

Using Digital Media and Various Forms of Technology in Teaching

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Abstract: *Digital media and technology are used in our everyday life. But the question is do we, and if we do, how often we use them in the classroom. Their role in education is very important because the way we use these services enhances the quality of teaching and whole education process and thus improving the learning outcomes. Application of new technologies and tools which are available online in the teaching process has a corresponding effect on motivation and learning. The aim of the survey was to assess the frequency of use of digital media (newer multimedia content such as interactive web games, lectures that are designed or accessed using a digital device, including computers, mobile devices, DVDs, CDs and the Internet) and traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers) and social networks (online communities of people who share common interests and/or activities) in teaching, learning and exercise programs, databases, games, experiments in the simulation of complex communication and cooperative environment of the teaching staff of University Centre for Professional studies, with an emphasis on teaching negotiation skills.*

Keywords: *Digital media, teaching, classroom, education.*

Introduction

Negotiation is one of the most important business skills. It is often claimed that to become a successful negotiator it takes you at least 10-year-training. But, companies can not wait that long. Whatsmore, negotiation is believed to be learned best by doing it, to be learned from experience. However, negotiation outcomes cannot be learnt, but the negotiation process can. Negotiation deals with conflict which again leads to heighlighthened emotions. In the classroom, when teaching students or mid-career businessmen, negotiation is taught by simulations, games, role plays, readings, discussions and debriefings. Since teaching negotiation consist of these mentioned above, it is not always predictable what the classroom event will look like. So, teachers have the responsibility of classroom managers, referees, and mediators [1]. As 'a teacher', teacher's role is to convey the expertise through lectures or reading, then to evaluate student's learning and performance. A 'a manager', teacher's role is to conduct the learning experience, prepare materials and organize groups. As 'a referee', the teacher has to define boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in the classroom. Thus teaching negotiation really differs from teaching a more traditional course. All students are equal, the same, but simultaneously they are all different having different background and different learning habits. Learning process is dynamic, especially if we are learning/acquring a new skill.

1. Theory Review

Negotiation is not just one skill or set of skills but it is rather an equation - once mastered it can be used over and over again. It includes various skills:

Mutual gains approach to negotiation

Table 1.

PREPARING FOR NEGOTIATION	CREATING VALUE	CLAIMING VALUE	FOLLOW THROUGH
Clarify your mandate	Listening to and understanding other parties' vlues	Behave in way to build trust	Agree on monitoring agreements
Estimate your Best Alternative To Negotiated Terms	Suspend criticism	Discuss standards or criteria	Make it easy to live up to commitments

Improve your BATNA	Invent without committing	Use neutrals to suggest possible distributions	Align organizational incentives and controls
Know your interests	Generate options and packages	Design nearly self-enforcing agreements	Keep working to improve relationships
Think of their interests	Use neutrals to improve communication		Agree to use neutrals to resolve disagreements
Prepare to suggest mutually beneficial options			

Source: Consensus Building Institute (2003)

This diversity of skills suggests that the best way to teach negotiation is by having students practice in actual conflict settings/simulations. Learning by doing implies that there is an experience and the doing causes thought patterns and theory-practice connections to change. Learning from experience is nowadays called the experiential theory [2,3]. There are three theories that have a significant role in experiential theory and construct it as well.

a. Dewey's theory

Simulations are art of experiential theory. Dewey [4] claimed that every experience modifies the one who undergoes it and this modification affects the qualities of subsequent (following) experiences. One aspect of this theory is that experiential learning can't happen to the person acting alone - the environment is also important. Also, objective conditions of the learning to take place include everything; from the physical conditions in the classroom to the learner's social and economic class. Also his theory includes collateral learning. It means that a student learns a skill relevant to a particular experience and simultaneously he or she forms attitudes and preferences he/she carries forward to apply in the situations to come.

b. Lewin's theory

He implies that participants in training learn the best when involved in reflecting on or discussing their experience with both, other participants and non-participant psychologists. Lewin begins with the personal experience as the first stage. He says that learning is optimized when observation of experience and action forward a desired goal are integrated and balanced [5].

c. Theory based on cognitive psychology

Jean Piaget [6] constructs cognitive structures through two major processes:

- 1) Assimilation- in which new information is integrated into existing structures. It means that the new experience is consistent with one's cognitive structures and experience is easily integrated into it
- 2) Accomodation- challanges our established perceptions. Our existing knowledges are challenged and we seek new ways of understanding our experience. So, learning occurs through reorganization of our cognitive structres.

These three theories, although different, stress that learning is a continual process of confronting and resolving conflicts between 'theories-in-use' and experience. Experiential learning consists of ideas and concepts being formed, challenged and re-formed in multipled, often linked, experiences.

When teaching negotiation it is the best if students are taught something they can immidiately use in real life situations [7]. However, learning process is complex, not linear, especially if you are learning a new skill, and it is time consuming. When five leading negotiators in the field of negotiation were questioned, their answers were more or less similar. They all use games, simulations, cases, role-plays and real-life applications in their teaching. And according to them, the best way to teach negotiation is by using simulations in combination with other games, cases and reading [8, 9]. Simulations are like a basis of experiential learning. Simulations model a complex process or reality. They place participants

