board and to distinguish them from the main text.

Survey questions and results

Three open ended questions were given to the MIS graduate students. They were asked to answer these survey questions based on their research and readings, and their actual and vicarious experiences. Snippets and excerpts of student postings in the course board will be interspersed in the interpretation of results below.

Q1. Where do you think student cheating is more frequent, in a regular face-to-face classroom setting or in an online distance course?

The results of the answers of 52 students are as follows:

21 out of 52 which is 40.38% of the class are convinced that there is more cheating or more possibility of it happening in an online classroom.

16 out of 52 which is 30.76% of the class believe that cheating in a regular face-to-face classroom setting happen more often.

15 out of 52 which is 28.85% of the class are uncertain of whether the online or face-to-face classroom setting provides more opportunity for cheating.

Online Distance e-Learning classroom – 40.38% (21/52)

Those who answered this gave the following reasons:

> King, Guyette, and Piotrowski made an analysis of students' views on cheating. (King, 2009). Without using the word "cheat", students were asked about their opinion on the appropriateness of activities while taking an online exam. And after the result was deliberated, it turned out that about three-fourths of the respondents believe that it is easier to cheat in an online versus a traditional course. (Duque, 2011)

Those taking online courses have unlimited resources at their disposal compared to those in a brick and mortar situation. Thus the online class provides greater possibility for academic dishonesty rather than the traditional classroom.

> I believe cheating is more frequent in an online distance course because information is readily available and accessible. Once a student goes online, hundreds and hundreds of answers for assignments, quizzes, or tests can be acquired. (Soberano, 2011)

Then there is also greater tendency for those in online sessions to be less proctored. Since those taking classes online do not meet professors and students in an actual mode, there is less fear of consequences on those who would cheat or actually cheat. Being anonymous at times gives them that feeling of lesser probability of getting caught.

> Based on my researches, majority believe that academic dishonesty is prevalent in online distance learning than in traditional face-to-face classroom setting due to the fact that there is no direct contact between professor and students in the latter and this opens up more ways and possibilities to cheat… Of course, students cheat for a variety of reasons and everyone has his or her own reasons but if one has decided on cheating, he or she increases his chances in an online class. (Alcasid, 2011)

Traditional face-to-face classroom setting: 30.76% (16/52)

Those who answered this gave the following reasons:

> Based on a research study conducted by Donna Stuber-McEwen, Phillip Wiseley, and Susan Hoggatt (2010), faculty members of Friends University, out of 225 students, there were 39 students on ground who cheated and only 14 from online students. There were 138 online number of students and 47 on ground. (Pangan, 2011)

Cheating could either be panic cheating or planned cheating. Panic cheating occurs more in a traditional classroom setting and makes use of the available opportunity. This is more frequent rather than planned cheating. Hence more cheating is likely to occur in this traditional setting.

> Although online long distance courses provide better platform for cheating, research shows that students of online courses cheat less than the traditional classroom setting. The best reason, which I agree with, is that online students are far older and more mature than those who are in traditional classrooms. Traditional students engage in "panic" cheating especially to ease off the pressure of time and seeing other students finishing earlier than them. Online students' personalities and characteristics seem to classify them as students who would be less likely to cheat. They are more motivated. The motivation to learn and finish the course prevents them from cheating. (Perez, 2011)

In terms of numbers, another reason is that there are less people taking ODeL academic courses compared to those in the traditional ones here in this country. Thus there will be less cheating numerically in the formal ODeL classroom and more possibilities in the traditional schools. Another reason for academic dishonesty is the strong competition and high expectations of students to get a high grade. There is less of that in the ODeL setting since those taking this seem to show more maturity because of age. Those in the online classrooms are more in it for the validation of their learning related to their stable profession and jobs. Being younger, those in traditional settings are more prone to cheating to meet higher expectations and to lead the competition to secure themselves the best jobs in the market.

> Cheating is still more prevalent in a regular face-to-face classroom setting than in an online distance course. In fact, cheating in academic institutions even increased for the past three decades. I think this more of the peer pressure that is present in schools. Since students do see each other every day, there comes a great desire to be a greater student than the rest. It has also become more frequent because students are still finding better, even more creative ways to cheat. (Penaredondo, 2011)

Undecided/Uncertain – 28.85% (15/52)

Those who answered this gave the following reasons:

Many past studies are not really conclusive about where cheating is more prevalent. Certain pressures force students to act with dishonesty. And it is the presence of these pressures that will determine the frequency of cheating be it in a traditional or online classroom situation.

> The studies of Etter (2006), Harmon (2008) and Klein (2011) indicate that one's perception has a lot to do with how one chooses to behave (in this case, dictates whether the student chooses to cheat or not to cheat). Such perception remains consistent regardless of the learning environment. Rowe (2004) supports this claim too. (Oclarit, 2011)

Another reason is academic dishonesty is not dependent on the delivery of the course but rather more on the integrity of the students themselves.

> I don't think there is much difference in the frequency of cheating in a regular face-to-face classroom setting or in an online distance course. Though it is perceived that cheating is more frequent in on ODL, this may not be the case…. Cheating is not dependent on the method of delivery - it depends solely on the integrity of the student. Even if a student has all the opportunities to cheat, if he himself does not condone cheating, then it does not matter whether it is an F2F or ODL course. (Panis, 2011)

In summary, the numbers and percentages we have seen is not conclusive as to where cheating could be more prevalent since not one category received more than fifty percent of the votes. And the percentage of the uncertain/undecided could make it swing either way.

Q2. What are the ways one can cheat in an online distance course?

The 52 students offered many ways online cheating could be done or is already being done based on their readings, their experiences, and from their own observation. Below is the result of the survey:

73% (38/52) mentioned identity impersonation, substitution, or proxy attendance as the most common and perhaps the easiest to get away with. Here an online student gets another to do the academic work requirement for him or her. Also included in this category is the use of proxy ghostwriting services or the subscription to paper/essay mills readily available on the internet for a fee.

> There are different avenues where students can cheat in an online distance course. Based on the article, "The Shadow Scholar" (Dante, 2010), there are students who employ the use of ghost writers to create academic papers, a very lucrative business. It is also possible for a student to request assistance from other family members or classmates to do the requirements for the course in his stead. (Pangan, 2011)

69% (36/52) named the search engine and plagiarism duo as a very common way of cheating. Students would "google" terms, ideas, concepts and copy-paste their desired portions on their work "as is" and without even the proper citations. This also refers to copying a classmate's post without the latter's knowledge or consent.

> One way of cheating is googling answers or projects. Google has been a way of life of this generation, we have even made it a verb ("Google it."). The Internet being an open source has all the available resources for what we need. Once a student finds what he or she needs, all he or she needs to do is some re-phrasing or re-wording of the work; then it could pass as his or her work. (Penaredondo, 2011)

69% (36/52) referred to unauthorized intellectual networking as another method of cheating. Students would collaborate dishonestly and even share files in the process. This involves discussing the answers with each other using forums or even personal chat rooms.

> The most common ways of cheating online and even in traditional setting are aiding and abetting. Abetting means letting your classmate copy your work while aiding is helping each other answer an exam. This can also be called "group cheating". Group cheating is done during exams when the students gather and answer the questions together. They will assign questions to each one and swap answers. (Perez, 2011)

48% (25/52) said unauthorized technology exploitation especially among the technologically proficient is becoming the more preferred way of cheating. This involves the use of unauthorized devices or processes while doing an online assessment. Unauthorized devices include cellphones, texting, or having a standby tablet or computer while doing an online assessment. Unauthorized processes would mean having another window open or script tools running within the same online assessment environment. Those who are more competent may even hack a course site.

Adjusting the clock in the computer to send late emails but have an earlier date and time. Hacking the website resource (UPOU MyPortal). Use of other devices such as mobile phones for texting answers and tabs for opening resources that are unauthorized. There are still a lot of ways where users can cheat in an online distance course. (Jison, 2011)

40% (21/52) pointed to unlawful distribution as another source of cheating. Students would ask questions about or "borrow" the works or submissions of persons or groups who have taken the course before them.

If the exam is given online within a 24 hour window, a student can ask the questions from their classmates who has taken them. (Halibas, 2011)

Downloading or distributing the exam to others is also done by most of the students in an online course. For the same subjects of different classes, the exam questions are distributed depending on which batch gets to take the exam first. (Ellazo, 2011)

35% (18/52) saw deceit and manipulation as a new alternative to getting away with things in the online course environment. This basically refers to the misrepresentation of one's status or situation and even the fabrication of false alibi to be able to buy time to cheat.

I could have gotten away with the ethics project just by asking my colleagues in the office to pose for the camera (documentation) and not do the actual training seminar requirement. Another form of cheating that could be done is to cheat the hours required to conduct the training requirement. Instead of three hours as required, just make it one or two, just enough for you to take pictures. (Santana, 2011)

Another loophole in an online distance course is that there is also a greater chance to provide excuses or alibis. The simple statements like "there was a brownout", "internet was down", "technical difficulty", "email service failure", "file is corrupt", these statements are hard to prove as true. (Atay, 2011)

Q3. How can one prevent cheating in an online distance course?

For this section, the students randomly enumerated a multitude of detailed ways to prevent academic dishonesty in an ODeL course. To facilitate tabulation there was a need to categorize these random ways into their area of focus. Alcasid (2011) gave this suggestion:

[We could use these] areas of focus to prevent cheating in an online distance course. First is the use of the policies and requirements of the course…. [Another] is Faculty-Student interaction and communication to promote an open and bidirectional communication line between teachers and students … [Then] there is the design of assessment...[And last] is monitoring….

The following is the result of the survey:

Policies and requirements 52% (27/52)

Having clear guidelines and giving the consequences for academically inappropriate behavior help motivate students to academic integrity.

Knowing that the school is serious in protecting the honor and value of the school and the people are taught to be responsible for their school and the people in it, [the students] will bring out a culture of intellectual honesty in the school. (Turiana, 2011)

Requiring submissions involving creativity and personalization of principles also prevent plagiarism.

Employ more hands-on activities, seminar type projects where principles learned are applied, peer collaboration, putting projects online on public spaces… (Jison, 2011)

Interaction and communication 44% (23/52)

Frequent interaction, no matter how informal, creates good teacher-student relations.

Frequent teacher feedback and timely suggestions make the students feel attended too. Frequency of course board discussion and participation of students increase personal knowledge and styles of each other's writing and thinking capabilities. All these help prevent dishonesty in the process.

> One way to do so is by having the instructor establish a good relationship and affinity with the students. In this way, the students will deem cheating unacceptable and reproachable. Students will less likely to cheat if they know their instructors are helping them to learn. (Sta. Ana, 2011)

Design of assessment 62% (32/52)

Variety of test design versions, randomization of items in the question pool, password protection and limit of access to online test, assessment deployment in a secure web browser (respondus lockdown) with a "one question per screen" technique, and oral exams via live chats are some of the suggestions given by the students to further the security of the online assessment process.

> The design of assessment which consist the standards to measure the aptitude and capabilities of students should be carefully and effectively thought of. (Alcasid, 2011)

Monitoring and evaluating 35% (18/52)

Online proctoring using screen viewers or screen capture (ex. join me) and using web cameras could ensure proper monitoring of students in their assessment. Plagiarism software detection like Jplag, Essay verification Engine, or Turnitin could ensure the integrity of submissions.

Constantly improving the course website particularly its security features, management of files, and accessibility of users could prevent any temptation for security breaches.

> As a Senior Web Developer I would like to see the following security features implemented: IP detection, authentication check, screen capture, desktop application sharing, and plagiarism detection software. With the implementation of these application tools for the website, we can help prevent cheating and the professors can easily validate the student's work. (Dayagdag, 2011)

The strategies enumerated will not completely eradicate academic dishonesty in an online environment. However, majority of the students agree that it is the healthy attitude towards learning that could probably be the best preventive measure against academic dishonesty.

> For me, the best way on preventing cheating in an online course, is by inculcating "good academic behavior", I saw this in UPOU as they included Computer Ethics as one of the first subjects in our [MIS] course. I define good academic behavior as the emotional perspective of each student; it is not just in the academic learning, but in the attitude towards learning. (Briones, 2011)

Conclusion

The findings of this survey bring us to certain conclusions about Academic Dishonesty in the ODeL environment. The fully online mode of academic learning in higher education is rather new in this country and exists in very few universities. Thus there are few researches about academic dishonesty in this mode of learning here. However it is a fact that as students grow proficient with the technology of this type of education (ODeL), the more they discover how they could go around it. Because of these reasons, students in this survey agree that although the possibilities of cheating in an online environment is greater than in the traditional face-to-face mode, there is no conclusive evidence as to which environment actual cheating is more prevalent.

