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The Impact of Secondary School Selection Process on the Performance of Ethnic Minority Children in Vocational Subjects

Olaruwaju Adelusi, Matthias Nnadi & Wey Amaewhule

Abstract

The study examined the impact of school selection process on the academic performance of minority ethnic students and finds that career aspiration and classification of children on basis of their ethnicity significantly affect performance. The study confirms the view that children from background with history of academic attainment also aspire to achieve similar success. The type of school: grammar or public school and the selection policy are not found to be of any significant impact. However, there is a significant correlation between the type of school and career aspiration of the students.

Keywords

Minority, performance, ethnic, children, vocational

Introduction

The low participation of certain group of students in higher education programmes has been recognised over the years by both the government and educationists as an issue of concern. Incidentally, in most identified cases of low participation, cultural, financial and social factors play vital roles in the obstruction of certain social groups to higher education and progression in acquiring higher education (Hayton & Paczuska, 2002).

The system of banding used in England was to ensure a balanced intake in the secondary schools which arguably failed to achieve its aims. Banding was introduced to ensure that comprehensive schools led an academically balanced intake, ILEA transferred arrangements were made to replace selection of testing for grammar selective schools. However, Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) children are assessed by head teachers in their primary school using verbal reasoning test and placed into a band group.

West (2004) mentioned three band groups: above average, average and below average. The children performance is not, however, affected by the secondary school allocation under ILEA. It was noted that there is a higher percentage of children placed in their first choice of school. The initial reason test was abolished and replaced with a London Reading Test (LRT) to identify the number of children who would need additional help in secondary school. It was noted that head teachers could not place children with EAL in correct bands of their ability due to language barrier. In addition, children from ethnic minorities are

placed to lower verbal reasoning groups. More so, Voluntary aided schools have a right to their entry choice.

The gradual changes to comprehensive schools made it possible to compare the effect of comprehensive and selective system; there was little difference in performance. Jesson (2000) observed that pupils in comprehensive schools performed better compared to Grammar schools. The same research, found out that average pupil in comprehensive schools performed better at GCSE compared to those in selective. His work has been criticised for focusing on only GCSE outcomes while ignoring achievements in schools. However, he noted that selective schools had generally higher attainment which suggests the selective system is most effective in the first three years of secondary school education.

Schagen & Schagen (2003) also studied the impact of selective systems on young Key stage 3 children and confirmed that the minority ethnic background children were most adversely affected by the selection. The small number of grammar schools has made the selection even more discriminatory. Gillborn and Mirza (2000) suggested that the term 'underachievement' has become loaded in stereotype and has somehow slipped into the pervasive 'discourse of despair' among and about some ethnic minority groups. They contended that some groups, say Africa Caribbean may be ranked low in the national measure of achievement, yet the said group may well be achieving highly in some schools and some LEAs.

Research Questions

The following research questions were outlined to guide the study:

1. How does criteria used in selecting students into grammar and state schools as it affects minority ethnic groups?
2. What is the level of difference in the academic performance and behaviour of children attending grammar schools with those in state schools?
3. To what extent does school admission and selection policy impact on the performance and progression of ethnic minority children in schools?

Review of Related Literature

The literature focuses on two keys strands: the school selection process and academic performance. The admission and selection policy has been a key player in the placement of children in schools. The performance of the students, particularly those from the minority ethnic group has often raised concerns due to underperformance, thus warranting scrutiny of the selection policy.

The Education Act 1944 which introduced the tripartite structure of modern, technical and grammar schools was intended at injecting equality and eliminating all prejudice and hindrance in the choice of schools. Coldron et al (2009) opined that the main principle behind the policy was for secondary education to be accessible for all children. This implies equality and absence of any discrimination on bases of ethnicity and ability. The choice of school had earlier been tainted with several accusations of bias, often at the detriment of the poor and minority groups. Atkinson & Gregg, (2004) noted that grammar schools are populated by children from wealthy families with higher levels of education while comprehensive are populated by children from the less wealthy families with parents who have fewer education qualifications. They argued that the use of the aptitude test in selection of pupils is inadequate as it leans towards predicting future attainment of pupils.

The selection policy often identifies students by their ability. West (2004) mentioned three band groups: those above average, average and below average. The local education authority tested pupils in their final year of primary school and allocating them to band groups. However, by 1990, there were noticeable changes to secondary school admissions policy. Most schools in inner London stopped using banding system. Banding was just seen as an unfair system of children intake into secondary (comprehensive)

schools since children are placed into schools based on their ability. London Reading Test (LRT) was also introduced to identify the number of children who would need additional help in secondary school. It was noted that head teachers could not place children within correct bands of their ability due to language barrier. In addition, children from ethnic minorities are placed to lower verbal reasoning groups. Most parents were not getting their first preference with the band system.

