

Overview

This study examined instructor teaching methods and teaching styles in all business disciplines when covering issues of ethics, social responsibility, sustainability/natural environment, or social entrepreneurship in their courses. The descriptive findings focus on similarities and differences between pedagogical approaches to undergraduate, graduate, and executive education for PRME related topic areas.

Research Questions

1. What methods are most commonly used when covering these topics in business courses?
2. What are the similarities and differences between pedagogical approaches at undergraduate, graduate, and executive levels?
3. Are there discernible differences between pedagogical practices within the business disciplines?

Literature Review

While calls for increased attention to sustainability and corporate social responsibility in the management curriculum are broad and ongoing, little attention has been paid to the means by which these topics are covered, i.e., *teaching practices*. An exception is research undertaken by the Ashridge Centre for Business in Society that reported executives' perceptions of optimum pedagogical approaches for social responsibility/sustainability mindset and skills development (Gitsham, 2008; Gitsham et al, n.d.).

As management educators, we lack a basic understanding of *how* ethics and CSR content is being delivered to students, even with the increasing scholarship of teaching and learning focused on ethics and CSR issues, and the ways in which students are developing the management and organizational skills necessary for dealing with them. The closest commentaries, in the form of advocacies and anecdotal cases, come from a Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) working group and the Aspen Institute.

The PRME working group on New Learning Methodologies advocated for, "adapt[ing] existing methodologies such as case studies to the new paradigm shift and, if necessary, consider the opportunity of expanding the range of learning opportunities" (PRME working group, 2008, 2). Some of their methodological suggestions included experiential learning, action learning, service learning, project based learning and work-based learning (PRME working group, 2008, 5-6). The Aspen Institute noted evidence in a recent webinar that more schools are embedding action learning approaches within MBA programs to bridge the theory practice divide (Leimsider & McGaw, 2010).

Methodology

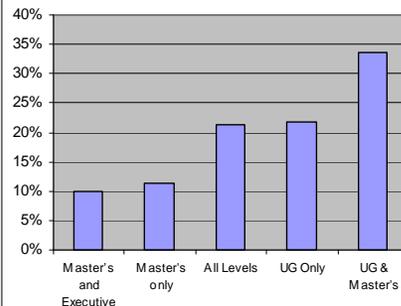
Sample. We collected data from an on-line survey tool from November 2009 to February 2010. The sample (N=280) included participants from 29 countries. 21.8% of respondents teach at all three levels (undergraduate, Master's, executive), 33.6% teach at UG and Master's levels, 21.4% teach at UG only, 11.4% teach at Master's only, and 10.0% teach at Master's and Executive. Of those indicating the location where they conduct the majority of their teaching, 65% teach in North America, 15% teach in Europe, and 19% teach in other regions.

Analysis. To date our analysis has focused on exploring descriptive and cross-tabbed statistics.

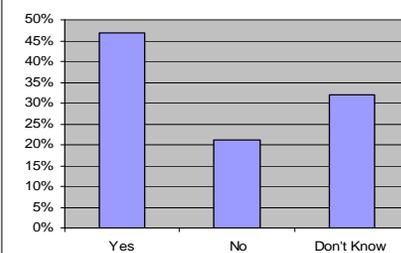
Findings

Our findings involve universal and unique patterns of how PRME related content is delivered in business classrooms across levels and the extent to which instructors are aware of their institution's PRME involvement. Specifically, we note the widespread use of class discussion and case studies methods across all levels. In addition, we find that instructors who teach at multiple levels employ more instructional strategies across all levels and that those who teach only at one level - for example, the master's level - utilize fewer instructional strategies. Finally, we note that currently PRME involvement does not appear to have an influence on breadth or type of teaching methods.

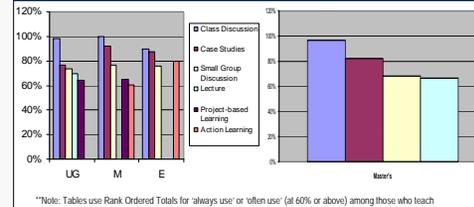
Business Student Instruction Level



PRME Participation

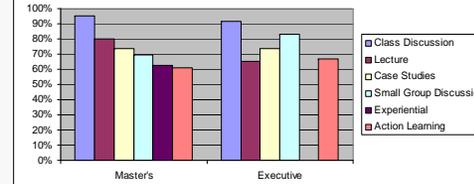


All Levels & Master's Only Level

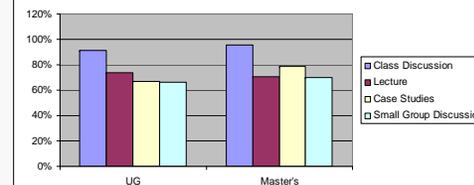


*Note: Tables use Rank Ordered Totals for 'always use' or 'often use' (at 60% or above) among those who teach

Master's & Executive Levels



Undergraduate & Master's Levels



Conclusions

We extend the conversation about pedagogical methods by offering the first descriptive snapshot of the learning process from the instructor's perspective for PRME related topics. Our survey broadens the instructional methods conversation by assessing the use of classroom discussion, so far excluded from the writings on the topic. Additionally, we include all levels of business education instruction in our sample. This we hope will help bring our attention to other marginalized levels of business instruction, namely undergraduate level. The inclusion of undergraduate in the pedagogy conversation is essential since the majority of business degrees offered in the U.S. are at this level and the undergraduate business students today are the potential graduate MBA students of tomorrow.

The limitations of the study include reliability issues such as the use of self-report data, the lack of quantified or rank order data on instructional methods that could provide quantification of actual usage, and the statistically insignificant subsamples for many business disciplines. Future studies should work to capture data from more non-management business disciplines and include rank ordered or quantified data.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we interpret the broader range of teaching methods for those who teach at all levels?
2. Why are such a large percentage of respondents uncertain if their institution endorses PRME? What are the implications?
3. How can we facilitate broader engagement with PRME research and initiatives across all business disciplines?

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Acknowledgements & Contact Information

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Dr. Jeanie Forray
Associate Prof. of Management
Western New England College
1215 Wilbraham Road,
Springfield, MA 01119
Email: jforray@wnec.edu
(ph): 1-413-782-1702

Dr. Jennifer S. A. Leigh
Assistant Prof. of Management
Nazareth College
4245 East Avenue
Rochester, NY 14618
Email: jleigh4@zimbra.naz.edu
(ph): 1-585-389-2515