As to the ways of cheating online, the students warn us of the dangers of identity and paid impersonation which verify the conclusion of the qualitative study of Thirunarayanan and Vilchez (2011). The students also point out to plagiarism and unauthorized intellectual networking as the most common ways of cheating.

Finally, as to how cheating could be prevented, students agree on a secure study and assessment environment online. Also, expressing a strong ethical stand through academic policies on the part of the university and giving clear relevant requirements on the part of the professor make the students feel that learning is *"non scholae sed vitae"* (not just for school but for life).

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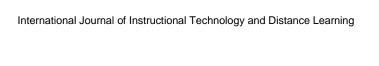
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Editor's Note: This analysis highlights critical aspects of discourse in virtual learning.

Critical Discourse Analysis of Politeness in Virtual Language Learning Environment

Mahboubeh Taghizadeh and Fatemeh Mahjourian

Iran

Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) concerns with examining ideology, identity, power and inequality in social contexts. It also claims to explore how discourse affects the construction of "social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1993, p.134). Distance education is considered as a "new, global technology-based education to facilitate easy, immediate learning and interaction for communicators, teachers and students in education programs" (İşman et al. 2009, p. 1). This paper aimed to investigate how the use of CDA as a research tool can be employed to examine politeness in three virtual classes of general English language courses in the Iran University of Science and Technology. The theoretical framework of this study consists of the elements of power, identity, and ideology proposed by Fairclough (1992, 1993, and 1995) and Fowler (1996) as the major concepts of CDA, the Politeness model (Brown and Levinson, 1987), Politeness Principles (Leech, 1983) and Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975).

The analysis of the data revealed that (1) Politeness allows the speaking subject to perform his/her identity through interactional talk in virtual environment and it can be a very effective way of 'doing power' less explicitly, especially in unequal encounters. It helps superiors maintain the position of power and helps subordinates license challenges to the power structures. Politeness can also be used to achieve the speaker's instrumental goal and when face is at risk, participants adopt politeness strategies to handle and possibly minimize face threats. (2) Approbation and Tact maxims are the most common maxims among teachers and Modesty and Agreement maxims are the most common ones among students. Teachers in some cases violated Grice's Quantity and Relevant maxims while the student tried to observe them. (3) In the virtual environment with an unequal status, teachers sometimes ignore their students' questions and do not refer to the contents of their messages and further, students make use of conspicuous capitalization, emoticons and repetitious punctuations in order to express their messages politely.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Politeness; Power; Identity; Face; Ideology; Distance Education

Introduction

CDA concerns itself with examining social context along the lines of ideology, identity, power and inequality. It also illustrates how discourse affects the construction of 'social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief' (Fairclough 1993, p.134). Distance education, as İşman et al. (2009, p. 1) argued, is "a new, global technology-based education to facilitate easy, immediate learning and interaction for communicators, teachers and students in education programs".

There is a growing knowledge base with regard to politeness (Akbari, 2002; Bravo, 1998, 2002, and 2003; Briz, 1996, 1998; Chodorowska, 1997; Delgado, 1995; O'Sullivan, 2007; Simpson, 2004; Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2000; Tanaka, Spencer-Oatey & Cray, 2000; Tian & Zhao, 2006) but the focus of this study is on the analysis of politeness in terms of aspects of critical discourse analysis, i.e., power, identity and ideology in virtual learning environment. It aims to investigate the kinds of politeness principles which are most likely to be found in discourse of instructors and students in their unequal status in virtual environment. Moreover, it attempts to determine what

power relations, identity and ideology the superiors and subordinates try to establish in their communicative exchanges. To this end, the discourse of three virtual classes at Iran University of Science and Technology were analyzed. Four conversational elements of Grice's (1975, 1989), Brown and Levinson's (1987) Cooperative Principle (CP) theory and Leech's (1983) Politeness Principles were the framework of this study. Further, aspects of CDA were employed to examine how politeness is displayed by participants of this study.

Background

Critical discourse analysis

The term discourse generally encompasses any form of language use in society (Fairclough, 1993; Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Van Dijk 1997). Discourse, as Van Dijk (1997, p. 2) defines, is "the use that people make of language to convey ideas, thoughts or beliefs within a social context". Critical discourse analysis (CDA) goes beyond the acknowledgement of the social dimension of discourse. What distinguishes a critical from a non-critical approach to discourse is the fact that critical discourse analysts, as Fairclough (1993) believes, illustrate, how discourse is affected by the social and ideological status quo and how it, in turns, affects the construction of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief. CDA also concerns itself with examining social context along the lines of ideology, power and inequality. As Fowler (1996) suggests, CDA goes "beyond the formal structure of language as an abstract system, toward the practical interaction of language and context" (p. 10). In this sense, according to Fairclough (1995), language is seen as a social practice, as a mode of action that is always socially situated "in a dialectical relationship with other facets of 'the social'…it is socially shaped, but it is also socially shaping or constitutive" (p. 131). From this viewpoint, discourse is seen as constitutive of social reality in a general sense.

As Fowler (1996) argued, CDA places an emphasis on identifying power relations and demystifying the processes that produce and reproduce these relations and eventually leads to significant social changes. Moreover, it argues that there is a degree of "distortion" in all mediums of representation (such as language) that functions to create and maintain power imbalances. In this study, three major aspects of CDA, i.e., power, identity and ideology are taken into account. Some information related to these aspects is presented below.

Identity

Considering Street's (1993) metaphor "culture is a verb", Roberts and Sarangi (1999, p. 229) propose that "identity is a verb" suggesting that similar to culture, identity is something that people do. Heller (2003) also argues that "identity is among the entities that are frequently commodified in the globalized world, and it is constantly negotiated in institution/individual interactions as a key factor involved in the definition of the social order" (p. 474). Moreover, Gumperz (1982, 1992) believes that individuals do not choose and construct social identity alone, but rather that identity is co-constructed by all participants in a given interaction. Therefore, it can be argued that social identity is multifaceted and dynamic and that both the individual and other interactants in a given situation continually construct and reconstruct one another's identities through interaction.

Power

Researchers within the socio-political perspective are concerned with power and subjectivity. They maintain that power infuses all organizational relationships therefore interactional development must be examined in the context of this condition (Knights & Murray, 1994).

Power and dominance are the key concepts for critical discourse analysis (CDA) in looking at how people in hierarchically higher positions, majority groups, and organizations use and

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maintain power and control over other people and minority groups (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Gee, 1996, 1999). Power and solidarity was a concept first presented by Brown and Gilman (1960), and later extended by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their model of politeness. Following Weber (1947), Brown and Levinson provide a useful and widely accepted definition of power, as "the degree to which H [the hearer] can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S's [the speaker's] plans and self-evaluation"(1987, p. 77). 'Doing power' less explicitly is generally more acceptable in an era when informality is valued and there is a general trend towards democratization and a reduction of emphasis on power differences. Where the underlying intent is controlling or coercive, however, this use of language can be identified as 'repressive discourse (Pateman, 1980). Repressive discourse "disguises the coercive intent underlying an utterance, or fudges the power relationships involved" (Pateman, 1980, pp. 84-85). So, while it is fundamentally based on a power imbalance, repressive discourse tends to distract attention from issues of power. It often functions to gain willing compliance, retain good will, promote social cohesion and, superficially, to reduce asymmetry (Sollitt-Morris, 1996, 1997).

Ideology

As Fairclough (1995) argues, "ideologies reside in texts" and "it is not possible to 'read off' ideologies from texts" and "texts are open to diverse interpretations" (p.). He also stresses that "ideology invests language in various ways at various levels" and that ideology is both "property of structures and of events". Highlighting the ideological significance of lexical choices, Fairclough (1989) argues that "a text's choice of wordings depends on, and helps to create, social relationships between participants" (p. 116). Sykes (1985) also believes that the choice of different words for referring to the same thing by different speakers demonstrates "different ideological affiliations" (p. 87) on the part of the interactants. Further, the study of ideology, for Eagleton (1994), is considering the variety of theories and theorists that have investigated the relation between thought and social reality.

2.2 Politeness

This study is largely on the basis of the frameworks suggested by Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, Grice's (1987) Cooperative Principle and Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Politeness Strategies. A brief summary of these models follows.

Leech (1983) proposed the Politeness Principle which is a series of maxims as a way of explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. Politeness, as Leech (1983) defines, are forms of behavior that establish and maintain comity and it is the ability of speakers in a social interaction to engage in communication in an atmosphere of relative harmony. Politeness Principle model, as Leech (1983) classified, contains six maxims: (1) Tact maxim: a) minimize cost to other; b) (maximize benefit to other), (2) Generosity maxim : a) minimize benefit to self; b) (maximize cost to self), (3) Approbation maxim : a) minimize dispraise of other; b) (maximize praise of other), (4) Modesty maxim : a) minimize praise of self; b) (maximize dispraise of self), (5) Agreement maxim: a) minimize disagreement between self and other; b) (maximize agreement between self and other), (6) Sympathy maxim: a) minimize antipathy between self and other; b) (maximize sympathy between self and other).

Grice's (1987) Cooperative Principle (CP) theory, as Brown and Levinson (1978) point out, rests on the assumption that people are intrinsically cooperative and aim to be as informative as possible in communication. The CP includes maxims of: Quantity (a contribution should be as informative as is required for the conversation to proceed), Relevance (speakers' contributions should relate clearly to the purpose of the exchange), Manner (speakers' contributions should be perspicuous: clear, orderly and brief, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity) and Quality (speakers should be truthful and not say what they think is false, or make statements for which they have no evidence).

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of Politeness Strategies also provides another framework of this study. This mode, as Goodman (1967) suggested, is based on the concept of face. Each speaker, according to face theory, "possesses a social face, a public self-image" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61) or a "kind of social standing" (Cameron 2001, p. 79) that is constantly negotiated in conversational exchanges. Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that face "can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (p. 61). As Fairclough (1993) suggests, it is in the interactants' interest that face is mutually protected so that the exchange of information is likely to be successful and the interactants' social persona safeguarded. When face is at risk, participants adopt strategies that enable them to handle and possibly minimize face threats (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It is argued that these strategies can be grouped under the label of politeness, and often guarantee the smooth development of a communicative event (Blum-Kulka (1997; Cameron 2001; Kasper 1997; Thomas 1995).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face consists of two complementary parts: positive face, which is about one's desire to be socially appreciated, supported and approved of, and negative face, which is about one's wish not to be imposed upon, of seeing one's own actions 'unimpeded by others'. As a result, two kinds of politeness exist that correspond to the two types of faces at stake, positive politeness conveying the speaker's/writer's desire, whether real or just simulated, to attend to the audience's wants and desires and to establish a cooperative connection with the interlocutor and negative politeness which satisfies the interlocutor's negative face, i.e., his or her need for freedom from imposition.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory provides an account of the ways in which politeness takes account of the positive face needs of both addressee and speaker. Politeness may thus express solidarity, indicating concern for the listener's positive face needs, as well as self-deprecation, which attends to the speaker's positive face needs. Moreover, politeness theory includes consideration of power relations, insofar as they are assumed by, or salient to, the participants. But the main focus of politeness theory is an account of how participants handle face threat, and Brown and Levinson's analysis is designed to account for modifications of face threatening acts (FTAs) which are consistent with a basic cooperative intent. Differential power tends to be considered largely as a factor accounting for deferent behavior, i.e., more mitigated FTAs, by the person with less power, or for the use of less mitigated FTAs by more powerful participant.