The more competitive the system, the greater the number of children who are rejected since only few are selected. Coldron et al., (2009) stated that the test measures children's intelligence and how they are able to learn. On the other hand, specialist schools selection is likely less stigmatising for those that failed to be selected. The process of admission to selective schools is discriminatory. There are three methods in highly selective areas: the universal opt out, invited to opt in and primary school recommendation systems. They argued that the selective aptitude enhances the choice of available places only to those who have the capacity to excel in a particular subject but could not, and only contributes to social selection by default.

In a study by Iannelli, (2008), the Scottish comprehensive school was found to have a higher overall participation rates and more inclusive and free at compulsory level. The academic performance of children is often influenced by a number of factors. Family background, ethnicity and the career aspiration of the student have often been contributory factors to the excellence or failure of the children. Mocetti (2010) observed that schools failed to fill the gaps of those children coming from less- advantaged and ethnic minority families. Such inequalities are increasingly strengthened with the compelling risk of mistaking privilege with merit in the school environment. The fact that the social selection starts at such early age deserves greater attention in the policy debate.

Several studies have opined that children from ethnic minorities have not had similar measure of success within the British education system as other indigenous groups have had, even though surveys have shown that families from ethnic minorities tend to be more positive about the values and needs for education than their white counter parts (DfEE, 2001). Indeed, recent statistics show that black boys were more likely to be excluded (83% of the permanent exclusions in 1995-6) six times higher than their white counterparts. Poor academic outcomes of children from ethnic minorities particularly black boys, have well been documented (DfES, 2004), (Osbourne, 2000), (Majors, 2000) and it is suggested that the differences in attainment levels, particularly in GCSEs between black children and their white counterparts may represent a long process of decline in relative attainment of ethnic minority pupils in the compulsory education system.

Research methodology

The main research tool used in the data collection was the questionnaire, supplemented by interview. The questionnaire contains three sections of five open – ended questions each. The respondents include parents, teachers and students in secondary schools. The teachers are those directly involved in the teaching of students from the ethnic minority students. Parents and their children of same group were also the respondents. An equal number of 5 students were selected from both grammar and public schools. The total sample in the study was 15. The questionnaire was supplemented by few interview questions in which the respondents (teachers, parents and students) were asked to respond to questions on the selection policy of admission (see the appendix for the questionnaire and interview questions).

The data obtained from the questionnaire were keyed into SPSS programme and analysed. Three statistical tools were used in the data analyses: descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), correlation and the standard deviation. While the mean and standard deviation measure the centrality of the variable responses, the correlation coefficient measures the relationship among the variables. The standard regression examines the effect of the independent variable on the academic performance of the ethnic minority students. The regression equation can be represented by the following simple equation:

Performance = β + selection + behaviour + ethnicity + career + satisfaction + school + ξ

Where:

Performance - the academic achievement of minority ethnic students

Selection - the selection policy of admission into grammar/public schools

Behaviour - the attitude, outwards disposition of students of ethnic minority

Ethnic - this includes students from non- white background

Career - the career plan, aspiration after secondary school such as university education, vocation training, jobs, dropping out after school.

Satisfaction – the enjoyment and comfort level in the present school (grammar/public)

School- whether present school is grammar or public school

ξ – Error term

β - Constant term

Findings and Analysis

The results from the data obtained from the questionnaire and interview are presented and analysed in this section. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of all the variables used in the research and shows the mean and standard deviation.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
school	1.50	0.53
Satisfaction	2.00	0.82
Career	2.30	1.34
Performance	1.60	0.84
Ethnicity	2.00	0.05
Behaviour	1.50	0.71
Selection	2.07	0.58

The value of the standard deviations is minimal and less than 1.00 except for **career**. This shows the centrality of the mean responses of the respondents. The highest mean being career, with a mean of 2.30 and a standard deviation of 1.34. The variables; **school** and **behaviour** have mean response of 1.50 each and a standard deviation of 0.53 and 0.71 respectively.

To establish any possible relationship among the variables, the Pearson correlation was used to test the correlations of the variables. This is necessary as to verify the extent significant relationship exists among the variables. The correlation result is reported in Table 2 and shows the significant interrelationship among the variables.

