Motivating Student Learning

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Abstract

After more than 20 years in various sales and marketing roles, I have recently changed careers to lecturing business studies subjects within the HETAC framework. I decided to use the opportunity to conduct an action research project to address student engagement and explore strategies to encourage the students to take ownership of the learning by engaging in classroom activities. My concern therefore resulted in the following action research question:

'If students are encouraged to engage in open discussions regarding the course content, will this motivate them to take ownership of their own learning?'

The methodology applied in this research uses the five phases of Susmans action research model (1983). The five stages includes: diagnosing, action planning, taking action, evaluating, specifying learning and then repeating the process multiple times. I undertook two action research cycles to explore and respond to this question during a six week period which began in March 2011. My students were a small group (9 students) studying their 1st year of a higher certificate course in business studies. Having gathered data from cycle 1 and reflecting upon it, I commenced my second action research cycle responding to the learning and further needs which emerged during cycle 1.

During this research I uncovered unexpected issues which are outlined in my findings: for example, differing learning cultures between second and third level education. I expect that the issues uncovered are not unique to my small group of students and other lecturers have had similar experiences and I hope that the recommendations provided in this report will be of use to the reader.

Introduction

Having worked in various management roles in sales and marketing for the past 15 years, I changed careers and have recently been appointed a teaching position at Griffith College Dublin. My students are studying for a higher certificate in business, stage 1 level 6 within the HETAC framework. Although I have provided many presentations in the course of my career, this is my first professional teaching role.

My area of concern has arisen as a direct result of my experience as a mature student having returned to full-time education to complete my studies. I recently undertook a masters' degree with the intention of gaining the necessary qualifications which would allow me to teach in higher education. During the course of my studies, my learning experience was very positive and I thoroughly enjoyed the process. However, I noted that in the majority of cases, the principle teaching approach adopted by my lecturers was one of knowledge transmission to the students, who in turn must absorb the information. Crucially, this approach was applied to the communication of expected learning outcomes and associated benefits for students, which were briefly mentioned but rarely reinforced.

In my experience, this one directional knowledge transmission approach by teachers creates an authoritative environment and can leave students feeling insecure about revealing their lack of understanding of the subject. At best, this approach has little impact or at worse a negative impact, on student learning.

In light of this, I would like to involve the students in the learning process and therefore my research question is, ***'If students are encouraged to engage in open discussions regarding the course content, will this motivate them to take ownership of their own learning?'*** I anticipate that this approach will help students improve their questioning and answering skills which I feel are very important learning tools.

Many different activities can be conducted within the learning environment to motivate students and facilitate learning. Elton (2001) argues that for 'deep learning' to take place the students must be actively involved in the learning process. The various different teaching methods used must therefore actively involve the students. Gibbs et al. suggest improving students' notes using handouts and articles to minimise note taking in class and encourage attention and participation instead.

 Sustained and unchanging low level activity lowers concentration, according to Biggs and Tang (2007), and as a result the learning activity should change every fifteen minutes or so to restore student attention and learning. Many alternative activities suggested as particularly successful include: a paired activity in which students explain the subject matter to each other with unanswered queries passed to the lecturer, mid-lecture buzz break for discussions in small groups, individual problem solving, short quiz breaks, multiple choice questions, quiet time etc. Andersen (1996).

My current class: Demographic Profile

My students are in their first year of a higher certificate course in business studies. Upon completion of the certificate they have the option to continue their education to degree level. It is a small group with a total of 9 members. Of these, 5 students are Irish nationals and 4 are non-nationals. For the non-national students where English is not their first language, their

English language skills are of a reasonable standard. I have not been made aware of any students with specific learning disabilities.

As such, I feel it is important to set the stage for effective teaching and learning. My intention is to involve students by getting them to agree to participate in specific tasks that will encourage them to interact and facilitate discussion. The following report describes my action research project.