It appears that there is a demand in conducting a research on CDA of politeness in virtual learning community. Vinagre (2008) analyzed the linguistic features of politeness strategies which were used in the introductory e-mails exchanges between English and Spanish language learners. The findings of her study demonstrated that where the social distance between participants is high, participants make use of positive politeness strategies, especially those relating to 'claiming common ground', 'assuming or asserting reciprocity' and 'conveying cooperation'. Investigating socio-cognitive processes in asynchronous online course discussions, Ho and Swan (2007) aim to explore relationships between Gricean elements in students' discussion postings and sustained discussion and relationships between Gricean elements in students' discussion postings and their course performance. Results of their study revealed that *quality* was the most important criterion for predicting direct responses to a posting. Students with high average quality scores received higher final course grades than did their counterparts. Furthermore, students with a high score for Manner earned higher conference grades than did their counterparts. Further, Schallert et al., (2009) investigated the discourse of two course activities, synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated discussion (CMD) for the kind of discourse functions and the kind of politeness strategies they represented. Results showed that synchronous CMD provided more information seeking, information providing, and social comments than asynchronous CMD and asynchronous CMD provided discussion generating,

experience sharing, idea explanation, and self-evaluation function than synchronous discussions. In addition, messages with positive evaluation and group conversation management functions received more politeness indicators while messages concerned with experience sharing function received the least politeness. But this study aims to investigate the discourse between instructors and students in terms of CDA of politeness and it intends to apply theories of politeness and aspects of CDA to explore how power differences affect the use of politeness by participants in virtual learning community and it addresses two research questions.

1. What kinds of politeness maxims do participants in different status use in virtual learning community?
2. How do instructors and students make use of politeness to establish identity, ideology and power?

Methodology

The methodological approach to both data gathering and data processing is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call an interpretevist qualitative approach focusing on naturally-occurring discourse of three virtual classes.

Site and participants

In order to explore how politeness is manifested in terms of aspects of CDA in a virtual environment, a corpus of three online undergraduate-level classes were analyzed at Iran University of Science and Technology. A total of 90 students enrolled in the online General English course which was a compulsory subject and held fourteen sessions during a semester at that university. The students' fields were Industrial Engineering and Information Technology and their textbook was entitled "General English for Engineering Students".

Data sources and procedure

A content analysis of students' and instructors' postings and transcripts of the discourse of three virtual classes was done to investigate how participants in virtual learning environment manifest politeness principles while practicing and constructing power, identity and ideology in their interaction.

The researchers had access to written discourse of participants' postings and the recordings of these three virtual classes of the winter 2010 which were available on the site. The researchers transcribed the participants' talk for further and detail analysis. Politeness models of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Grice (1987) and Leech (1983) provide the framework for the analysis. Aspects of CDA, i. e., power, identity and ideology were also employed for the analysis of this study.

Results and Discussion

In what follows, a number of examples regarding positive, negative and off record politeness strategies are analyzed critically.

Some Strategies of Positive Politeness: (Adapted from Brown and Levinson, 1987)

* Notice, attend to Hearer:

- (*Student to Teacher*): Your accent really sounds like a native person.

The person who holds the power usually does not need to receive attention from a lower-ranking individual. However, this will not be considered impolite if such notice is given. Here, the student is trying to be polite and based on psychological factors of his teacher, he chooses Approbation maxim as his strategy. He is still conservative in going into details and explaining his teacher's

accent as British or American. This avoidance strategy may be rooted in two facts: first, he does not know which pleases his teacher most and second, he might not be familiar with the differences (lack of knowledge affects compliments). Students (who have less power) are very cautious when using this strategy, since some teachers (who obviously have the power) may consider it insulting if they receive compliments from their students, assuming that students are not in a position to judge and evaluate their teachers.

- *(Teacher to Student)*: You have always been a volunteer for answering questions.

Teacher indicates that he is considerate about the class events and students' contribution. By using this strategy, while maintaining his power status, he tries to benefit the student (Tact maxim) by making him aware that (1) his contribution is noticed (2) his contribution is appreciated and may have further benefits as well. The identity of teacher provides to be the supportive on.

- *(Student to Teacher):* Thank you for reading our e-mails (homework) so carefully and providing us with insightful comments. You are very enthusiastic about our improvements and I really appreciate that.

The mode of address of this student is regarded as making a high degree of deference and identified as a feature of positive politeness and is considered a face-saving utterance. Moreover, this student has observed Appreciation' and Tact maxims very effectively.

* Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy):

- *(Student to Teacher):* When you are the teacher, we never get tired in the class!

The exaggeration might be used by both students and teachers. As the example indicates, students have used positive exaggerations (Otherwise, it would be absolutely impolite). But teachers, who have the power in the class, may also use negative exaggerations for punishment of students or critically criticizing their performance.

- *(Teacher to Student):* You will never learn English.

This exaggerated statement is the result of failure to answer one question correctly. The identity of the teacher seems to be a threatening and intimidating one. This identity does not seem to be co-constructed, i.e., no contribution on the part of the students and that is why it acts as an obstacle to the path of learning. However, if a teacher uses positive exaggeration for his student, his power may be endangered as this is not the strategy normally supposed to be used by a person of higher ranking toward a person from a lower rank.

* Intensify interest to Hearer:

- *(Student to Teacher):* our teacher is unique; no one else is like her.

The student is trying to be polite by offering this statement and at the same time, he tries to present a favorable identity. He is aware of the teacher's positive face needs - the need to have her wants acknowledged and her values respected and shared.

- *(Teacher to Student):* your advancements have been unbelievable and praise-worthy.

The teacher used the Approbation maxim without needing to worry that his face is threatened. Simultaneously, she has observed the Tact maxim. Still, this would involve sharing power at some level with the students.

* Use in group identity markers:

- *(Student to Teacher)*: We have not had a break for three hours. You must be tired by now.

This statement can be considered impolite since the student is putting himself and the teacher in the same position. However, in the cases of sympathy and feelings, the above sentence might be less threatening for the power of the teacher.

- *(Teacher to Student):* I am delighted that we managed to establish such a friendly environment in our class.

The teacher is attempting to show an intimate identity and tries to express solidarity. Usually teachers, use this strategy when they already know their students well. It should be noted that this is a strategy which protects the autonomy of the addressee.

* Seek agreement:

-- *(Student to Teacher)*: Our exam was rather difficult, wasn't it?

Seeking agreement is a strategy used both by teachers and students, but usually students do not have the power in the class to answer negative to a question that the teacher has raised for the sake of seeking agreement. On the other hand, a teacher may refrain from offering his agreement to the point raised by the student. That would maintain his power, but if used frequently, the class would lose its flexibility.

- *Teacher:* Our make-up class would be on next Wednesday. Is that all right?

- *Students:* yes, as you wish.

Students who have less power in the class consider the teacher's positive face needs and try to be polite by observing Agreement and Modesty maxims. Further, they try to show a submissive and considerate identity.

* Avoid Disagreement:

Teacher: I am sure learning English through virtual classes has been very beneficial to you.

Student: Yes, it saves a lot of time and helps us control our anxiety.

This strategy is usually used by those who have less power. The student uses this strategy to avoid disagreements with his teacher and tries to avoid posing any potential threat to the teacher's positive face. Besides, the teacher's identity is intermingled with virtual classes, avoiding disagreement with the fruitfulness of virtual classes is helping teacher to maintain her identity.

* Presuppose/ raise/assert common ground:

- *Teacher:* Today we had a good class.

This strategy brings the students and teacher in the same position. So, if a person with more power consciously makes use of this strategy, he is ready to share a part of his power with the person of the lower ranking. In classes where teacher is more intimate with the students, this strategy may be helpful.

- *Teacher:* None of us could imagine that you would be so successful in improving English vocabulary skill in virtual classes.

The teacher has observed Tact maxim and has managed to establish a good identity. He does not consider herself to be in the position of better information while preserving her own identity.

* Joke:

- *(Student to Teacher):* When my course finishes, I will be the next Shakespeare!

This is the strategy which should be used delicately both by teachers and students since it can serve both as face-saving or face-threatening act.

- (Student to Teacher): you teach very fast and I am afraid I have not passed any short-hand course!

Humor has been used in this utterance in the service of power to minimally disguise the oppressive intent, as a repressive discourse strategy. This statement violates the maxim of Relevance and establishes a sarcastic identity, which can become face-threatening as well.

* Offer, promise:

- (Student to Teacher): Since there is the connection interruption this session, can you please substitute grammar exercises for speaking ones?

The student observes the politeness principle and his utterance is a very effective way of 'doing power' less explicitly and helps her, though in a subordinate position, to license challenges to the power structure in the virtual community.

* Be optimistic:

Teacher: I am sure you will pass the exam

Student: it depends on your questions!

The teacher considers herself in the position of better information and performs her identity through the optimistic utterance. The students convey their message in an acceptable way since politeness enables them to convey a directive which recognizes the addressee's face needs.

* Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity:

   - Now let's have some free discussion.

This strategy is similar to "use in group identity markers". This is a strategy which can protect the autonomy of the addressee.

* Give (or ask for) reasons:

- (Student to Teacher): Sorry I am late for the class, I was talking to one of my teachers.

This is the strategy of politeness which can be used both by students and teachers. However, since those who are in power do not usually need to bring reasons (specially addressing those at lower position, and this may be a privilege to having power!), teachers usually feel less obliged to bring reasons. In other words, if a teacher refrains from bringing reasons, it will not be considered impolite on his side.

- Students: As you know, this university offers Industrial Engineering courses both at traditional classes and virtual ones. Do you think our certificate is valid enough? And we have equal chance of finding jobs?

- Teacher: it's better to focus on today's lessons, instead of thinking about possibilities and impossibilities.

Teacher's utterance violates the maxims of *quantity* and *relevance* because it bears nothing on the question. She may well have the information in front of her but she does not wish to highlight it.

* Give gifts to Hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation):

   - (Teacher to Student): Since you have been busty today and this is your third class, we can finish the class ten minutes earlier.

Teacher establishes a supportive identity and observes Generosity and Sympathy maxims as proposed by Leech (1983).

Some Strategies of Negative Politeness: (Adapted from Brown and Levinson, 1987)

* Be conventionally indirect:

   - *(Student to Teacher)*: We cannot hear you well teacher (asking for louder voice).

The students use the indirect utterance and it is a sign of politeness but not challenging the power structure. By using this polite statement, the students try to achieve their instrumental goal, while observing Tact maxim.

* Questions, hedge:

- *(Teacher to Student):* To the best of my knowledge, you were supposed to e-mail me your homework by yesterday at 9 p.m.

Teacher has tried to observe *quality* maxim, though his power position licenses him to ignore the maxim. However, the teacher attempts to maintain his exact and honest identity by using that hedge.

* Apologize:

- *(Student to Teacher):* I am sorry I could not email you my homework last week.

This is the politeness strategy which does not endanger power relations if used by any party. However, teachers who have the power should use it more delicately to avoid challenges to power structure on the part of the students.

* State the FTA as a general rule:

(Student asks a question) - *(Teacher to Students):* I had told you explicitly that while I am teaching new lessons, you are not allowed to pose your questions.

The teacher is doing power quite explicitly and maintains his power position. The teacher poses a potential threat to the students' positive face since he considers himself in the position of better information. His utterance is also perceived as possessing considerable control over the class.

Off record: (Adapted from Brown and Levinson, 1987)

* Give hints:

- *(Teacher to Student):* In this class, there is a direct relationship between punctuality and final score!

The teacher is giving the hint that the online presence, on time presence and contribution of students is important for her. She uses the power status to establish rules and make the students take the class seriously and introduces a serious and threatening identity.

* Overstate:

- *(Students to Teacher):* We all fell asleep after our physics class *(that is why I am late)*

- *(Student to Teacher):* I think IUST virtual education system is the best.

The student's sentimental sentences violate the maxim of Quality. The students are aware of the teacher's positive face needs- the needs to have her wants to be acknowledged and her values respected and shared.

* Be ironic:

- Online classes are very successful in our country since technology is too advanced *(complaining about the connection interruptions)*

As the name indicates, this strategy is a tool at the hand of power. Through this strategy, the teacher can "do power" less explicitly.

* Use metaphors:

- (Student to Teacher): After your class, I look like www! (*We study a lot in the class*)

The student considers the power of teacher to show that her teacher's class is highly effective.

* Be vague

- *Students:* Due to the connection interruptions, we can have only text messages. Do you think by this method we can be successful in speaking in situations of real social life?

- *Teacher*: It depends.

The teacher explicitly violates the maxims of Quantity and Relevance. He is in the position of better information but he prefers not to highlight it and by this answer, he does power quite explicitly.

* Displace Hearer

- A student who has just arrived to the class asking the other student: Which page is it? (*Hoping that the teacher answers*)

The person who has the power can raise questions directly and it will not be considered impolite. Often addressing a higher ranking directly by the one who has less power is considered impolite.

