

TEACHING BUSINESS ETHICS IN AN INNOVATIVE BUSINESS COURSE

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Outline

- Introduction
- Course description
- Course structure and course delivery
- Research questions
- Statistical analysis
- Summary and Conclusion



Introduction

- Modern business education requires constant changes in business curriculum
- In the fall semester of 2002, a new course, Gateway Experience was designed and offered first time in the College of Business and Economics at the California State University, Northridge



Introduction (continued)

- 57% of adults disagreed with the statement that people on Wall Street are as honest and moral as other people (Taylor, 2002, results of Harris Poll)
- Swanson (2003) demanded that business ethics is a part of business curriculum
- Sarbanes-Oxley Act requires CEOs to sign and certify corporate financial statements
- AACSB requires business ethics course



Methods of Delivering Business Ethics

- Offering a course in business ethics
- Incorporating business ethics issues in the existing course (s)
- Creating a new case course with business ethics, and business ethics exercises



The Need to Redesign the Curriculum

According to employees and alumni surveys, students in Business Colleges need to

- Improve their communication skills, both oral and written
- Learn to build and work effectively in team
- Understand the cross-functional nature of businesses
- Think and behave ethically



New Course Description

<http://www.csun.edu/BUS302/>

- The course is offered at the junior level
(CSUN has more than 60% of transfer students from community colleges)
- Originally there were 4 credits for this course.
- Now, there are two parts of the Gateway Experience Course
 - one unit computer Lab, BUS 302 L
 - three units case study course, BUS 302



Original Course Learning Goals

- Build good process skills with emphasis on effective team working
- Enhance oral and written communication skills
- Review and integrate lower division (LDC) business core courses topics
- Use strategic thinking
- Understand the cross-functional and interdisciplinary nature of business problems
- Create personal networks



Revised Learning Goals

- Enhance oral and written communication skills
- Use ethical thinking in solving business problems
- Learn to build and work effectively in teams
- Understand the cross-functional nature of business problems and strategies



BUS 302 L

- Students are required to pass 6 lower division multiple choice question tests
- Tests cover selected topics in the following lower division courses (LDC): financial accounting, managerial accounting, business law, microeconomics, macroeconomics, and statistics
- Each LDC test has 16 multiple choice questions
- Receiving at least 8 on each test with a total of 56 points (about 60%) qualifies for passing BUS 302L



Gateway Experience Course Delivery

Phase 1

- course introduction, successful team building, creating student teams
- exercises on trust and team rules
- academic honesty forms
- examples of case presentation and information on report writing
- COBAE infomercial team presentation
- business ethics exercises, stakeholders summit
- strategic thinking exercises



Gateway Experience Course Phases

Phase 2

- instructors present first case, students must deliver the first team report
- student team case presentations
- grading case reports (five per team)
- providing feedback on case reports and case presentation
- grading individual writing assignments



Team Formation

- Students are divided into teams of 5 by the instructor using the results of the Humanmetrics-Jung Typology Test
- Each team determines rules of behavior and signs them as the mandatory rules for the entire semester
- Students sign two documents: student ethic of conduct and COBAE core values statement



Team Work

- Each team gives a short presentation about options offered by the College of Business and Economics
- Each team presents one case which includes topics from at least two LDC courses and business ethics
- Each team writes 5 reports on cases assigned at the beginning of semester
- The report includes the executive summary, introduction, body, and conclusion with recommendations plus an appendix with any supporting information (data, computer printouts, graphs, etc)



Methods of Assessing Learning Goals in BUS 302

- Assessment by the College Assessment Director
- Students' responses to a survey posted on the course website
- Instructors responses to questionnaires



Research Hypotheses

- H_a : In BUS 302 course students learn equally well business ethics and strategic thinking
- H_b : In BUS 302 course students learn equally well case analysis and teamwork skills



BUS 302 Assessment by the College Assessment Director (CAD) (Based on the Spring 2006 report)

Course Learning Goals	Not Good Enough (below 70%)	Good Enough (70% to 84.9%)	Very Good (85% or more)
Oral Communication	1.4%	22.3%	76.3%
Written Communication	13.1%	47.8%	39.2%
Ethics in solving business problems	23.2%	52%	25.5%
Effective team work	5.5%	11.4%	83.1%
Understanding cross- functional natures of business problems	9.8%	57%	33.2%

Categories used by the CAD

Performance on goals	Outcome
Less than 70 %	Not good enough
More than 70% but less than 85%	Good enough
85% or more	Very good



Assessment by Students

- 450 students = 70% students enrolled in the course answered a questionnaire posted on the course webpage at the end of the semester on the following questions:
 - improving learning on case analysis
 - improving teamwork skills
 - learning business ethics
 - improving oral communication skills
 - improving writing skills
 - improving knowledge on LDC topics
 - learning about strategic
- Likert scale from 1 to 5 is used, with 1 representing disagreement and 5 representing complete agreement.