Table 2 Correlation of study variables

Variables	School	Satisfaction	Career	Performance	Ethnicity	Behaviour	Selection
School	1						
Satisfaction	0.775**	1					
Career	0.867**	0.916**	1				
Performance	0.365	0.354	0.360	1			
Ethnicity	0.800**	0.904**	0.946**	0.091	1		
Behaviour	0.745**	0.770**	0.881**	0.002	0.984**	1	
Selection	0.816**	0.791**	0.837**	0.373	0.816**	0.609*	1

**correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed) *correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed)

The table shows that most of the variables are significantly correlated. For instance, **school** is significantly correlated with **satisfaction** at 0.775, **career** at 0.867, and **ethnicity** at 0.800, **behaviour** 0.745 and **selection** at 0.816 respectively. This implies that there is a strong interrelationship that exists among the variables; each could be affected by another's reaction.

However, not all the variables show significant or strong correlation. **Performance** does not show any relationship with **ethnicity**, **behaviour** and **selection**. The relationship between **performance** and **school**, **satisfaction** and **career** is also non-significant.

The importance of establishing any relationship among the variables is to help understand the influence and impact of each variable among the others. However, to specifically, assess the impact the independent variables have on the dependent variable (**performance**), the standard regression was applied. The regression measures the individual impact of all the other variables (**selection**, **behaviour**, **ethnicity**, **career** and **satisfaction**) on the dependent variable - **performance**.

Table 3 Standard Regression

Dependent variable = performance		
Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	1.833 (1.655)	2.500 (2.692)
Selection	0.075 (0.202)	-0.236 (-0.316)
Behaviour	-0.714 (-1.454)	-9.919 (-2.000)
Ethnicity	-2.130 (-3.306)*	-1.826 (-3.114)*
Career	2.510 (3.650)*	2.896 (4.880)**
Satisfaction	-	0.639 (1.225)
School	-	0.471 (1.069)
Adj. R sq.	0.781	0.775
Mean sq	2.167	2.625
Observation	10	10

*significant at 0.01 level; **significant at 0.05 level. Figures in parentheses are the t-statistics while others are the variables coefficients

The regression result is presented in Table 3. The results are in two models and show the coefficient and t-statistics (shown in parentheses) of each of the independent variables.

The regression result shows that career has the most positive significant effect on the performance of the ethnic minority students. The variable has a coefficient of 2.510 and t-statistics of 3.650 in model 1, which is significant at 0.01. The significance of career remains even stronger on the model 2 with a coefficient of 2.896 and t-statistic of 0.4880. This implies that career is a dominant factor in the overall academic performance of students from the minority ethnic group. The variable ethnicity shows a significant negative significance with performance of the students from the ethnic minority group. The variable has a coefficient of -2.130 and -1.826 and t-statistics of -3.306 and -3.114 respectively. This implies that ethnic background of the students from minority group has a negative impact on their performance. This result can be explained by the sometimes, negative stigma attributed to minority ethnic students.

The results obtained are not entirely surprising. Majors (2000) asserts that the prospect of good career has a propelling effect on students. This is particularly important for students from minority ethnic groups whose academic career prospects are hardly encouraging, either because of poor family orientation or lack of vision. Gillborn and Mirza (2000) found that black minority students often aspire lower than their white counterparts into positions of leadership and public service. Those with such aspirations are not surprisingly good in their academic performance.

Critique of research methodology

The research is a quantitative study, using primary data. A major shortcoming of the research technique is the analytical tools and the small sample size. Regression results are more reliable with a large sample. Hartas (2010) posits that large quantity of data yields more reliable and generalised results. The study was also confirmed to schools and minority ethnic groups within the Kent councils. A wider sample selection would ensure that the result reflects the minority students irrespective of area of settlement.

The questionnaire was closed ended which ensured that respondents tick options of their choice. The questions were drawn to primarily reflect only the research interest. This did not give room for parents to add as much information as possible. These shortcomings may have a significant impact on the results.

Conclusion

The study was set out to investigate the difference in academic achievement between students attending grammar and public schools. It also examined their academic performance and behaviour as it affects the minority group. The school admission policy and its impact on performance and progression on minority ethnic students were also investigated.

The study shows that career aspiration was the most significant factor affecting academic performance of children from minority ethnic background. Students from established academic backgrounds are likely to perform better than other. The study also found that identifying and classifying students on basis of their colour and ethnicity, significantly affected their performance. This is becomes noticeable in environments where minority groups are stigmatised with name callings as a result of their ethnic background. However, such stigma can be reduced with proper supervision by the teachers, ensuring that the feeling equality is entrenched among all the students.