Conclusions and Implications

This study aims to apply theories of politeness and aspects of CDA to explore how power differences affect the use of politeness by participants in virtual learning community. The analysis of the data revealed that (1) politeness allows the speaking subject to perform his/her identity through interactional talk in virtual environment and it can be a very effective way of 'doing power' less explicitly, especially in unequal encounters. It helps superiors maintain the position of power and helps subordinates license challenges to the power structures. Politeness can also be used to achieve the speaker's instrumental goal and when face is at risk, participants adopt politeness strategies to handle and possibly minimize face threats. (2) Approbation and Tact maxims are the most common maxims among teachers and Modesty and Agreement maxims are the most common ones among students. Teachers in some cases violated Grice's Quantity and Relevant maxims and though they may well have the information in front of them, they do not want to highlight them. So, flouting is the linguistic strategy for them to perform a variety of functions. Through politeness strategies the teacher can exercise and maintain his power and identity in the class. Even the kind of politeness strategies that he chooses, i.e., positive, negative and off record has a role in such manifestation. Through politeness strategies, the teacher finds the opportunity to exercise his power less explicitly, which makes the environment more intimate and thus learning can happen easier.

Paying attention to status differences in educational context is a key factor in order to have a successful communication. Pedagogically, it is important for students to develop insights in order to improve their conversational skills. In educational settings, students should be presented with instruction regarding critical discourse and aspects of CDA. Therefore, teachers need to provide awareness to students through adequate instruction and information, possibly in a context of dialogue or conversation, to familiarize students with effective and acceptable ways of conversations with people in various ranks in educational settings.

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Power of the multitude:
using social media for collaborative research

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Abstract

Emerging from an analysis of what Andreas Wittel (2001) has termed 'networked sociality', this paper explores a number of ways in which online social networking platforms can be utilised by academics, and suggests the key features of these digital technologies must be seen as important educational, sociological and informational tools. This article contends that digital platforms are increasingly designed to harness the power of the user-base, with Hardt and Negri's concept of 'the multitude' being introduced to further analyse collaborative action in contemporary networked societies. Through the detailed analysis of social bookmarking services like Delicious, I argue that the current technological environment may enable the efficient dissemination of ideas amongst vast communities of researchers, who together can contribute and create new ways of thinking, teaching and learning.

Keywords: Network Society, Web 2.0, Multitude, Research, Information, Social Bookmarking.

Introduction

This paper interrogates the role of collaborative, networked digital technologies in - dissemination of academic research, demonstrating a number of ways in which social networking and "architectures of participation" (O'Reilly, 2005) can be adopted by academics to organize information and develop new modes of teaching and learning. This article discusses the socio-technological context from which these services have emerged, suggesting it has become increasingly beneficial for scholars to take advantage of social networking tools to seek out new information, collaborate with like-minded individuals from around the world and participate in an emerging model of research distribution. I propose the current technological environment presents a number of potential methods for disseminating ideas amongst vast communities of researchers, who together can contribute and create new ways of thinking, teaching and learning.

As such, these activities become dispersed throughout the whole of society, through technological and human interactions, connected in new, shifting assemblages. Practices which emerge within what Henry Jenkins (2006) calls "participatory cultures" enable users to engage and interact with information and content which is far more relevant to them. This is a shift from established forms of hegemonic control which previously underpinned the 'broadcast' model of cultural production, whereby corporate and political interests could act as 'gatekeepers' of information. Web-based interactive technologies now permit individuals to become more collaborative *participants* in the digital media environment. As users blog, upload, share, review, tag, rate and comment they contribute to the whole process, leading to a 'post-broadcast' model of media production which enables public citizens to express themselves in new and exciting ways (Gauntlett, 2007; Merrin, 2008). Media theorist, William Merrin suggests, "In place of a top-down, one-to-many vertical cascade from centralised industry sources we discover today bottom-up, many-to-many, horizontal, peer-to-peer communication" (2008: 6). Thus the cultural transformations brought about by interactive, networked technologies have enabled users to collaborate, create, explore and seek out information in innovative and empowering ways.[1]

In the opening section, I draw on a range of concepts in order to analyse the socio-technological dimensions of the contemporary cultural landscape, indicating the strategic forms of

informational and technological organisation which permeate our social sphere. I introduce Hardt and Negri's concept of '*Multitude'*, a useful theoretical approach for understanding collaborative action in contemporary networked societies. The second section explores the use of social networking services, concentrating on new modes of bookmarking websites which have emerged in recent years. Using Delicious as a case study, I suggest that social bookmarking can considerably benefit the organisation and dissemination of academic research. The third section argues that social engagement and peer-to-peer interaction underpin the digital environment, with a number of online platforms providing services which harness the power of the user-base. I contend these issues are considered during the design and development stage, with social connectivity being 'built' into the technological infrastructure of such services.

Living and learning in the network society

It has been suggested that we live today in the 'Network Society' (see Van Dijk, 1999; Castells, 1996), a society in which a combination of social and technological networks continually shape our prime modes of organization. In recent years networked technologies have become increasingly embedded in all aspects of our lives, leading to the development of innovative forms of production, engagement and social interaction. In this section, I focus on the emergence of what Andreas Wittel (2001) has labelled *network sociality*, and suggest a number of ways in which networked practices may be beneficial for academic researchers in the context of teaching, learning, sharing and disseminating information in this networked environment. According to Wittel, this term describes a contemporary transition away from regimes of sociality in closed social systems towards regimes of sociality in open social systems which are mediated by networked communication technologies. These changes are marked by a general shift from analogue to digital technologies; a cultural transformation whereby physical production is largely displaced by the production of bits and bytes (Negroponte, 1995). Lister et al. (2003: 14) call this *digitization*; the process whereby the input of data is converted into numbers and is thus compressed, dematerialized, and can be modified and accessed at a very high speed. As such, data can be easily duplicated, stored, transferred, converted and processed by an array of networked devices. The move to digital technology, therefore, alters the ways we share and consume information.

These developments are largely recognised under the term Web 2.0, a buzzword we may all be familiar with by now. Originally coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2004, it describes the multitude of interactive Internet applications and computer software that enables users not only to receive and to respond to information they engage with, but also to generate and distribute new content. Web 2.0 can also be seen as a second generation of development into the personalised, contributory and participatory capabilities of the World Wide Web and a move away from the Internet as a static, one-way source of information. In short, these developments foster new patterns of organisation and production through realignments of culture, industry, economy, access, ownership and regulation. As a result, the Web has become a rich tapestry of knowledge; a network of information that academics can interact with and contribute to in a variety of new and exciting ways.

Castells (1996) defines the network society as a "space of flows" (of data, of production, of interactions), a flexible system which is ordered horizontally rather than being based on fixed, hierarchal structures. Therefore, a network is comprised not only by its subjects and technologies, but also on the links between them which are able to expand without limits; for Castells (1996: 479), this demonstrates a "culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction". The main source of productivity in the network society lies in the ability to decentralise the use of energy throughout the production and circulation process, leading to a myriad of networked, peer-to-peer interactions which ultimately transform how we make sense of the world around us.

This chimes with Hardt and Negri's concept of *Empire*, a form of sovereignty that "operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world" (2000: xv). According to this theoretical approach, the resulting effects of globalisation dilute previous forms of sovereignty which centered on imperialism and constrictions held by nation states. *Empire* forms a postmodern critique of these effects, with 'the Multitude' representing a potential model of resistance against global capitalism. The Multitude, in this sense, comes to stand for the self-organisation and mobilisation of democratic citizens – collective subjects who actively become the site for political struggle. Throughout their conceptualisation of these theoretical positions Hardt and Negri remain purposefully vague about the positive or constituent aspects of the Multitude, instead preferring to describe this as an ongoing battle against imperial control. The Multitude in the digital environment is therefore embodied in the new modes of collaboration, organisation and peer-to-peer interactivity these technologies facilitate.

The forms of social activity which develop within these networked spaces - forms of 'network sociality', to use Wittel's terminology - differ to those previously established in communities based on proximity. In networked societies, links are continually developed and maintained, and can be represented by fluctuations of integration and disintegration. Wittel (2001: 51) suggests this marks a shift towards a more flexible, open system of sociality which consists of fleeting and transient relations; of ephemeral yet intense encounters which are created on a project-to-project basis, and by the movement of ideas. These encounters and interactions are increasingly mediated by networked computer technologies, which help to organise and structure such interpersonal connections.

In the context of Web 2.0, we are encouraged to express ourselves as individuals and continually define who we are by a whole host of interactions, experiences and encounters. Perhaps this has led to an overload of information. There are currently over 15 billion web pages, and countless related network interactions; so what strategies can we employ to arrange this data and engage with the relevant material? As Wittel (2001: 55) notes, "content or information has to be individualised and adapted to the needs of users in order to be valuable". Since the network society is managed, structured and mediated by databases, information technologies can be utilised to sift through vast exchanges of knowledge to engage with information which is useful, interesting, entertaining and pertinent on an individual basis.

The rise and rise of social networking

In recent years there has been an explosion of online technologies which establish a networked platform for users to construct and organise their social connections. This is social networking. Over the last decade, online social networking services have emerged as multi-million dollar companies, with substantial investment into digital media platforms reflecting the global popularity of this mode of communication. Sites like Facebook and Twitter allow users to stay connected with friends and interact with their cultural interests, whilst sites like LinkedIn and Academia.edu represent more professional networks, allowing researchers to publicise their work and engage with other scholars in their field of study. Whilst these sites offer a number of benefits in the context of maintaining social bonds and disseminating information, I want to focus on an area of social networking which is perhaps less well-known, but which may foster new modes of teaching and learning for many academics. I want to focus on *social bookmarking*.

Much of our work as researchers is done on the web. We trawl it regularly looking for information which is related to our specific academic disciplines. We may sign up to e-mail lists and newsletters, seek out professional organisations, subscribe to RSS feeds and read academic blog entries which may all benefit our teaching and research. The trouble is there is just so much information out there that it becomes hard to keep track of it all. To help us manage this data we often use search engines to help uncover useful resources, then we bookmark these sites to our

web browser as a means of storing the location of a site for later use. To help us make sense of the various sites we accumulate over time we begin to make folders in the web browser to categorise them. This is the Web 1.0 approach. It can be useful at first but things start to get more complicated when a site is relevant to a number of topic areas; and what happens when we need to access our bookmarks at home if they are stored on an office computer? We need a new approach. We need to utilise the principles of Web 2.0:

> One of the key aspects of Web 2.0 is human interaction. It is this human component that is taking the Internet to the next level by leveraging the strengths of the human mind with the strengths of a computer's processing power. While a computer is great at reading large amounts of data and searching for defined patterns, the human mind can spot undefined patterns and, more importantly, can detect quality (Nations, 2011).

This new approach is called social bookmarking; an interactive and collaborative mode of organising information and categorising resources. Rather than bookmarking to a browser, this new method stores our bookmarks on a remote website, enabling users to access this information on any computer with an internet connection. Rather than creating folders in a single web browser as with previous forms of bookmarking, we can now 'tag' websites with a few useful and relevant words to help categorise them within a social bookmarking account. A 'tag' in this context represents a compressed data point which makes this information far more manageable. There are numerous websites which offer these services; this article will refer to *Delicious* as an example. To use the service you must first register, which also gives the user the option to install a toolbar to enable you to tag at a click of a button.

Now when a webpage is 'tagged', not only is it collated with other pages previously bookmarked, but it also saves the site descriptors in a tag list, making it easier to revisit at a later date. For instance, if I wanted to research the nature of privacy in social networking sites I would go to my Delicious account and browse the tag categories I have encountered in the past; when the tag 'Facebook' is clicked, for example, the entire list of bookmarked sites is reduced to a far more manageable set of relevant bookmarked pages related to that topic.

Become a social researcher

Social bookmarking, as the name suggests, also allows users to share bookmarks with their social contacts. Since Delicious allows users to make their bookmark lists public they can easily direct colleagues and students to it. Now other users can also benefit from these bookmarks and engage with this information further by searching their tags. This helps to produce a steady stream of useful bookmarked sites as a unique structure of keywords to define sources is developed by the user-base. Collaborative tagging, therefore, exhibits a decentralised and self-organising dynamic which transforms how we share, store and locate information (Halpin, et al. 2007). As a recent report by Educause suggests, using social bookmarking for research:

> lets you take advantage of the insights of other users to find information related to the topic you are researching, even in areas that aren't obviously connected to the primary topic. If you are looking for information about sailing, for example, you might find that other users saw a connection between sailing and boat repair, taking you in new, potentially valuable directions (*Educause Learning Initiative*, 2005).

