Plan for a SoTL Project

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Activity - Refine Your SoTL Plan – Red Font
Activity - Design Your SoTL Project – Blue Font
Activity - Reflecting for Disseminating Your SoTL Project – Green Font
Activity - Share Your SoTL Research Plan – Purple Font

Research Question

What are you curious about?
What would you like to know about strategies that might hinder and/or help students to learn, in your course?
Do you want to know if an activity, assignment, or teaching strategy "works?"
Do you have a question about how to help your students learn a particular skill?

From my 30 plus years of business experience, I have learned that two of the most important skills people need to excel at are communication and teamwork (human relations). I have always been curious why students are reluctant to participate in class as well as interact with others. My question would be in what ways can I help the students want to participate and interact to a higher degree.

Identify challenge/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.

Describe the learning in a way that suggests how you might *measure* it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.

The challenge is that with online classes, students do not seem to have a problem putting comments in the chat on Bongo or Zoom. However, they shy away from turning their audio on and their webcams to participate in a discussion. I also noticed if they are working on a group project, they would rather email or text each other rather than picking up the phone. I want to help students understand when they get into the business world, whether it is a job interview or a sales meeting, they are going to have to be

comfortable and confident interacting with other people, whether it is in-person or virtually online.

Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote student learning on the outcome you identified.

SoTL projects might investigate the impact of a *modification* to an existing strategy or assignment. Describe how the new approach differs from the old approach and why this modification might change student learning on this outcome.

Currently in the business program that I teach at Fanshawe, we have students prepare a short introductory video and post it to a discussion board at the outset of the program. As well, one of the assignments that the students complete is a group project that consists of three parts. The third and final part is a presentation of their projects. Each student is required to present a portion of the project once again through a recorded video.

Some modifications that I would like to see include the following:
- **Rather than a recorded video their introductions, I would like to see each student do his/her introduction live online during the initial class.**
- **With the group project, I would meet with each group separately live online after part two has been submitted and help them prepare for their presentation. Ideally these meetings would be conducted with both audio and webcams on.**
- **Each group would present part three of the group project live online during rather than submitting videos**
- **Invite students to volunteer to facilitate short snippets of an online class.**
- **Invite successful business leaders from the London business community to attend online classes as guest speakers to talk to the students about the importance of these skills. "Who says so besides me?". It is one thing for the professor/teacher to talk about the importance. I believe reinforcement from business leaders will be invaluable.**

There are some considerations I must take into account. First, we cannot mandate the students to turn their audio and webcams on. It must be done voluntarily by the students. As well, I did not create the outline for the course; it was created by the Program Coordinator. Therefore, I would have to get permission to adjust the framework of the course outline to conduct live introductions at the start and then live presentations for part three of the group project. Finally, with the current online classes, students are often attending from their homes which usually means they are in different countries. So, picking up the phone might not always be a viable option as I alluded to earlier.

Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.

Describe the evidence you would need to collect to answer questions about the impact or value of this teaching strategy. How would you convince others that this approach is better than other approaches? What comparisons should you make? Examine students, skill before and after the assignment? Compare students who complete the learning activity to another group of students – what comparisons would be meaningful?

One way to measure the impact of this strategy is to have the students assess themselves at the start of the course and then again at the end in terms of their level confidence, communication, and human relations. These assessments would be confidential between the students and myself.

Another measuring stick would be for me to track the participation each week during the online classes and see if the participation does in fact increase over the duration of the semester.

Finally, at the end of the semester, I could ask for volunteers to share testimonials about their increased participation benefitted them. And if they gave me permission to do so, I could use these testimonials going forward at the beginning of future classes that I teach.

How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?

If I did receive permission to proceed with this strategy and modify the course outline to include live presentations, I would gather my evidence over the course of one semester. I would then present my findings to the other professors who teach the course that I do (Introduction to Business Processes). And then I would look at sharing my results with other professors not only in the Business School but the entire college. And since I would be promoting live interaction, I would do my presentations using Bongo or Zoom sessions and not pre-recorded messages.

FINAL REFLECTION

If you can improve the way you communicate with people in your life, you will improve your life.

Jim Knight speaking at a workshop Sept. 2016

Not only am I curious about the importance of these skills sets but I am passionate about them as well. For over twenty-two years I have been a Senior Trainer with Dale Carnegie Training in addition to teaching at Fanshawe College. Over that time, I have seen so many people struggle in their careers due to a lack of communication and human relations skills and "hiding behind their computers/devices". I am referring to both people who

are starting off in their careers as well as those who have been in their careers for several years. As a matter of fact, I put myself into that category. When I first graduated from college in the mid-1980's, I quickly learned that I had not invested enough time into developing these necessary skills. As a result, the first few years of my career were challenging to say the least and I would like to help my students at Fanshawe be better prepared for success in their chosen careers. My hope is that I can create a safe and positive environment during the online classes so the students will feel comfortable to gradually increase the use of audio and webcam and thereby their interaction.

"Quotation: 'If you can improve the way you communicate with people in your life, you will improve your life.'" by Ken Whytock is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

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