Methodology

Susman's Action Research Model

The methodology applied in this research used the five phases of Susman's action research model (1983). Susman's model provided structure from which a plan of action emerged and was implemented. Throughout the process questionnaires, interviews, feedback quizzes, reflective journal and conversations with my critical friend aided the collection and analysis of data in terms of how successful each action had been with a view to re-evaluate before moving on to the second cycle. During the second cycle, additional data were collected and upon completion of the second cycle, all data were interpreted and findings reported.
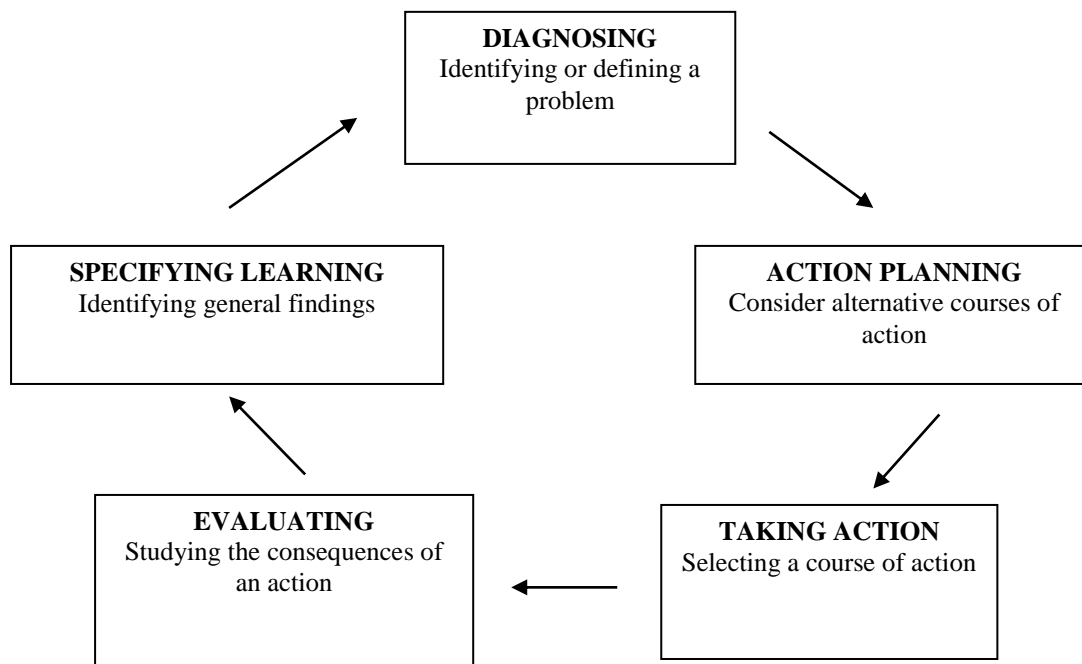

DIAGNOSING
Identifying or defining a problem

SPECIFYING LEARNING
Identifying general findings

ACTION PLANNING
Consider alternative courses of action

EVALUATING
Studying the consequences of an action

TAKING ACTION
Selecting a course of action

Figure 1: *Detailed Action Research Model (Adapted from Gerald Susman, 1983)*

Analysis of the qualitative data

Common themes in responses were sorted into different categories as outlined in the 'findings' section. These were interpreted to find meaningful patterns in terms of this research question. Analysis of the qualitative data involved measuring words in both written and verbal form in order to find these meanings. It should be noted that the sample used was quite small and therefore it is recognised that the qualitative findings are limited.

Revised Two Factor Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ)

One of the data gathering tools used was Biggs Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ). The SPQ Questionnaire has been designed to help teachers evaluate the learning approaches of their students Biggs et al (2001). The questionnaire has two main scales Deep Approach (DA) and Surface Approach (SA) with four sub-scales, Deep Motive (DM), Deep Strategy (DS), Surface Motive (SM), and Surface Strategy (SS).

This questionnaire was completed by the students at the beginning of this research. Scores for both Deep and Surface Approaches to learning were calculated from an accumulation of the sub-scales scores. For the purpose of this report I have focused on scores for the two main scales i.e. Deep and Surface Approaches. Scores were calculated using the methodology outlined by Biggs which were then compared to 'typical' norms also provided by Biggs.

In order to explore this research question, I undertook two action research cycles. These are described below.

Action Research Cycle 1

Week 1

The students were hesitant to contribute to my invitations to discuss the content. I initiated the discussion by inviting student observations but due to the poor response I felt it was necessary to re-frame this in the form of questions. The answers provided were brief with little elaboration. As such, it is necessary to provide continuous encouragement alongside activities that are of interest to the students. *(Appendix 3, Journal 1st March)*

Week 2

I introduced alternative activities as I felt the activity of the previous session was a little unstructured for the students. This time I felt that a case study and the problem based scenario would provide a good point of focus to discuss the theories. The students reacted well to both activities which suggest that the activities provided a good learning platform. This is evidenced by the students' responses to the instant feedback questionnaire I provided them with at the end of class. All of the students responded favourably to question 3 i.e. 'Today's class activities helped me with my understanding of the topic'. *(Appendix 4, Instant Feedback Questionnaire # 2)*8