This user-generated system of tags can also be used to seek out information in a much more defined and relevant fashion than traditional search engines. Since webpages listed on a social bookmarking site are added by people, not computers, it becomes easier to encounter information which is particularly pertinent to a search request.

Despite the free-scale nature of the Web, the network society does have a disproportionate character; nodes which have a large number of connections progressively attract more associations, leading to vast 'hubs' or 'clusters' of links within the network. Social bookmarking sites like Delicious identify popular clusters by displaying how many other users have decided to tag a particular webpage, which gives a basic indication of how useful that site may be. According to Wittel, such social bonds in network societies are based on "complex, reciprocal intricacies of traverse networks of information exchange" (2001: 67), leading to a cooperative system of data management which blurs the boundaries of work and play. Here, interactions with friends and colleagues adds value to such collections of bookmarked pages by utilising the 'collective intelligence' of the user-base displayed in modes of social tagging to continually organise information, making this content far more relevant and accessible.

Furthermore, this culture of social engagement in the dissemination of information in contemporary network societies is underpinned by a technological infrastructure which has been designed to harness the power of users. Website designers are encouraged to integrate 'social buttons' which allow users to easily share and publicise the content they come across online throughout their social networks. For Gerlitz & Helmond (2011) this raises questions about the interrelation between the social, technicity and value online, representing an emerging form of social indexing which they label the 'Like economy'. Since 'social buttons' utilise an interactive functionality and more user-generated metrics, the validation generated by these applications is far stronger than non-personal recommendations. The 'Like economy', then, capitalises on the value of social validations to generate further potential engagement through a multiplicity of different social formations. This principle is central to social bookmarking services, with social indexing representing an efficient method for scholars to archive, share and engage with research in new and innovative ways.

Concluding thoughts

The developments discussed above present a number of implications for teaching and learning in an academic context, with new ways to store, share and retrieve information starting to emerge. Several social bookmarking services, such as Citeulike, enable researchers to collate academic papers, as well as transforming how we may distribute reference lists, bibliographies, and other resources amongst peers and students. As these unique structures of tagged resources continue to evolve, the collaborative nature of research becomes increasingly refined.

As alluded to throughout, the ubiquitous nature of digital technologies in contemporary networked societies has developed a participatory culture mediated by web-based platforms. The integration of social buttons across the web has further increased this culture of sharing and it is clear that interactive, participatory modes of production have become integral to new and emerging business models. For example, many online platforms now utilise Facebook's 'Open Graph' plug-in to engage users and further disseminate content. Here, the collaborative action of users across a network becomes central to both the indexing and distribution of information. Social bookmarking services like Delicious typify these developments, representing a novel and efficient practice which I contend scholars should utilise in order to take advantage of this interactive, cooperative and networked environment.

NOTES

Nonetheless, I do want to add a disclaimer early on: despite the almost celebratory tone of this paper, it is important to note the positive rhetoric surrounding social media has largely emerged through the marketing discourse of these technologies. Therefore, whilst they do present a host of positive functions, we must not lose sight of the fact that these are proprietary systems which enable the aggregation and containment of personal data.

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Editor's Note: This paper goes beyond the comparison of face-to-face and virtual options to include a range of digital applications and social media.

Office Hours: 'There's an App for *That*?!'
Student Perceptions of Faculty Channels for Out-of-Class Communication
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Abstract

This study examines office hours and mobile applications in instructor-student communication by exploring 79 undergraduates' perceptions of office hours. The purpose of this study is to examine undergraduate college students' perceptions, use and preferences regarding office hour communication. An open- and closed-ended survey was placed within students' Learning Management System. A majority of students (74%) have visited a professor in office hours though the most frequent means of communication transpired via email. 41.9% of respondents use an app on cell phones to contact professors and 83.8% noted they would use more app-based, mobile communication if offered by instructors. 81.1% wished their professors offered more virtual communication opportunities.

Keywords: office hours, computer-mediated communication, undergraduate students, instant messaging, communication studies, instructional communication, social media, educational apps, educational technology, digital media, out-of-class communication, student-faculty interactions.

Introduction

Students and instructors are not always on the same page when it comes to modes of communication. Traditional office hours are not the most successful ways to reach students and can often leave the professor sitting in an office waiting for students who are unaware of the potential benefits of out-of-class (OOC) communication with faculty (Cotton & Wilson, 2006; Nadler & Nadler, 2000; Pascarella, 1980). Today's mobile, distant learners are facing more options to reach their professors including virtual office hours, social networking sites, and instant messaging. This study examined students' perceptions of professor office hours.

Instructional communication or the process by which educators and students both stimulate meanings in the minds of one another using verbal and non-verbal messages (McCroskey, 1968; Mottet, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006), is changing as our education and digital environment to become more interwoven. Online courses are not the only courses using digital communication. Universities are offering enhanced, blended, and hybrid courses which result in increased technology and computer-mediated communication. The new technologies and learning management systems (LMS) have led to a slew of opportunities for student-faculty communication and learning. Instructional communication can occur face-to-face or via email, instant messaging (IM), blogs, wikis, blackboard and even social media. Understanding instructional communication offers a greater awareness of the learning environment, pedagogy, and the important student/faculty relationship.

Instructional communication is changing. As more cost-effective, mobile, multi-functional devices blend the worlds of computing with that of communication (iPad, iPhone, Android, Blackberry, tablets, netbooks) and appear on the market, student options and expectations about OOC communication may change. Students are learning in digital, mobile environments and their communication preferences with their faculty are shifting. However, faculty members are often sitting in offices waiting for a face-to-face meeting. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* details uses of these mobile devices in classrooms, programs and partnerships with universities, and

student-faculty preferences noting the increased presence of computer-mediated communication in today's college campuses (Levy, 2011; Weider, 2011).

Virtual office hours (VOHs) are emerging as an option to communicate with students outside of the classroom. Unlike traditional office hours, which are held face-to-face usually in the faculty member's office, VOHs allow the student and faculty member to communicate via an online connection. As our educational world shifts toward digital environments for our classrooms and our texts, Cox and Williams (2011) found we may need to alter previous channels of communication toward increasingly digital venues.

The use of IM and other technological communication tools are expanding within the educational arena, but the research is mixed on the use and functionality of virtual office hours. Edwards and Helvie-Mason (2010) found that though over 70% of students surveyed were favorable toward VOHs, only 12% were using VOHs in their courses (where VOHs were available by the professor). Similarly, Balayeva and Quan-Haase (2009) examined virtual office hours (through instant messaging) finding that students see IM as an useful tool, but make limited use of it when offered as an alternative to regular office hours. IM and VOH carry benefits as noted in a 2008 study, where Lavooy and Newlin found statistically significant correlation between the frequency of students' online chat hours and the course outcome (as measured through course points).

Students continue to note a wide interest in VOHs and the desire to remain connected to their professors. Li and Pitts (2009) remarked that students' use of virtual office hours does not differ from their use of traditional, land-based office hours, but that the students who are offered VOHs reported higher levels of satisfaction with office hours than those in courses only offering traditional office hours.

Research by Leh (2001) noted that computer-mediated communication was beneficial not only for communication, but also for learning. Some students may prefer computer-mediated communication because, as O'Sullivan (2000) found, mediated channels allow students to hide embarrassing or negative information about themselves that would make them more likely to feel anxious or threatened. Kelly, Keaton, and Finch (2004) found reticent students prefer asynchronous computer channels, but both reticent and non-reticent students share the same comfort level for asynchronous channels, such as email. Vonderwell (2003) found that online communication allowed for improved communication and students asked more questions. DeBard and Guidera (2000) found that online responses by faculty members averaged 106 words while in class responses averaged twelve words (p. 225). Students are seeking that interaction through a variety of channels in today's learning environment. Virtual office hours are no longer the only point of access for students.

From instant messaging like Yahoo! IM to social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, students are finding the apps on their mobile devices can let them connect with their institution and their classes. Additionally, professors are now able to list more and more points of contact for students in their syllabi, including instant messaging (IM), social media handles (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.), real time sessions (GoToMeeting, Skype, Oovoo), LMS specific options (Blackboard collaborate, Blackboard mobile learn), and other apps such as YouSeeU and interfaces such as ConnectYard. Our ability to connect students and professors for OOC communication has never had so much diversity. Diversity, though, can lead to confusion on how to best reach and teach our students.

Apps are increasingly common in both the LMS and university sites. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2011 -Parry) described a survey at 2011 Educause noting the "sharp rise" of mobile applications related to education and learning. Indeed, many LMS like Blackboard and Moodle offer apps for students and professors to stay up to date on the course. Additionally, new programs and applications are available for student-to-professor communication such as

ConnectYard. Touting the ability to reach students through social media without breaching their privacy, ConnectYard allows users to determine how their course content reaches them (through Twitter, Facebook, text, or email) and they can reply through that same channel. Students today can use many synchronous mobile communication apps such as Skype, Adobe Connect, Oovoo, Google's Vtok, and GoToMeeting to reach the professor during office hours.

Purpose of the study and research question

The purpose of this study is to examine undergraduate college students' perceptions, use and preferences regarding office hour communication. The author examined the students' preferences, use, and perceptions of office hours through an open- and closed-ended survey in the Fundamentals of Public Speaking course in spring 2011. The author felt the need to explore students' perspectives on communication opportunities which are becoming an increasingly common part of students' lives through their mobile devices. To explore these perceptions, the following research question was examined, "What are undergraduate students' perceptions, uses, and needs of office hours?"

Methodology

In order to better understand students' thoughts, needs and desires when it came to office hours, a 23-item open- and closed-ended online questionnaire was developed. Students at a small, public university completed the survey in 200-level Communication courses in early 2011 describing their basic demographics, current technology use, their experiences in office hours, and their feelings about virtual office hours. The survey was provided via a digital link to 114 students and 79 completed the questionnaire (69.29% response rate).

Participants' demographics

79 students completed the questionnaire. Of those students, 10.1% (8) were freshmen, 31.61% (25) were sophomores, 31.6% (25) were juniors, 22.8.1% (18) were seniors and 3.8% (3) did not answer the item on year of study. The average age was 28.6 years old with a range from 18 to 51 years old. There were 50 (63.3%) females and 29 (36.7%) males in the study with the respondents describing their background as 91.1% (72) African-American, 3.8% (3) Caucasian, 1.3% (1) Latino, 1.3% (1) Arabic, 1.3% (1) American Indian, and 1.3% (1) of respondents not responding to the question. 29.1% of respondents worked full time while 38% worked part time and 32.9% currently did not work. Students noted a variety of majors with the top three majors as Social Work (25.3%), Business Entrepreneurship (17.7%) and Criminal Justice (10.1%). An overwhelming majority, 84.8%, were on-campus students while 15.2% were online students.

100% of the students noted they currently owned some type of digital device ranging from cell phones, smart phones, netbooks and iPads, e-readers, laptops, and mp3 players. The most dominantly owned digital device was a laptop computer with 73.4% of respondents owning this device. The most dominantly used device was a cell phone with computing capabilities (smart phone) with 63.3% of respondents owning and regularly using this type of device.

Many students (74%) noted they *had* visited a professor during scheduled office hours, but most communicated with their professors through email (76.6%) though their preference was for communication during office hours (42.9%). Resoundingly, students noted they wanted their professors to offer at least some of their contact time with students through virtual office hours (81.1%). Most students who responded that they had visited a professor during office hours noted they did so for clarification on an assignment, for assistance, to check grades/concern about grades, or to make up missed work. One noted visiting the professor to discuss future career opportunities.

Results and discussion

Overall, students want to reach their professors on a regular basis and receive prompt replies to their questions or concerns. They described a need for instructors to be available and approachable for students through a range of communicative opportunities. The students are described below as those who prefer office hours, those who prefer email, and those who prefer IM.

Prefer office hours (face-to-face): (42.9%) Many students wanted the ability to meet face-to-face with professors. They noted their desire to ask questions and follow up questions. As one participant noted, "Meeting with a professor during office hours allows me to ask any questions and have the time for the necessary feedback." This thought was shared as a student stated, "I like speaking to someone in person. I feel like it matters more to me when I can speak and have a conversation with someone directly."