Contrary to some studies, the choice of school (whether grammar or public) and the school selection policy did not play any significant role in the academic performance of ethnic minority children.

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Development of intellectual property potential in Russian economy

Gretchenko A.A

The role of intellectual property constantly increases in modern conditions of development of national economy. National economy cannot successfully develop without introduction in manufacture of the scientific achievements which are object of intellectual property.

The important point is the establishment of methods of involving of objects of intellectual property in an economic turn as the product of intellectual activity serves as a subject of an economic turn and is subject to alienation from the manufacturer though continues to be considered as its property.

In that case, when national economy develops on an innovative harmony, it is very important to create conditions for realization through purchase and sale of such specific goods as intellectual property, more truly to tell, the rights to it. In the intellectual property market as the basic subjects of relations act: authors of the given property, owners of the rights to it, such as proprietors and buyers of these rights. Transmission of the rights by one physical person or corporate bodies to others is carried out on a commercial basis.

The structure of subjects of intellectual property has certain hierarchy. The author of object of intellectual property possesses the primary status. It always reserves certain group of the rights and is the invariable participant of the first certificate of assignment of object, and also the further relations of intellectual property. As secondary subjects can act both the state, and private subjects.

Thus, if it is a question of results of scientific and technical activity, components, as already it was mentioned above, the main resource of development of economy on an innovative way where «commercialization represents set of the interconnected actions undertaken for transformation of given results in the goods, providing them to the consumer and reception as a result of profit» (5, p. 32).

In the market of intellectual property of the greatest commercialization objects of the industrial property are subject. New scientific knowledge in connection with the essence does not represent itself as the goods in the market. They form a basis for reception during realization of scientific and technical activity of concrete results put into practice. The new knowledge reflected, for example, in monographies, articles is a joint achievement of human society. In this connection, the fundamental science end-product should be popular. It is not casual, that fundamental science in all countries receives financing not so much from private or corporate sector of economy, but from the state.

At the same time the results of creative activity protected by the copyright, such as products in the field of the literature, music, the fine arts after illegal actions on their copying and distribution

are quite capable to become the highly remunerative market goods on which it is possible to earn well, but thus having broken copyrights.

The state guarantee of the rights to results of intellectual activity in modern conditions is even more often considered as one of the basic and necessary elements of progress of any economic system. That essential value which the intellectual property has for modern development of economy, confirms necessity of its active involving for economic circulation.

It is necessary to notice that the term «*intellectual property involving in economic circulation*», widely adopted in our country, both in publications of researchers, and in standard legal certificates outside of our country is not used.

In the foreign special economic and legal literature as a similar category the concept «*transfer of technologies*» is considered. The general recognized as all and the settled definition of the term «the transfer of technologies» (from Latin - *transfere* - to transfer, translate) doesn't exist, in practice the definitions offered by various structures and the organizations are used, for example, by the National center of a transfer of technologies of the USA, the Consortium of federal laboratories of the USA, etc. In most general view on a transfer of technologies process of transfer of the knowledge received as a result of fundamental and applied researches in sphere of industrial development is understood. The given process characterizes the initial stages of life cycle of an innovation, beginning from formation of idea and finishing working out introduction in manufacture. Thus, in the considered treatment the technology transfer is not connected directly with profit reception, and aimed only at introduction of scientific and technical achievements in economic practice.

However there is also wider treatment of a considered category proceeding from which process of introduction of an innovation grasps also a commercialization stage, sometimes in this case it says about «commercial transfer of technologies».

The commercial transfer means process of transition of results of scientific re-researches in sphere of practical application, manufacture and marketing of new products for the purpose of reception of commercial benefit (2, c. 112). Process of commercialization of workings out is directed on achievement of commercial effect and originates from the moment of definition of prospects of commercial application of new working out, and comes to the end with working out realization (the technologies, the goods received with its help or the rendered service) in the market and profit reception.

From the article 1358 in Civil Code of Russian Federation follows that the category used in the Russian practice «introduction in economic circulation», under the maintenance as a whole is identical to the treatment of a transfer of technologies considered above in the expanded interpretation. According to specified article «introductions in economic circulation of the invention, useful model or the industrial sample» it is necessary to understand as process «import on territory of the Russian Federation, manufacturing, application, the offer on sale, sale ... or storage for these purposes of a product in which the invention either useful model, or products in which the industrial sample»(1) is used and work. In the specified act by separate image are characterized each of the specified components of process of introduction in innovation economic circulation.