Week 3

In week three I provided a short recap lecture using power point with a short review of what was covered in the previous session. I then introduced a case study exercise to be read in pairs for 10-15 minutes and then questions and answers involving the class as a whole. I decided to use this activity because I had been encouraged by the students' reaction to the case study exercise during the previous week. I explained the learning outcomes which were displayed on the overhead projector. I also articulated what I expected the students to do and how this would be of benefit to them. At the end of the class I gave a short quiz i.e. two

questions relating to the learning outcomes. I had also purchased a power point 'clicker' which allowed me to roam around the classroom and sit with students during discussion without having to physically be at the top of the class near my laptop. I noted in my reflective journal that the students reacted favourably to this. *(Appendix 5, Journal 29th March)*

Week 4

Week four attendance was very poor i.e. only 2 students out of 9 came to class. This was most likely due to very heavy rain that morning! I provided both of the students with coloured post-its and put a list of adjectives on the overhead projector. I asked them to write each of the adjectives on the post-its and I divided the whiteboard in two i.e. leader and manager. The students were then invited to place each post-it on what they considered the appropriate side of the board. When completed I discussed with them the rationale of their choices and, where they put the same adjective or phrase on opposition sides of the board, I encouraged them to justify to one another why they chose this. I noted that even though the students did not know one another prior to the course, and were from different countries, both students engaged well with this activity and both remarked positively when asked about its effectiveness. *(Appendix 6, Journal 30th March)*

Action Research Cycle 2

During weeks 1 and 2 of arc 2, I used the teaching exercises that I found to be most effective during arc 1. During week 2 of arc 1, I noted that students reacted well to case studies and scenario based exercises and therefore made the decision to use similar activities during arc 2. These activities allowed me to question students individually which I noted during arc 1, is an effective way of engaging the students. I repeated the same process as arc 1, however, periodically I reminded the students that engagement through discussion is a core theme to the learning environment and I explained the benefits of engaging for the students.

During this period I noted improvement in students' responses to end of session quizzes *(Appendix 11 & 12)* and to questions put to them individually during class. However students continued to be reactive only, with virtually no enquiries initiated by the students themselves.

Findings & Recommendations

Having undertaken the action research, key findings and specific recommendations for actions are outlined below.

Finding No 1 *My Research Question*

Overall in response to my research question, I found that students can be encouraged to take ownership of their learning through engagement in class discussion through structured class activities. This was evidenced by improvements to class participation using case studies and short quizzes. *(Appendix 5, Journal 29th March)* The ability to achieve this however, was challenged by a number of factors including previous learning culture and experience of group work as outlined below.

Recommendation 1 – **Induction:** Students new to higher education should be provided with a coherent induction process. The induction should ask the students what their expectations are and it should be explained what is expected of them. It should also identify choices faced by

the students in terms of their approach to learning and emphasis the differences between second and third level education.

Finding No 2 *Previous Learning Culture*

Through discussions with the students, it became clear that their previous learning culture at second level is considerably different to their current environment *(Appendix 9, Critical Friend Correspondence 14th April), (Appendix 47, end ARC 1 conversation transcript).* Students are used to an autocratic approach at second level and are unsure how to deal with a culture that encourages students to take ownership of their own learning.

Recommendation 2 – **Leadership**. Provide appropriate leadership to address differences in learning cultures between second and third level education. Leaders should examine ways of bridging these cultural differences to reduce students being 'overwhelmed' when they make the move from second to third level. An induction process would be a good starting point however, additional more long term efforts could be made to address this. New students seek guidance and welcome instructions and it would make sense to 'climatise' the students by adopting an teaching and learning approach they are familiar with while simultaneously guiding them towards a more responsible approach to their learning.

Finding No 3 *Group work*

Related to finding number 2 above, I unearthed evidence that first year students are relatively unfamiliar with working in groups. They work well as individuals but have expressed concerns regarding group dynamics i.e. they are concerned about how others' performance may impact how they are perceived by their peers. This illustrates a strong sense of individualism and the desire to keep control of ones own circumstances. *(Appendix12, start of ARC 2 interview transcript)*

Recommendation 3 – **Group Assignments Guidelines**. Specific guidance and clearer criteria should be provided to the students when they are asked to participate in group assignments.. Assurances and control mechanisms should be articulated to the students to provide guidelines regarding individual performances and how they will be assessed. Lecturers should be explicit about their support for groups and how disputes can be managed during the process.