Prefer email: (32.5%) Students reported they most frequently communicate through email. For those students who prefer email, they commented that it was easier to reach the student and that response times were better than trying to find the professor on campus. One participant claimed, "I prefer to use email as a method of contacting my professor because I feel it's more respectable to the professors and an emailing confirms or validates your conversations or agreements between you and your professor. In some cases, I've gotten a quicker response from my professor by emailing as oppose[d to] calling."

Prefer instant messaging: (5.2%) Few students preferred IM, though many had used it. Those who noted their preference was IM appeared to want a fast response, noting "It is secure and generally the fastest. Also it allows me to contact my instructors during nontraditional hours." Additionally, students liked that the conversation could be stored, "It [IM] allows for the conversations to be recorded with time stamps also they can be accessed for review on both ends"

Students noted that there were many options that "just aren't thought about by professors."

Overall, students make the most use of email as it is a dominant channel open to them where they do not have to come to campus and they can access it via an app or mobile device. However, students also expressed a desire to have a choice in how they could contact their professors. As seen in Figure 1, most students noted professors are primarily available through phone, email, and face-to-face visits in their office during specific times of the week.

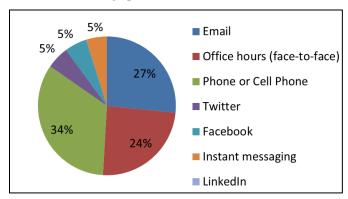**Figure 1: Students' descriptions of professor availability**

These more traditional access points for professors sat well for some students, but others struggled with already full schedules to reach the professors through these traditional channels.

Previously, their options have been office hours, phone, and email while only a few professors have offered connections beyond the traditional means of contact.

In the past, students have made use of multiple channels of connectivity, as noted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: How students reach professors

Students reported wanting more options, and those options include apps and social media that many professors may not be familiar or comfortable with. As seen in Figure 3, students would prefer to connect with professors outside of their (often mandated) institutional email, they desired an instant message option, and many would like to incorporate social media connections as options for reaching professors.
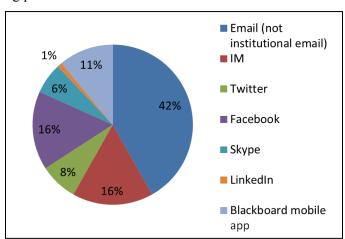

Figure 3: Student preferences for professor contact.

Students were not satisfied with email, face-to-face options for reaching their professors. Though they preferred face-to-face meetings, they noted they were the least convenient and especially hard for online students and evening students, "The office hours are sometimes a[n] inconvenience with their time schedule and your time schedule." Though students reported using email regularly, they claimed that many professors, "simply don't reply" to email or "take too long" to get back to them about a question.

Students remarked on "virtual" options with the perception that faculty members were not generally open to other ways of communicating. One student remarked, "I think it would be great if professors would make the two [face-to-face and virtual] work hand in hand. If professors would just open their minds to technology and arise from their traditional ways, maybe we could find common ground among each other."

When asked what students would like to see, they wanted mobile options. One student noted, "With technology constantly evolving, we must use them to our advantage and not be afraid to embrace changes in our school[']s culture...And keep pace with the students['] ability and willingness to use technology (apps) as part of their normal everyday process." Another wrote, "Most people are pretty computer savvy and have phones that are internet capable. I personally already use lots of apps on my cell phone. A mobile app for office hours would be a great way for me to communicate with the professor quickly and easy." Others agreed, "Mobile device apps are more likely to be used by the students than actually going to a professor['s] office, because some students just don't want anything to do with the professors after class is over so instead of going to see the professor they would use technology to contact them." Another student responded, "I would like to see more virtual offices."

Of the respondents answering the question "If my professor offered a way to communicate electronically through an App on my phone, I would be likely to make use of that option," 78.3% noted they would be highly likely or likely to use the app. When considering their use if the app was required in class, 83.7% would make use of the app to communicate. Lastly, when asked about virtual office hours (office hours where you can synchronously chat with a professor without being face-to-face), 73.9% of respondents answered they would be highly likely or likely to make use of virtual office hours. Respondents liked the convenience of the communication, noting "I think that this is a good idea. Many people are short on time being full-time workers. This will give more flexibility to contact class instructors."

Despite the generally positive push toward apps and computer-mediated communication, some students (4.05%) felt apps should be avoided when exploring course communication. One student stated, "student/teacher relationship is at stake" and another remarked, "I feel that the face-to-face contact lends itself to a better learning environment. Not real crazy about non-personal communication."

Implications for future study

This study examined the perceptions, use, and preferences of undergraduate students attending a small, public, urban university. Our understanding of student and faculty communication may be enriched by following this research with an examination of the faculty members' perceptions of student use, perceptions and preferences of office hours. This mixed-methods approach had a limited sample size of 79 respondents. Due to the limited nature of this study, future researchers may want to conduct quantitative research with a larger population size at a variety of institutions. Future studies may also build on the research about reticent students and comparative research exploring male and female faculty members' out-of-class communication (Fusani, 1994; Nadler & Nadler, 1995).

Through this particular research, we can see that generally students desire a mobile or virtual connection with their instructors; however they express concern about being limited to only a digital connection. The research on student use of virtual, digital channels of communication should continue to be studied to better understand the link between what students want and what students are using. Ultimately, students showed that they want choices when it comes to their communication channels with their instructors.

Conclusion

Students are seeking more options that allow them to connect with their professors without being held to a specific location. They want their mobile devices to serve as yet another portal to accessing their professors. Students see professors as reluctant (or perhaps uncertain) about learning new types of technology or approaching students through new channels.

There are many places where professors or institutions can start. Perhaps the easiest: Virtual office hours using instant messaging. This option is fairly straightforward, it allows professors to avoid a web-cam (although one could be easily incorporated), and is a nice small step into the synchronous virtual world. Once that step is comfortable, professors can begin looking into options that may best fit their work day and their technological comfort level. There are many options for professors who are seeking to enhance their technological outreach to students in today's app-filled world. The choice is left up to the professors, but it is clear from this study that students desire more access points (outside of face-to-face communication) during office hours.

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Editor's Note: This program is designed to build intercultural understanding in a nation with a diversity of languages, cultures, values and belief systems through a sandwich program that uses a common language to share and build understanding of cultural similarities and differences in knowledge, experience, values and beliefs.

Promoting intercultural understanding among university undergraduates through sandwich programme in Nigeria

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Nigeria

Abstract

This article studied promoting intercultural understanding among university undergraduates through a Sandwich programme in Nigeria. The aim of this study was to examine if the Sandwich programme could promote intercultural understanding among the students of the university that come from various parts of the country for the programme. Four null hypotheses were generated for the study and 400 samples were selected across the levels. A questionnaire constructed by the researchers titled: Promoting Intercultural Understanding Questionnaire (PIUQ) was used to collect data from the Sandwich students. The hypotheses were analysed using a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship in intercultural understanding of Sandwich students and their language, values, knowledge and beliefs. It was, therefore, concluded that Sandwich students need to learn proper intercultural understanding to have more intercultural appreciation of and engagement with cultural and individual differences. To fulfill this in a spirit of tolerance, empathy and respect requires the common humanity of all human communities to be recognized and accepted without reservation.

Introduction

Nigeria is no doubt a multi-ethnic nation. This brings about diversities in culture, religion, as well as language. To this end, this paper attempts to explore these diversities with a view to promoting intercultural understanding among university undergraduates through the sandwich programme, thereby engendering national integration and unity.

All ethnic nationalities in Nigeria seem to be hospitable, loving and accommodating. The experience of the United States of America has shown the whole world that cultural diversities and heterogeneity, if properly managed, can become major assets to development and greatness. Nigeria has all it takes to be as great as the United States of America in terms of human and material resources. However, there is the need to develop a new attitude and orientation towards ourselves. This can only be achieved if we have unbiased information and knowledge (understanding) of ourselves.

According to Omotoso (2006), Nigeria is a multi-ethnic state. It is generally believed that the country has over 250 ethnic groups. Most of these ethnic groups have distinct customs, traditions and languages. Omotoso (2006) went further to say that the larger and politically dominant groups are the Yoruba, the Igbo and the Hausa/Fulani. Apart from these major ethnic groups there are others such as the Ijaw, Edo, Urhobo, Igala, Nupe, Ebira, Kanuri, Idoma, Ibibio, Efik, Junkun and others. It is noteworthy, that each ethnic group occupies a distinct territory and that most smaller groups had very little contact with other groups before the imposition of colonial rule.

Culture, such as arts, health/sanitation, language, law, music, is a veritable tool used to bring change and meaning to people's lives. According to Ayodele (2006), education is a learning process, either formal or informal, which includes learning the content of a given culture (selected

skills, knowledge and attitude). Education is, in fact, a process of socialization (enculturation). Education is the process of cultural transmission for continuity and growth and for knowledge dissemination. According to Fafunwa (1974), education is "either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both. Morrish (1972), drawing from Jaeger and Selznick (1964), believed that, in very general terms, the objective of education is to provide students with the means of understanding their society and its structures, and to open up for them a way of creating 'meaning' out of their environment and their relationship".

According to Morrish (1972), education should not merely preserve and transmit the best of the past; it must also demonstrate its function in the present as well as its possibilities for the future. The process of education is part and parcel of the socialization process, while education is learning to confirm to a given cultural pattern. Education and culture are, therefore, inseparably interrelated. This is what the sandwich programme attempts to bring to the doorsteps of its partakers. A lot of students meet in this programme and may continue their relationships thereafter.

Borode (1998) views sandwich education as a formal adult education programme organized between the off-hours of holidays of the conventional education, for the training of workers on the job. In the same vein, Nwegwa (1997) sees a sandwich course as an aspect of in-service programme which is given to people who are already on the job either for their general education and upgrading or to enable them to obtain higher certificate diplomas or professional qualifications. The Sandwich programme has its contact periods defined to occur during teacher holidays. The period of the sandwich programe, though at a longer period of time, helps students to interact and gain access to full time studies, and helps them to share life experiences within the higher institution community. It also ensures that the trainees enhance their own educational improvements. Adesina (2001) in (Odu et al, 2009) explained that some of the reasons for establishing sandwich degree programmes in the Nigerian universities of higher learning include: exposing participants to modern and contemporary approaches, techniques, knowledge and skills with a view to improving their efficiency and updating their knowledge of essential subjects.

Literature review

Intercultural activity, as noted by Sen Gupta (2003), is generally understood to be any encounter between people of different cultures. According to the Standard Dictionary of the English Language (Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), "understanding" means "the sum of the mental powers by which knowledge is acquired, retained, and extended; the power of apprehending, relations and making inferences (deductions, conclusions) from them". It can also mean "an agreement between two or more persons; sometimes an arrangement or settlement of differences, or disputed points". In the present context, intercultural understanding included close acquaintance, empathy and appreciation between people of different cultures.

Culture refers to the consistent ways in which people experience, make sense of, and respond to, the world around them; it represents the collective 'ways of doing' of a given population; it is common to all human groups; it is shaped by historical, social, political, economic, and geographic factors (Marshall, 2002); it is learned in the sense that it is acquired knowledge that people use to interpret their world, and from which they generate social behaviour; language plays a critical role in its transmission (Campbell, 2004; Marshall, 2002). Culture is therefore a continuous, dynamic process, which indicates that we reinterpret and modify our assumptions as we grow and learn from our contact with external influences (Hernandez, 1989). It is manifest in material goods and artifacts (e.g. food, dress, and arts) as well as in fundamental beliefs, perceptions of time and space, and precepts about human nature (Marshall, 2002), and its characteristics vary from highly explicit or obvious (recognizable in its material manifestations) to highly implicit or deeply hidden elements (attitudes, values, beliefs). It should be understood,

however, that these explicit and implicit elements are interwoven because of constant interaction between them (Arvizu et al., in Hernandez, 1989).