Results of Students Surveys (n= 450)

Learning objective	Spring 2006 mean (st.dev)
Case Analysis	4.00 (0.85)
Teamwork Skills	3.94 (0.89)
Business Ethics	3.83 (0.82)
Strategic Thinking	3.69 (0.88)

Instructors' Survey

- The third tool in the internal assessment was instructors survey
- 25 out of 36 instructors teaching BUS 302 responded
- Likert scale from 1 to 5 was applied



Summary of Faculty Responses

Learning Objective	Mean (st. deviation)
Case Analysis	4.32 (0.80)
Teamwork Skills	4.24 (0.88)
Business Ethics	3.68 (1.18)
Strategic Thinking	3.36 (1.15)



Students and Faculty Perceptions on Learning Business Ethics and Strategic Thinking

- Using t-test and students responses our Hypothesis H_a is rejected at a 1% level of significance (p -value = 0.0137)
- Students do not learn equally well business ethics and strategic thinking
- Using t-test and faculty responses our hypothesis H_a is not rejected
- There is a gap between students and faculty perceptions on students' learning of business ethics (0.20) and strategic thinking (0.33)



Students' and Faculty Perceptions on Learning Case Analysis and Teamwork

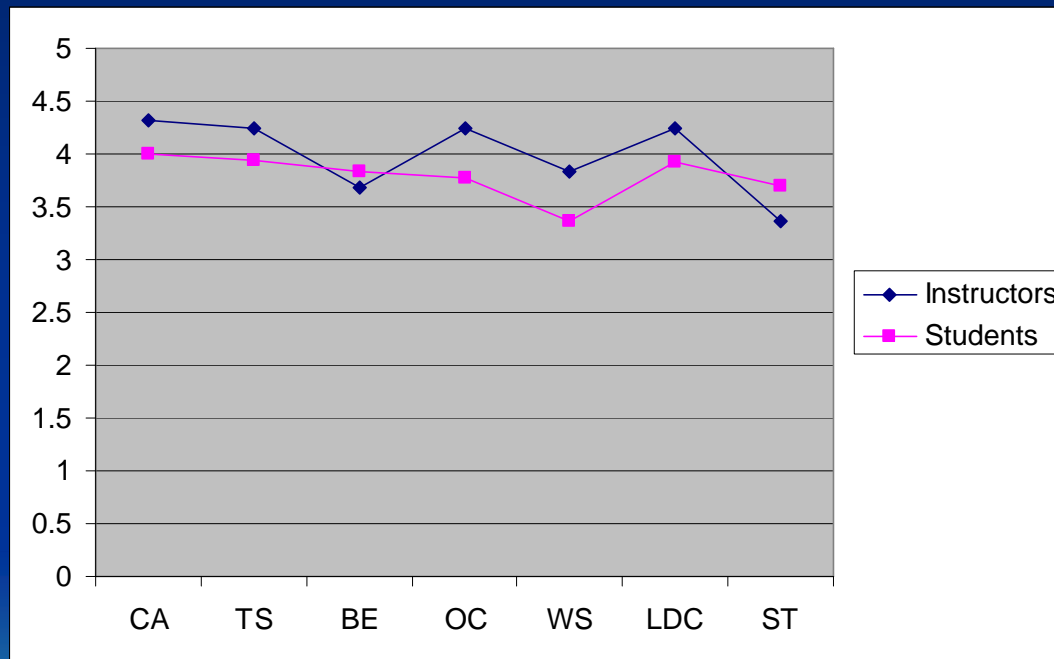
Using t-test and students responses our Hypothesis H_0 is not rejected (p-value = 0.0137)
Students learn equally well case analysis and teamwork skills

Using t-test and faculty responses our hypothesis H_0 is not rejected

However, there is a gap between students and faculty perceptions on students' learning of case analysis (0.32) and teamwork skills (0.30)



Gap Analysis



Examples of Cases in BUS 302

- Let's Go To The Movies
- Bank of Gould
- Chatsworth Sports Products
- Customer claims a refund because of 20 min commercials
- Unprofessional financial statements
- Wrongful termination of disabled workers



More Examples

- ACME Electronics
- Blufield Health Plan
- Day at a Spa
- Wrongful release of private data left on the hard disk
- Increasing deductible in an insurance plan
- Heart attack of a non-member



Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Gateway Experience course helps students to
 - learn how to do case analysis
 - improve teamwork skills
 - learn business ethics
 - practice strategic thinking



Conclusions and Recommendations (continued)

- There are gaps between faculty perceptions and students perceptions, especially in learning Business Ethics and strategic management
- There are gaps between faculty perceptions and students perceptions on learning case analysis and teamwork skills
- Improvements will be seek in these areas



Conclusions and Recommendations

- Annual retreats for faculty teaching BUS 302 should be continued
- Course assessments by employees and alumni must be conducted
- Continuous course improvement is recommended



Questions?

Thank you !