Finding No. 4 *Surface V Deeper Learning*

Evidence provided at the start of this research process indicated that this group of students display average levels of deep orientations towards learning. *(Appendix 1: SPQ Questionnaire).* This orientation for this group of young students was encouraged by providing activities and directly questioning individual students *(Appendix 5: Journal 29th March).* Development of this orientation was slightly hindered due to students reluctance to respond to group questions but rather preferred to answer questions posed individually *(Appendix 7: End of ARC 1 conversation transcript).*

Recommendation 4 – **'Participative' marking for 1st year students**. Marks should be awarded to 1st year students who engage in classroom. 1st year students should be rewarded for preparing for class and their subsequent engagement in class.

Finding No 5 *Self Reflection*

While conducting this research I used a reflective journal to record events soon after they occurred. This was very useful as perspectives can change with the passing of time and it helped me to focus on what occurred at that moment. It also helped inform me with preparation for the following class (Appendix 5: Journal 29th March), (Appendix 6: Journal 30th March), (Appendix 7: End of ARC 1 conversation transcript), (Appendix 10: Feedback Quiz)

Recommendation 5 – **Self Reflection for all lecturers.** The use of self reflection should be encouraged for all lecturers to help them monitor and improve their own teaching practice. Using the college intranet, a template could be posted 'online' allowing lecturers ease of access. The information entered by lecturers could be assessed by the college's centre of excellence to evaluate the needs of both lectures and students.

Finding No 6 *Collaboration*

The challenges I faced during this research were not unique to my own teaching as discovered during informal discussions with colleagues. Other lecturers of the same students noted in conversation, the passitivity of the students and offered their own explanations as to why this is the case, most common of which was the fact that the students are quite inexperienced. This was borne in conversation with my critical friend (Appendix 3: Reflective Journal 1st March), (Appendix 9, Critical Friend Correspondence 14th April)

Recommendation 6 – **A collaborative effort by colleagues.** Course lecturers should collaborate with the Centre for Academic Excellence and gain support from the department head. Regular meetings should be held to discuss pedagogical practices which would help lecturers deal with the challenges and share experiences for better practice in relation to class activities.

Conclusions and Future Work

This paper provides a good insight into the education situation and provides critical analysis and evaluation of students taking ownership of their learning. Findings and consequential action are presented along with insightful and relevant commentary on possibilities for the future of this teaching and learning environment.

Engagement with students through conversation and discussion is a tried and tested approach to education. Not surprisingly, first year students tend to opt out of group discussions and are happy to allow the lecturer to 'provide' knowledge in a transactional fashion. Young students need to be given a set of realistic and clear criteria to improve their 'in-class' questioning and answering skills. The use of various teaching and learning techniques can be effective however these alone are insufficient to encouraging a deeper learning approach by students. Young students need to be taught how to learn. Additional lecturer supports (see recommendations above) would be very useful to help lecturers share and learn about their pedagogical practices. Future research in this area could focus on lecturers themselves in terms of these possible supports and how they might aid the teaching and learning experience for both lecturers and students.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ)

Appendix 2: Instant Feedback Questionnaire #1

Appendix 3: Reflective Journal 1st March

Appendix 4: Instant Feedback Questionnaire #2

Appendix 5: Reflective Journal 29th March

Appendix 6: Reflective Journal 30th March

Appendix 7: End of ARC 1 Conversation Transcript

Appendix 8: Critical Friend Correspondence 5th April

Appendix 9: Critical Friend Correspondence 14th April

Appendix 10: Feedback quiz (leadership)

Appendix 11: Feedback quiz (motivation)

Appendix 12: Start of ARC 2 interview transcript

References

Andresen, L.W. (1996). Lecturing *to Large Groups: A Guide to Doing it Less...But Better*. Birmingham, Australia: Staff and Educational Development Association.

Biggs, J.B., Kember, D., Leung, D. Y.P. (2001), The revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire: R-SPQ-2F**.** *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71, 133–149

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Appendix 1:
Revised Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F)

This questionnaire has a number of questions about your attitudes towards your studies and your usual way of studying.

There is no *right* way of studying. It depends on what suits your own style and the course you are studying. It is accordingly important that you answer each question as honestly as you can. If you think your answer to a question would depend on the subject being studied, give the answer that would apply to the subject(s) most important to you.

Please fill in the appropriate circle alongside the question number on the 'General Purpose Survey/Answer Sheet'. The letters alongside each number stand for the following response.