People are naturally steeped in their own culture (i.e. enculturated) and therefore ethnocentric (Sen Gupta, 2003). By this token, ethnocentrism is inherent in the human condition and proceeds from the premise that "our way is the best way and the only way" (Bennet, 2003). It follows therefore that in the event of an intercultural encounter, people would be challenged by the sudden difference in culture, which shifts their focus from their familiar sphere to aspects of themselves with which they are unfamiliar. Relatively superficial differences may not be experienced as challenging, but they can be if they implicate fundamental beliefs and values, because encounters may force an evaluation or re-evaluation of such beliefs and values (Sen Gupta, 2003). When a person experiences a change in cultural context, acculturation is the outcome. Acculturation can and often does cause a more or less disruptive and destructive sense of cultural alternation, disorientation and general loss of cultural identity. Anxiety and feelings of alienation may develop when individuals start feeling that they are moving away from their group and are running the risk of becoming outsiders in their culture of origin. A backlash effect of acculturation may be therefore that people retreat into a cocoon of their pre-exposure beliefs and refuse to look at their own cultural systems from the viewpoint of the "other". Similarly, learners' receptiveness to teaching material may be significantly reduced if the content of the material makes them feel isolated and/or marginalized in the classroom (Sen Gupta, 2003).

People from different cultures tend to perceive the world differently, but are sometimes unaware of alternative ways of perceiving, believing, behaving and judging. Hall (1959; 1976) contends that most people hold unconscious assumptions about what is appropriate in terms of space, time, interpersonal relations and ways of seeking truth. These assumptions may cause intractable difficulties in intercultural encounters. A conscious effort must therefore be made to overcome ethnocentric attitudes and to recognize the cultural differences between nations and ethnic groups. According to Bennet (2003), this recognition process takes place in six stages: denial, defense, minimizing, acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

Inter-(cross-) cultural awareness is a prerequisite for the achievement of intercultural understanding that begins when a person realizes that he or she has a particular cultural identity that is one among many, and becomes aware of the similarities and differences between them (Bennet, 2003). The ability to differentiate enables people to compare and therefore evaluate their culture in relation to that of others, which means that they take a decisive step away from the ethnocentric position from which the discovery of cultural diversity started (Cushner and Brislin in Sen Gupta, 2003). Neither understanding nor true acceptance is likely when differences are only identified at a superficial level.

Developing intercultural competence includes self-reflection, gathering information about your own and other cultures, appreciating cultural similarities and differences, using cultural resources, and acknowledging the essential equality and value of all cultures (Klein and Chen, 2001). It is demonstrated, amongst other things, by the ability or sensitivity to interpret intercultural styles of communication (language, signs, gestures, body language, and customs) (Bennet, 2003).

People communicate within and between cultures by means of language, which is therefore central to their social relationship. It both reveals and marks status, power, authority, and levels of education. Cultural differences, therefore, tend to be revealed in language, and misunderstandings between people from different cultures tend to arise from their use of language to communicate with each other (Campbell, 2004).

However, effective intercultural communication depends on both the language and the cultural perceptions and priorities of whoever one interacts with. Culture-specific perceptions and priorities are evident from a specific cultural code (symbols, manners, dress, and gestures)

(Sketie, 2005). Successful communication is only possible on the basis of a shared code. "To share a code you must know the meaning of the foreign word(s) and the meaning must be the same in both languages for if it is different, the code is not shared" (Ter-Minasova, 2003). People should therefore be sensitive to the way in which members of other cultures perceive reality; why and how they express their perceptions; and importantly, how their perceptions differ from those of other cultures (Campbell, 2004). It follows, too, that although language is the primary vehicle of communication, non-verbal communication is equally important.

To guide the study, the following hypotheses were generated:

1. Sandwich programme would not bring a significant relationship between intercultural understanding among students and their language.
2. Sandwich programme would not bring a significant relationship between intercultural understanding among students and their values.
3. Sandwich programme would not bring a significant relationship between intercultural understanding among students and their knowledge.
4. Sandwich programme would not bring a significant relationship between intercultural understanding among students and their beliefs.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the intercultural understanding among university undergraduates through the sandwich programme. It was also to examine whether the coming together of these students during the contact periods influenced them in any way to such an extent that it would be reflected in their behaviour after the contacts and in their various schools.

Methodology

Descriptive research of the survey type using an interview method was used to enable the researcher get the students on the programme as well as meet them on the jobs. The population for the study comprised all sandwich undergraduates in the programme in the University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria (UNAD). The first sample consisted of 400 undergraduates of the sandwich programme of UNAD. The selection of the samples was done through simple random sampling.

The instrument used was a questionnaire titled: Promoting Intercultural Understanding Questionnaire (PIUQ). The questionnaire had two parts (A & B), part A was on the bio-data which sought information on sandwich students, their levels, sex, age and area of specialization. Other information included: present employer and position in the school. The respondents were to fill the bio-data as appropriate to them. The part B of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items which sought information concerning the promotion of intercultural understanding of students in the sandwich programme.

A test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. 30 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents that were not part of the sample used for the study from the Part Time Programme (PTP) of the University. Two weeks after the first administration, the test was re-administered. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse the two tests and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. This was found to be reasonably high and therefore considered reliable for the study.

Five research assistants were used. Each of the research assistants was instructed to visit the sample schools for administration of the instrument. The researchers and research assistants were able to get the sandwich programme students during the contact as well as when they came to the office for certain inquiries. Personal contact between the researchers, research assistants and

respondents enhanced better understanding of the items in the instruments. Copies of the questionnaire were collected after completion.

The data collected was analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Table 1
Relationship in intercultural understanding
among Sandwich students and their language

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r_c	r_t
Intercultural	400	2.49	0.71	398	0.05	0.164
Language	400	3.40	1.58			

The result on Table 1 showed that r_c (0.05) is less than r_t (0.164). It implies that there is no significant relationship between Sandwich Students' intercultural understanding and their language. The null hypothesis is accepted. It therefore means that Sandwich Students use languages to bring about understanding of themselves while interacting during contacts. The students' languages have no correlation on their intercultural understanding so language does not affect their intercultural understanding.

Table 2
Relationship in intercultural understanding
among Sandwich students and their values

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r_c	r_t
Intercultural	400	2.49	0.71	398	0.162	0.164
Value	400	10.03	1.77			

Table 2 revealed that r_c (0.162) is less than r_t (0.164). Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. There is no significant relationship between the intercultural understanding of Sandwich students and what they value. This means that the Sandwich Students value others from other cultures in terms of cultural similarities and differences. Whatever values the students have does not have any relationship with their intercultural understanding.

Table 3
Relationship in intercultural understanding
among Sandwich students and their knowledge

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r_c	r_t
Intercultural	400	2.49	0.71	398	0.188*	0.164
Knowledge	400	4.82	1.84			

Table 3 showed that r_c (0.188) is greater than r_t. It revealed that there is a significant relationship between the intercultural understanding and level of knowledge among Sandwich Students. The hypothesis is not accepted. It therefore means that Sandwich Students have a good knowledge of intercultural understanding of students from other cultures. Level of knowledge acquired determines their intercultural understanding.

Table 4
Relationship in intercultural understanding
among Sandwich students and their beliefs

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r_c	r_t
Intercultural	400	2.49	0.71	398	0.065	0.164
Belief	400	2.42	0.80			

Table 4 revealed that r_c (0.065) is less than r_t (0.164). It proves that intercultural understanding of Sandwich Students does not have any significant relationship with their beliefs. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. It therefore means that Sandwich Students have a good understanding about the beliefs and ways of doing things in other cultures. Students' belief does not correlate with their intercultural understanding.

Discussion

Findings from the study showed that Sandwich students use language to bring about understanding of themselves while interacting during contact. It is clear that people communicate within and between cultures by means of language, which is central to their social relationship. Language reveals and marks status, power, authority and level of education. According to Campbell, (2004), cultural differences tend to be revealed in language and misunderstandings between people from different cultures tend to arise from their use of language to communicate with each other. Language plays a critical role in the transmission of culture (Campbell, 2004; Marsh, 2002).

From the findings, it was discovered that Sandwich students value persons from other cultures in terms of cultural similarities and differences. This findings, however, contradicts that of Bennet, (2003) which says that inter-(cross)-cultural awareness is a prerequisite for the achievement of intercultural understanding. Intercultural understanding begins when a person realizes that he or she has a particular cultural identity that is one among many, and becomes aware of the similarities and differences between them.

The findings also revealed that Sandwich students have a good knowledge of intercultural understanding from other cultures. This finding supports Ayodele (2006) that education is a learning process, either formal or informal, which includes learning the content of a given culture (selected skills, knowledge and attitude). The finding also supports Fafunwa (1974) which says that education is "either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of the society." Furthermore, Morrish (1972) believed that, in general terms, the objective of education is to provide students with the means of understanding their society and its structures and to open up for them a way of creating 'meaning' out their environment and their relationship."

The finding revealed that Sandwich students have a good understanding about the beliefs and ways of doing things in other cultures. This finding is supported by Marshall, (2002) that culture refers to the consistent ways in which people experience, make sense of, and respond to, the world around them. It represents the collective 'ways of doing' of a given population. It is common to all human groups; it is shaped by historical, social, political, economic and geographic factors. Marshall (2002) further said that culture manifests in material goods and artifacts (e.g. food, dress and arts) as well as in fundamental beliefs, perceptions of time and space, and precepts about human nature.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, what is required to achieve proper intercultural understanding is informed intellectual appreciation of and engagement with cultural and individual differences, which presupposes recognition and acceptance, in principle, of the existence and inevitability of cultural diversity. These requirements should be fulfilled in a spirit of tolerance, empathy and respect, which cannot be achieved unless the common humanity of all human communities is recognized and accepted without reservation.

All the Nigerian languages should be introduced into the Sandwich curriculum to enhance intercultural understanding. This will promote meaningful and useful interaction among participants In the same vein, programmes should be designed to enhance intercultural understanding among lower classes having low knowledge acquisition.

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Editor's Note: This analysis of Human Capital Development points to the changing role of HR personnel in business operations and in management. For this reason, it may be advantageous for HR to be taught in conjunction with Business courses or be taught in a School of Business.

Business education and human capital development: Issues, challenges and strategies

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Abstract

This paper studies business education and human resource capital development through a historical survey based on the works of various academic experts. The authors explain what human capital development and business education entails and reveals the importance of human capital development as well as problems faced in human resource capital development. It also addresses an aspect of human capital development that is not always addressed in business education – the area of conflict resolution between management and employees. This paper uses a historical survey to analyze and evaluate the views of various experts in an attempt to inform and advance the knowledge base of business educators, researchers and scholars on current practices and future prospects in human capital development.

Keywords: business, education, capital, human, assets, development.

Introduction

Business education has been defined in so many ways by so many authors some of whom are Azuka (2000) who says business education is a programme of studies, which aims at creating awareness in business occupations; preparing youths for work in a business occupation; preparing people to become better citizens and consumers of goods services and preparing business teachers. Nanassay (1977) sees business education as education for and about business.

Human capital on the other hand, according to Derek (2008) is recognition that people in organizations and business are an important and essential asset who contributes to development and growth, in a similar way as physical assets such as machines and money. Their collective attitudes, skills and abilities contribute to organizational performance and productivity. Any expenditure in training, development, health and support is not just an expense, it is an investment in human capital.

Importance of human capital

Derek (2008) stated though an organization or business is a separate legal entity, its ceases to exist if it has no people. Leaders, directors, members, and employees are required to maintain an organization's existence. On this basis, the author holds the view that teachers, students, equipment, textbooks and other teaching and learning materials are essential components of business education and the system cannot be successful without any part of these components.

In a society that places a strong emphasis on competition, financial return and viability, the people issues can sometimes be neglected. Increasingly however, business and political leaders are starting to recognize that having good people who are skilled and motivated can make a significant difference. For this to be actualized, business education teachers also need to be highly motivated.

Competition is so fierce and change is so fast, that any competitive edge gained by the introduction of new processes or technology can be short-lived if competitors adopt the same

technology. But to implement change, their people must have the same or better skills and abilities.

To grow and adapt, the organization's eldership must recognize the value and contribution of people.

Treating money spent on people as an investment in an important asset is much more appropriate than treating such expenditure as an expense to be kept to the minimum amount necessary.

Problems with the human capital

Over the years, the terms used to describe staff and employees in businesses have changed. We have moved from "personnel" to "human resource" and now "human capital". Other phrases, such as "talent management", have also emerged.

These terms can appear to be dehumanizing. That is why some human resource managers titles include the word "people" in preference to "human resources" The important point is the mindset behind the organization's operation. If people are valued, and all management and leadership actions demonstrate that, then the terminology is not so important.

In summary, people should be treated as an asset rather than an expense item. Every effort should be taken, both formal and informal, to develop skills and abilities and provide opportunities for people to maximize their contributions.