in an assigned role in a specific situation and challenge them to find ways to address circumstances and consequences likely to follow from various course of action. They can be computer-based packages of information or not, be carried out by face-to-face interaction but they certainly offer a safe setting without costly errors in which experimentation is encouraged. According to five leading teachers in the field of negotiation [10], computer-based simulations cannot replace the real-life dynamic that face-to-face simulations offer. Simulations combine elements of games and role-plays. But, participants in games seek solutions that fit the elements of the games, and participants in a role-play have to acquire/fit characteristics assigned to each participant. Product/outcome of taking part in a simulation is learning. However, simulations are useless unless the gained experience is shared among all the participants. The sharing of experience has to be carefully led by the instructor so that the participants do not become additionally confused because during the post-simulation discussion/debriefing, the learning takes place. Simulations cannot be used to supplement traditional curricula, or like isolated exercises, but they work best when they are part of an overall teaching strategy, grounded on experiential learning. There are four basic suggestions for using simulations to teach negotiation [11]: start simple, rely on layering, encourage constant reflections and use mixed media. Starting simple means using games that have very little to do with real-life situations, but contain the 'aha' effect which means the students realize the point. One of the examples of such a game is 'Sally Soprano' in which a negotiator has to negotiate a job for an elderly opera singer. Layering means that each simulation should build on the themes of previous simulations, then more parties can be included in order to understand the interests of several players, and later on topics that relate to real life can be included. Discussions, reflections or debriefings are important for the learning to take place [12]. Students should keep journal of their records so that later on they can review what they have learnt.

An example of simulation is Harbco. It is a multi-party, multi-issue, face-to-face negotiation, organized by Federal Licencing Agency. Participants are the representative of the environmental coalition, a spokesperson for the Federation of labor union, a representative of a consortium of other parts in the region, senior staff for the Federal Department of Coastal Resources, and the Governor of the host state. They negotiate over five controversial issues. Every participant is given general instruction, but they are as well given confidential instructions they must not share with other participants since they are designed to create deliberate conflicts among the parties leaving room for agreement. They also provide each participant with a desired set of outcomes. The negotiation includes periodic votes on five issues. The parties score each issue based on the points assigned in their confidential instructions. The simulation is arranged so that a high scoring issue for one party is a low scoring issue for another party. One objective is to highlight the possibility that parties can work together to achieve a high score. There are two possible agreements with only nine being six-way agreements.

From this simulation three lessons are taught:

- 1) Importance of understanding one's Best Alternative To Negotiated Agreement (BATNA);
- 2) Opportunities to create value even in situations that are usually competitive;
- 3) Multy party negotiations often hinge on the creation of winning or blocking coalitions.

Simulation illustrates how negotiators must best understand their BATNA by using a simple scoring system [13]. The second insight for the participants is to realize that joint-gains are possible because each player attaches a different level of importance to each issue being negotiated. The third lesson highlights how coalitions are fragile. The stability of the coalition depends on each party understanding the interests of other parties and being creative about identifying shared interests. For this simulation it takes three hours, and like many other simulations it is the best if two or three groups perform it, so that negotiation outcomes can be compared. If the outcomes can be compared, it means this is a scorable simulation [14]. The disadvantage of scorable simulations is that the creativity to think outside the frame of things that can be scored counts for nothing.

2. Survey

For the purpose of this research we carried out a survey among the professors at the University of Split. They were questioned about ways they teach their subjects, and apart from traditional theoretical teaching, what other techniques they use during their lectures. 60 professors were questioned. In the classroom all of them have access to the Internet, TV, DVD player and the radio. Only 70% of them have the access to daily newspapers to be used during the lesson, and as many have the access to the video camera. However, only 10% have the access to the conference equipment which may be very useful for the simulation of the negotiation. However, only 58% of the teachers use the digital equipment twice a week, while the remaining 42% use it at least once a month. However, if we take a look at the ages of the questioned teachers, these percentages are even more different. 67% of those up to the age of 50 use digital technology more often. That is twice as much than the modest 33% of professors older than 50. What's more, those younger than 50, not only use the digital technology, but they also use social networks like Facebook and Twitter for their lectures.

When we talk about using newer digital media and technology in teaching, out of these 60 teachers only half of them uses games or simulations. Others, either teach it through readings, or by showing examples and diagrams of outcomes carried out on foreign universities, which again are available on the Internet. The reason for this, they say, is a large curriculum which cannot be carried out completely and the students' lack of interest for anything but traditional teaching that provides them with the information to be taught for the test.

The other half that uses games and simulations in teaching, also agree that the students often lack the interest and willingness to do what they are told to outside the classroom (like journals and diaries). However, these teachers are persistent in their attempts to prepare the students for the real-life situations, saying that if they teach, for example, only one student per generation how to negotiate effectively, they have done a lot.

Out of thirty teachers from this group, 20% of them has enough pupils to divide them into three or four groups when doing scorable simulations which allows them to compare the outcomes later on. However, they say that because of the large curriculum it is difficult to do more than one simulation per semester.

Conclusions

We live in a world in which it is impossible to live without the digital technology because it is all around us. This also means that in teaching, i.e. in preparing students for life, the technology has become an inevitable means of lecturing. This is especially the fact when we teach negotiation. Negotiation is agreed to be one of the most important skills for the businessmen, and thus it is important to be well acquainted with this skill in order to be successful in your business life. Those teaching it, have stated, from their own experience, that it is taught the best by doing it. So, in order to gain experience in negotiating you must negotiate. To prepare the students for the real life, the teachers prepare simulations and games, which are later on discussed so that the experiences can be shared and some lessons from them can be learnt. In teaching simulations, technology is inevitable. It is used either for filming the groups or for comparing the outcomes. Simulations and games however cannot be separated from traditional way of teaching. They just complement it. As we have seen from the survey carried out among 60 teachers at The University of Split, only half of them when teaching use simulations or games, while the other half only talks about the traditional way, thus leaving the students without any experience and completely ill-equipped for the real life. The solution for this, in the case of negotiation course, may be in separating negotiation as a separate subject, which will allow the teacher with more time to prepare and do simulations since they say that the curriculum is too large to use any other techniques other than traditional teaching. The other solution might be to educate teachers more on negotiation and new findings in teaching it.

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