A—this item is *never* or *only rarely* true of me
B—this item is *sometimes* true of me
C—this item is true of me about *half the time*
D—this item is *frequently* true of me
E—this item is *always* or *almost always* true of me

Please choose the *one* most appropriate response to each question. Fill the oval on the Answer Sheet that best fits your immediate reaction. Do not spend a long time on each item: your first reaction is probably the best one. Please answer each item.

Do not worry about projecting a good image. Your answers are CONFIDENTIAL.
Thank you for your co-operation.

1. I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

2. I find that I have to do enough work on a topic so that I can form my own conclusions before I am satisfied.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

3. My aim is to pass the course while doing as little work as possible.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

4. I only study seriously what's given out in class or in the course outlines.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

5. I feel that virtually any topic can be highly interesting once I get into it.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

6. I find most new topics interesting and often spend extra time trying to obtain more information about them.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

7. I do not find my course very interesting so I keep my work to the minimum.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

8. I learn some things by rote, going over and over them until I know them by heart even if I do not understand them.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

9. I find that studying academic topics can at times be as exciting as a good novel or movie.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

10. I test myself on important topics until I understand them completely.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

11. I find I can get by in most assessments by memorising key sections rather than trying to understand them.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

12. I generally restrict my study to what is specifically set as I think it is unnecessary to do anything extra.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

13. I work hard at my studies because I .nd the material interesting.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

14. I spend a lot of my free time finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in different classes.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

15. I find it is not helpful to study topics in depth. It confuses and wastes time, when all you need is a passing acquaintance with topics.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

16. I believe that lecturers shouldn't expect students to spend significant amounts of time studying material everyone knows won't be examined.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

17. I come to most classes with questions in mind that I want answering.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

18. I make a point of looking at most of the suggested readings that go with the lectures.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

19. I see no point in learning material which is not likely to be in the examination.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

20. I find the best way to pass examinations is to try to remember answers to likely questions.

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.   E

SPQ RESULTS

	Std = Student													
	Std 1	Decile	Std 2	Decile	Std 3	Decile	Std 4	Decile	Std 5	Decile	Std 6	Decile	Std 7	Decile
DM	24	5	22	3	28	9	22	3	28	9	20	2	26	6
DS	26	8	20	3	26	8	16	1	24	6	22	4	20	3
SM	18	3	18	3	10	1	14	1	8	1	12	1	16	2
SS	14	2	16	3	30	10	20	7	20	7	22	7	14	2
AM	22	7	16	3	14	2	10	1	18	5	18	1	14	2
AS	18	5	16	3	14	2	16	3	20	6	18	5	24	2
		Ave												
SA	32	**40**	34		40		34		28		34		30	
DA	50	**47**	42		54		38		52		42		46	
AA	40	**40**	32		28		26		38		36		38	
		Ave												
SA	33	**40**												
DA	46	**47**												
AA	34	**40**												

SPQResults
7 attendees out of 9

	A	B	C	D	E	TOTAL	A	B	C	D	E
Q1	0	3	1	1	2	7	0%	**43%**	14%	14%	29%
Q2	1	2	2	1	1	7	14%	**29%**	**29%**	14%	14%
Q3	1	3	1	0	2	7	14%	**43%**	14%	0%	29%
Q4	0	3	1	1	2	7	0%	**43%**	14%	14%	29%
Q5	2	3	0	1	1	7	29%	**43%**	0%	14%	14%
Q6	1	1	4	1	0	7	14%	14%	**57%**	14%	0%
Q7	2	2	1	2	0	7	**29%**	**29%**	14%	**29%**	0%
Q8	1	3	1	0	2	7	14%	43%	14%	0%	**29%**
Q9	4	2	0	0	1	7	**57%**	29%	0%	0%	14%
Q10	1	1	1	3	1	7	14%	14%	14%	**43%**	14%
Q11	1	1	3	1	1	7	14%	14%	**43%**	14%	14%
Q12	2	1	1	1	2	7	**29%**	14%	14%	14%	**29%**
Q13	0	1	2	2	2	7	0%	14%	**29%**	**29%**	**29%**
Q14	3	1	1	1	1	7	**43%**	14%	14%	14%	14%
Q15	2	2	3	0	0	7	29%	29%	**43%**	0%	0%
Q16	1	1	2	2	1	7	14%	14%	**29%**	**29%**	14%
Q17	1	3	1	2	0	7	14%	**43%**	14%	29%	0%
Q18	1	1	1	2	2	7	14%	14%	14%	**29%**	**29%**
Q19	2	1	2	1	1	7	**29%**	14%	**29%**	14%	14%
Q20	1	2	1	3	0	7	14%	29%	14%	**43%**	0%

Below is a list of topics covered in class today. Please indicate which of these your understood (Best) and which you did not (Blur).