The importance of human resources in economic development

According to Akinmayowa (2004), the importance of human resources for the transformation of social, political, economic and technological institutions in human societies has received the attention of economists, management practitioners, academics and others. The background and orientation of each group of discussants of the subject differ. Thus, the topic has been addressed often from a variety of viewpoints. However, there is a general agreement among the various groups that there are three resources are used in business as the engine for economic and industrial growth. These resources are materials, finance and human, and out of all these resources; human resources are the most important. The reasons for this observation are many and it is necessary for us to examine some of them here. Basically, human resources are those who will make use of other resources i.e. financial and materials. Note that materials, machines and equipment, even the hardware or the software of the latest computer, may become obsolete twenty-four hours or less from the time they have been purchased. In the case of human beings, they become better and improve or mature on the job over time, particularly if they are preparing and constantly trained or re-trained and motivated within a supportive work environment in particular and the larger society in general.

In addition, it was noticed that material resources may be adulterated and machines may be grounded for lack of spare parts and money may lose its values as a result of inflation and price. In the case of human beings, they are more complex and unpredictable and they are those who will make the right and/or the wrong decisions depending on their orientation in the process of deliberating organizational problems. Actually, human resources are more difficult to manage than materials and financial resources. This is because it is difficult to forecast precisely how human beings will respond to a given situation. They cannot easily be manipulated (programmed) like machines and computers.

Conflict in human capital and business education

From the above facts, it is not easy for industry and business education sector to manipulate human capital like materials and equipment. For this reason, it is necessary to talk about human capital without reference to conflict.

Akinmayowa (2004) opined that conflict often occurs between the employers and employees because the employees desire to fulfill certain human needs and employers are unable to provide for these needs and also achieve organizational goals. The difficulties inherent in managing human resources suggest that their problems ought to be at the top of the decision-making agenda in the organization.

Ohiwerei & Omo-Ojugo (2008) stated that most social organizations are complex organizations. They are made up of people with different backgrounds in terms of needs, skills, talents, status, competencies, knowledge, behavioural styles, interests, values, prejudices, aggressiveness, perceptions, education, experience and so on. With such diversity, individuals and/or groups are sometimes bound to disagree on issues with emotional intensity. Thus, conflict can be said to be inevitable, unavoidable, natural and a normal part of organizational activities. Due to its inevitability in organizations, managers, accountants, and supervisors including educational managers and administrators, must learn to manage conflict rather than attempt to thwart or eliminate it. While conflict is one of the most prevalent issues in organizations, including the educational enterprise, it has been one of the least developed. In the decade of the (1970s), conflict management became a major area of interest among practicing managers and academic researchers. Today, it is at the very forefront, a topic of increasing importance in the study of organizational behaviour and in the management of human resources in general.

Human resource capital and education

Human resource magazine (2007) stated that mastering of business skills places human resource (HR) professionals in a stronger position to effectively contribute to their organization in strategic business partner roles. Partnerships between academia and HR management practitioners can lead to new educational programmes, linking human resources and business competencies, and serve both researchers and employers seeking to equip future HR professionals with business competencies.

Ulrich & Brockbank (2005) opined that in today's knowledge economy, there is a natural link between business knowledge and human resource deliverables, and between business drivers and the organization's strategic focus. The primary driver producing the most change is growth, which directly impacts the HR organization to provide greater services through more competent and experienced HR staff. These changes also translate into increased activity in recruitment and selection, rotation in the HR function to develop greater HR competencies and an increase in outsourcing. Another key driver of change for the HR function is the increasing demand for a knowledge management change initiative (i.e. the process of creating, acquiring, sharing and managing knowledge to augment individual and organizational performance that focus on how work is done. For example, increasing employee involvement, innovation through teams, and quality and process improvement are vital aspects of today's organizations. As HR spends more time on strategy, these changes require not only flexibility and greater efficiency from human resource but also the ability to use business competencies.

Lawler, Boundreau, and Mohrman, (2006) focus on the practice of HR and how it has changed from 1995 to 2004, serving as a 'wake-up call'. The findings highlight that a low level of satisfaction still exists with HR business partner skills. In fact, while HR professionals may increasingly understand the business, overall they still do not appear to bring substantive business expertise to the organization. This finding marks a critical weakness with respect to HR's

potential to perform as an effective strategic business partner. On a positive note, the study found greater satisfaction with organizational dynamics skills of HR staff, an increased effectiveness of HR in corporate, business and strategy roles, and strength in helping shape a viable employment relationship (e.g. providing HR services, change consulting, managing outsourcing).

Adamu (2002) in Awopegba, (2002) stated that human capital formation transcends mere acquisition of intellectual ability through the formal education system. It has to do with the transformation of the total person to enhance productivity. Therefore, human capital investment is an indispensable component of the development process – it is a force that can help in tackling inequalities and poverty in any nation. Buffie (1994) in a cross-country study investigated the repercussions of reducing human capital expenditure in his model, he distinguished between skilled and unskilled labour in the manufacturing sector. His major concentration was on the public sector contribution to skill formation with the assumption that skilled labour growth is governed entirely by human capital investment of the government.

The Education & Human Capital Development Plan for NCER is very much in line with the aspirations of the 9th Malaysia Plan to put additional emphasis on human capital development to ensure the sustainable success of the country. Students will need to learn, unlearn and relearn to be at par with the latest developments happening globally over the student's lifetime – and everybody, regardless of age, is a student one way or the other.

Human capital development has proven to be a key ingredient in the overall socio-economic development of nations and is one of the key considerations for investors, other than local & regional demand, infrastructure, supporting industries, ease of doing business and business-friendly laws & governances, when selecting potential investment locations.

Impetus for change

Lawler, Boundreau, and Mohrman, (2006) emphasize the need for business schools to integrate human resource management programmes with a business focus. In fact, a recent study that reviewed nearly 50 human resource programmes found no consistency in course requirements in almost 60% of programmes, with compensation and benefits and employment law being the two most common courses. However, the study also revealed that human resource managers wanted to see a balance in the traditional human resource management master's programme. Specifically, they felt it was important to pay more attention to interpersonal and change management competencies, have less emphasis on technical human resource competencies and give more weight to the integration of broad business topics with human resources. Consequently, the United States and other parts of the world are seeing a shift in business education in relation to human resource management as corporations and academia collaborate to prepare students with a solid base of strategic business skills. This shift is specifically promoted by the society for human resource management through the SHRM Academic Initiate, created in 2006 to promote human resource and business education. The goal is to provide standardization in human resource education so that organization can expect a minimum level of human resource content knowledge from human resource management graduates. While human resource management and human resource related courses are in fact, often housed in non-business schools in universities and colleges, the human resource student is best prepared for a career in human resource management when human resource content is taught within a business context. Minimum areas of knowledge/human resource content areas were identified as: Compensation, benefits and total rewards; employee and labour relations; employment law, history of human resource and its role; human resource and globalization; human resource and mergers and acquisitions; human resource and organizational strategy; human resource information system; measuring human resource outcomes and the bottom line; occupational health, safety and security; performance appraisal and feedback; recruiting and selection; workforce planning and talent management.

Identifying human resource competencies

According to Human resources Magazine (2007) many human resource leaders today face the challenge of creating a strategic human resource organization with a strong business orientation. Research points to the growing need to link business education programs with the development of human resource leaders and practitioners. In particular, critical competencies for effective human resource management include the ability to think and act strategically in many different roles.

To clarify, competencies are a combination of skills, knowledge and abilities that can result in excellence in performance and be used for strategic advantage. They may be categorized as individual or organizational competencies and grouped as social or technical competencies. Competencies can be taught, learned, monitored and measured, and they can assist individuals and organizations to deliver business results. As change in business is typically the result of a combination of business trends, environmental factors and stakeholder expectations, competencies are essential tools to enable human resource professionals to quickly deal with change.

The 2007 Human Resource Competency Study, a global research project conducted by the RBL Group and the Ross School at the University of Michigan, in conjunction with the Society for Human Resource Management and other parties, examines the business context and demographics that affect the human resource profession and identifies essential human resource competency domains. The study considered the roles played by human resource professionals and, in particular, examined their ability to use knowledge. The new human resource competency domains identified are: 1) credible activist; 2) culture and change steward; 3) strategic architect; 4) talent manager and organization designer; 5) business ally; and 6) operational executor. For example, within the 'business ally' domain, human resource professionals contribute to the success of the organization by knowing the setting or social context in which the company operates, articulating the value proposition and leveraging business technology. This competency domain represents that human resource professionals know the business sections of the company (e.g., finance, marketing) and how the company makes money (i.e., the value chain of the business--the customers--and their reasons for buying the company's products/services). The authors conclude that to effectively play new roles--and have a positive impact on the performance of the organization—human resource professionals need to expand their competencies as individuals and as human resource departments.

By using this competency model, human resource professionals can evaluate their respective areas of strength as well as areas where they need to develop expertise to be effective business partners. For example, if the organization looks to human resource to help establish business strategy, this model is advantageous to determine appropriate internal needs, assess the current status of human resource competencies in the company and identify development plans. Overall, as corporations and academic institutions re-evaluate and restructure programs to integrate knowledge and competencies needed for today's human resource professionals, this study provides a wealth of information.

According to Lawler, Boudreau & Kohrman (2006), human resource professionals may increasingly understand the business; overall they still do not appear to bring substantive business expertise to the organization. This finding marks a critical weakness with respect to human resource's potential to perform as an effective strategic business partner. On a positive note, the study found greater satisfaction with the organizational dynamics skills of human resource staff, an increased effectiveness of human resource in corporate, business and strategy roles, and strength in helping shape a viable employment relationship (e.g., providing human resource services, change consulting, managing outsourcing). In view of this research, it is imperative--for the future of the human resource profession and the next generation of human resource

professionals--that human resource professionals take serious steps to elevate the level of their business skills.

Global human resource business competencies

According to Human resource Magazine (2007), the unprecedented growth of the global marketplace, human resource management students now require a wide range of global business competencies. Human Resource professionals working in a global environment need to be able to effectively interface with international staff, suppliers and government officials, all of whom will likely have different values, beliefs, assumptions and traditions. For Human Resource professionals who want to broaden their global business expertise, there are challenges to overcome. First, while multinational companies tend to make sure their future line executives have international experience, it is rare that high-potential Human Resource managers receive the same global career development. (There are, of course, exceptions, such as Schlumberger and United Technologies. Second, to become more global in their expertise, Human Resource professionals need to foster global literacies essential for effective global leadership today: personal literacy (understanding and valuing oneself), social literacy (the ability to engage and challenge people), business literacy (the ability to focus and mobilize the company) and cultural literacy (valuing and leveraging cultural differences).

Conclusion

In conclusion and in view of the fact that business education students, human capital and professionals have contributed immensely to organization as evidence in the past decade it is hoped that there should be a close relationship between the business education students and the industries as the industries cannot do without the business education students so also the business education students are indispensable to the industries. Therefore the future of the country depends largely on the good quality of the output of business educators. Though, the change management initiative, the integration of human resource management content areas with business education competencies in the educational arena will take time. Changes in curriculum will further not only the value of business education programs for the human resource professional but also the future success of organizations.

Aigbokhan, Imahe and Aileme (2008) say that the overwhelming nature of human capital development vis-à-vis the technological implication and the socio-economic threats of globalization trends should constitute enough reasons for any nation especially the developing ones to feel concerned about the future survival of education. In the case of Nigeria, the present situation should call for a very serious reflection on her errors of judgment or neglect and a determination to take the necessary and bold remedial steps clearly focused on adequate investment on human capital development via education investment. Since Nigeria's political independence many philosophies and plans have been put forward in the attempt to address the problems of her human capital development inadequacies, and yet, no sustainable impact has been evident in many aspects of the nation's economy. The vital role of education in economic and technological development, alleviation of illiteracy and general human development need not be overemphasized. The developed as well as the under-developed countries all over the world seemed to agree on the tremendous and compelling argument to make education the basis of national development.

Recommendation

After an exhaustive analysis, the authors recommended as follow:

1. There should be a link between the business education curriculum and the industry.

2. There should be a holistic approach to review the present business education curriculum to reflect the current and impending technologies.

3. Emphasis should be placed on the training of human capital, because highly trained personnel will increase productivity.

4. Human resource conflict management should be included in the business education curriculum.

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