	BEST	BLUR
1. **Scientific Management**		
2. **Hawthorne Studies**		
3. **Behavioural Management Theory**		
4. **Management Science Theory**		
5. **Contingency Theory**		
6. **Maslows Hierarchy of Needs**		
7. **Herzberg's two factor theory**		
8. **McGregor's x y theory**		
9. **Expectancy Theory**		
10. **Equity Theory**		
11. **Overview of Evolution of Management Theory and how it links in to work motivation**		
12. **Overview of Motivation Theories and why they are important**		
13. **Difference between Needs Theories and Content Theories**		

Appendix 3: Reflective Journal 1st March (extract)..

1st session with students.....

Own Observations immediately after lesson

Ran out of time! Got 8 out of 13 topics covered
Very difficult to elicit responses from students during discussion
difference in students attitude to the process (one or two visibly more interested than others)
At discussion stage, should have reminded students of learning outcomes on slide

Critical Friend observations after lesson (discussion over coffee)

Discussion 10 min interval quality of questions should be less open ended
Students very difficult to engage
Level of academic ability relatively limited at this stage
Suggested using small practical problems (instead of open ended questions)
Invite students to resolve and discuss
Too much content, too demanding
Resulting in no depth, context, application
Suggested to consider how many contact hours with students and relate this to syllabus. Using this, topic prioritisation is required and consider what students will consider challenging.

Appendix 4: Instant Feedback Questionnaire #2

Session 3 Feedback

Please choose the one most appropriate response to each question that best fits your immediate response. The questions relate to the class you have just taken. Each letter stands for the following response:

A – I completely agree
B – I agree
C – I disagree
D – I completely disagree

1. I understood the purpose of this class

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

2. I feel the topic covered is important and worth studying

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

3. Today's class activity helped me with my understanding of the topic

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

4. I prefer a class format delivered by the lecturer and I am passive

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

5. I prefer a class format delivered through open discussion

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

6. I will ask the lecturer when there is something I do not understand

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

7.   I would like to see more activities in class that would allow me to get involved and express myself

ANS: A.   B.   C.   D.

Session 3 Instant Questionnaire 6 attendees out of 9				
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**
Q1	3	3	0	0
Q2	1	5	0	0
Q3	2	4	0	0
Q4	3	3	0	0
Q5	1	3	2	0
Q6	2	4	0	0
Q7	0	3	3	0

Appendix 5: Journal 29th March (extract)..

Little actual discussion and students actually started discussing other matters relating to assessments being late and final exams. Had to reinforce the need to discuss the topic in their pairs as I would be asking them in few minutes. Discussion was best to date. *A couple of members of the group are more vocal than others. I note that this is generally the same students for each session. However I encouraged everyone to speak by directly questioning students who were less vocal.*
Asked them to be critical of what they read and consider factors that may have influenced the case that were not mentioned in the case itself

Gave class a short quiz i.e. two questions relating to learning outcomes to answer. Answers written were basic but satisfying to some extent (explained that their answers should refer to the theories. Some effort was made but far from comprehensive!) This was the last activity in the class and time ran out.

Bought a new powerpoint 'clicker' which allowed me to roam around the classroom while doing the presentation. This was very useful as it allowed me to sit with the students and move backwards and forwards during our discussion of the case study. There is also a laser pointer which allowed me to point to areas of relevance while discussing. I felt the students reacted well to this as the discussion was the best so far and by sitting next to the students, it was easier to encourage the quieter students to share their opinions.

Appendix 6: Journal 30th March

Very poor attendance. 2 out of 9. Heavy rain this morning.
First 15 mins 7 slides linking old topic to new topic.
Brief explanation of new topic and then focus on one element only i.e. leadership V management. Then exercise using list of 20 adjectives and asked students to select which adjective belonged best to leadership or management. I wrote 'manager' on one side of the whiteboard and 'leader' on the other side and handed coloured post-its to the students. They wrote all 20 adjectives on the post-its and pinned it to the board. The colours helped me identify who had posted what which allowed me to question their reasoning. It also highlighted differences in opinion between the students and I encouraged debate amongst themselves. Class ended with an informal interview with the two students.

In conversation with Martin, I pointed out how slow the process is i.e. 'if I had to teach the complete module, it would be impossible to do so in the manner I have attempted in the last few sessions. The reason being that to date I have taken a simple example or one focal point and carried out an exercise around it. This was the case in today's session but perhaps not in yesterdays as we covered a few motivational theories in one case study which was useful. Need to consider how activities cover the content and the pace of progress. Martin pointed out that at the start I was the opposite i.e. I tried to cram too much into each session. He called this the 'Cinderalla' syndrome i.e. too fast or too slow and now I need to try and get it just right. Martin has sat in on a few of the sessions and has suggested that I speed up a little.

On another note, just a thought, it is evident that those who wish to learn have remained unchanged i.e.from when I first entered the class to date. The less enthusiastic remain unenthusiastic.

Although it is very difficult to get the students to engage, I feel they do enjoy activities in the classroom. A comment today from one of the students confirms this i.e. 'when I can visualise the concept, I understand it better'. This was in response to today's activity using coloured 'post-it' notes and the whiteboard.

Another thought: It is evident that there is a culture of 'getting through' the learning process. This was revealed to me by a discussion in class between students when I had asked them to discuss a case study. I can't change this but I can make the activities as interesting, relevant and productive as possible which may 'linger' with the students beyond the duration of the semester i.e. hopefully they will look back on it as a positive experience and more importantly, remember some of the content (i.e. resulting in a deeper approach to learning)

Appendix 7: End of ARC 1 conversation transcript

5 out of 9 attendees. Audio quality not good.

Me: 'We have looked at motivation and leadership and I would like to ask you a few questions...

Me: Do you think motivation and leadership are important content when studying business studies. Do you think its worthwhile?

Student: I think its relevant.

Me: Does anybody disagree.
Students: No response

Me: Would you prefer to learn from activities or the teacher explaining the theories

Student: Activities.

Me: Can I get a show of hands on this?
Students: No hands for lecture only
Students: Bit of both ie some lecturing mixed with activities

Me: Is there any particular activities that you would like to see more of in class

Student: Video. Some can be very interesting but some are corny

Me: Do think because some students don't like speaking in class, that this is a good reason not to encourage debates in class.
Students: no it is still worth attempting

Me: How do you guys feel about asking questions in class?
Student: Students should ask questions if there is something they don't understand.
Student: I will wait till a later stage because the teacher may repeat or refer to the query and provide an explanation. I will not actively ask questions
Student: If it def coming up on exam I would ask questions

Me: How do you feel about class debates
Student: 2 out of 5 voted in favour
Student: depends if you are in a group the focus might be on one dominant person. Individually you can take control of your learning. In groups you lose some of this control

Me: Do you do other activities in other classes
Student: Apart from this class, we do not discuss how we are learning.
Me: Do other lecturers provide activities
Student: It depends on the subject. Some subjects are better for this. Take accountancy for example, there is not much opportunity for activities. What I would prefer would be in accountancy for the lecturer go through the problem with the class and how the answer is structured and then let the students have a go a resolving a problem. It is difficult to learn without actual 'hands on'

Appendix 8: Critical Friend Correspondence 5th April

Ireland.com Mail Ireland.com Mail   mark.dowling@ireland.com

Independent Learning   05 April 2011 23:19:07

From: martin.murphy@gcd.ie
   To: mark.dowling@ireland.com

```
Hi Mark,

Further to our conversation today, we spoke about time resources and
your concern for the lack of time required to cover the course content
in-depth.  It is worth pointing out that it is expected that the
students should supplement their classroom learning with additional
reading outside of class.


Regards

Martin


-------------------------------------------------------------
This message was sent using IMP, the Internet Messaging Program.
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Appendix 9: Critical Friend Correspondence 14th April

mark.dowling@ireland.com

Class Yesterday!   14 April 2011 11:59:38

From: martin.murphy@gcd.ie

   To: mark.dowling@ireland.com

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Hi Mark


Your conversation with the students yesterday was very interesting.
There is plenty that could be done to help young students make the
move to higher education and reduce attrition for 1st year students.
It might be useful to also consider the demands on lecturers and how
this might conflict with what is required by the students. Did you
happen to look at the "Dream School" programme last night???



Regards

Martin


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This message was sent using IMP, the Internet Messaging Program.
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Appendix 10: Feedback Quiz (Leadership)

12th March 2011

1. Can you briefly explain the difference between management and leadership?

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2. Can you name and briefly describe 3 broad Leadership Styles?

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3. Can you briefly describe the difference between transactional leadership and

transformational leadership?

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Appendix 11: Feedback Quiz (Motivation)

1. Briefly explain what you understand by the underlying concept of motivation?

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_____

_____

_____

2. With reference to motivational theories covered in class, discuss critically the validity of the contention that the motivation for staff to work well depends on more than a high salary and good working conditions.

_____

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Appendix 12: Start of ARC 2 interview transcript

4 attendees.   used this session to speak directly with the students regarding this AR. I gave them my initial conclusions and asked for their comments. The following notes were taken in class by myself and transcribed later the same day.

 Groups
The students generally do not work in groups and have limited experience of doing so (this question was asked explicity. This academic year, they have worked on one main project and occasional class activities. Student commented they prefer to work individually because of the challenges faced in group work i.e. 'it depends on who you get teamed up with'...student also commented that group work is less personal in terms of self development. Another comment made was 'working alone is more effective'.

Some other comments regarding groupwork..

'don't avoid working in groups'
'depends on the group' in ref to perceived quality of the group
'depends on your own experience' in ref to negative experience
'leaving cert is about individuals' offered as explanation to lack of groupwork experience
'sometimes get together with friends and study'
'sometimes if you need extra help you can be isolated from the rest of the class'

Diversity
Students did not know each other before meeting in class. When asked does this provide a good or bad learning environment one student commented that it is a good thing as it makes it easier to talk and discuss if you are unfamiliar with your class colleagues. One other student mentioned that at the start of the year, they were given a few minutes to talk to another classmate and then introduce them to the class. The student commented that this was a good exercise. Another student commented that diversity is good for social and communication reasons

Situation
In order to try and understand how the students made the decision to attend this course, I asked if this was their first choice. One student confirmed that this was not their first choice. One foreign national mentioned that they had studied accountancy in their native country for 3 years and initially attempted to continue studying here but found the language barrier too difficult. The student then switched to this foundation course and hopes to return to accountancy next year. This student also intends to return home to the family business when studies are complete. Most students intend to continue with their studies.

Ownership

Students commented that in college you are responsible for your own learning; this was not the case at second level. 3rd level is a choice. Sometimes this can be overwhelming. One student suggested that students should be given instructions regarding college culture etc initially. 'think about it, for 10 years you are told what to do and then you are given complete freedom to do whatever you want. You do not need to attend all classes because notes are put up on moodle etc. There is nobody to tell you that you must attend class.

On taking ownership of one's own learning, one student suggested that if lecturers are putting a lot of time and effort into the module, then the students should 'give a little back'.

One individual mentioned that they feel they have ownership of their learning i.e. will ask questions freely and the diversity in the class is good.

Another student 'deal with it on a daily basis' Others did not comment

The relationship with the lecturer is important in terms of discussing the learning environment and perhaps suggesting useful activities

One student mentioned they were happy to note that when another student suggested video as a useful activity, that this was acted upon but myself. 'I liked that' was the students comment.

Feedback
When I mentioned that the students did not request any feedback from class activities, the students did not volunteer any responses.

Own Observations:

This discussion too same format as previous activities i.e. had to draw answers from the students even when they were told that my initial conclusions suggested that there is a passive learning culture within this class. This discussion took a similar pattern to previous where answers were provided when individuals were pressed, but not when the group was addressed. The discussion led me to consider that second level education is 'autocratic' and third level is 'laissez-faire'. The students spoke about 'adjusting ' to the third level culture. I note that autocratic and laissez faire are at opposite ends of the leadership style spectrum. This could be a source of 'culture shock' for the students. Perhaps if institutions considered this and made efforts to initiate students autocratically (they are already familiar with this style) then move through 'participative' on on eventually to laissez faire when the students possess the skills.

This is similar to the course content i.e covered leadership with students and it appears that the students would benefit from good leadership in their education. The students expectations and expectations of the providers are not explicit. Young students want to understand what exactly is expected of them. They find this out 'as they go along'. Perhaps some form of pedagogical guidance for students should be provided by all lecturers as well as content or perhaps induction with initial review. Young students will not seek this information but rather, welcome it when presented. 'seeking' information is part of the maturing process that can be aided by the educator.

After Class
My critical friend, Martin handed back assignments to the students. There was 4 students and he provided them each with verbal feedback both positive and critical. Martin assumed an autocratic style. His instructions were quite explicit i.e. his feedback re criteria, layout, referencing, content, practical examples etc..

Before class ended I gave the students a student motivation questionnaire containing 44 questions with responses ranging from 0-7. This has yet to be analysed.