Import on territory of the Russian Federation is understood as product import on the territory of the country, providing its moving through customs border. In the presence of the specified circumstances moving of any product is considered as import without dependence from that it is aimed or not at profit extraction.

Manufacturing in the given context is understood as procedure of reception of a product which as the making element includes use of protected object of intellectual property.

Application – the stage covering all cases of industrial use of the made product when an activity main objective is profit extraction.

The offer on sale – a special kind of advertizing of objects of intellectual property which as a rule is reduced to its public demonstration in trading floors, on show-windows, in prospectuses, catalogs and etc. However if the exhibition or other demonstration don't carry commercial character and a product created with use of protected objects of intellectual property, is shown not as the goods it can't be considered as the offer to sale.

Storage of the product created with application of protected objects of intellectual property, also is considered as use if its accumulation occurs for the subsequent start-up of this product in a commercial turn. At the same time if the similar product is stored with a view of its subsequent personal consumption, i.e. uses for own needs in this case infringements of the rights of the owner of intellectual property does not occur.

Sale – a component of commercial activity of the organization, connected with product realization by which manufacture application of protected object of intellectual property took place. Thus the goods (product) can be got both in the economic purposes by enterprise structures, and with a view of the personal, family or home application which have been not connected with enterprise activity.

It is necessary to notice that the modern legislation of the Russian Federation in sphere of a transfer of technologies is in many respects similar to norms which regulate a technological transfer in the United States of America. It concerns also to a presumption of fastening to executors (persons who have created technology) intellectual property rights on technology which were developed at the expense of means of the state budget; and cases when the specified rights remain behind the state; a duty of the legal owner to introduce (practically to apply) technology and etc.

In procedure of involving of intellectual property in economic circulation the predominating role belongs to maintenance of a legal correctness of this action, that is - preventive maintenance of infringements of the property and personal non-property rights of other persons. Proceeding from this essentially important position, it is necessary to mean also and that with reference to various classification groups of intellectual property there are features of their use in economic circulation. So, for example, for objects of the industrial property (the inventions useful to model, industrial samples) does not admit infringement of exclusive rights of free use of these objects for satisfaction of personal, family and other needs not connected with enterprise activity if the purpose of such use isn't reception of profit (income). In this turn one of guarantees of protection of interests, including economic, the owner of copyrights introduction of the most various restrictions of the sizes of use of products by granting of the right to this use in whole (on public display or execution - by quantity of displays and executions; on transfer into foreign languages - quantity of variants of translation on concrete languages).

From the general point of view, main objectives of involving of intellectual property in economic circulation consist in increase of level and quality of life of the population, an export potential of the country and its safety, economy development through structural transformations and creation of new workplaces. Taking into account the given purposes in modern conditions in attention focus actually all more or less developed countries there will be questions of the rights to intellectual property, involving of this property in economic circulation.

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Comparison of development of innovative activities in Germany and Russia

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Events of last years show an absolute essential of creation of competitive economy on the basis of increase of innovative activity as to effective innovative activity. At the same time, the final result of innovative activity is introduction of innovations in Russian national economy that represents complex process of the scientific, technological, organizational, financial and commercial actions directed on commercialization of saved up knowledge, technologies and the equipment.

Preconditions to increase of innovative activity of the countries are set of factors, basic of which we consider the following - development of sphere of manufacture of knowledge, improvement of an innovative climate for the enterprises of all patterns of ownership and manufacture of the hi-tech equipment as main basis for labor productivity increase.

The basic founders of innovations are the people occupied in sphere of a science and researches of all directions and as the world economy becomes more and more innovative-focused, their importance constantly increases. The quantity indicator of number of scientists and researchers for each country speaks about its intellectual capital in innovative potential. Germany has 14th place in the world by quantity of scientists and researchers on 1000 occupied (8,1 scientists/1000 persons), Russia – 21st place (6,6 scientists/1000 persons).

Nowadays, speed of introduction of innovations and high efficiency of work are supported by highly educated personnel. Thus, achievement of high level of higher education became an important component of economic success. It is necessary to notice that the main accent today is preparation and support of young shots in the field of generation of knowledge. For example, within the Russian-German year of education, science and innovations 2011/2012 the Russian-German academy for young scientists will be created. Both countries are aimed at active cooperation and possess in the lead positions by quantity of young shots with higher education as potential workers in science sphere. Russia has 3d place in the world of a dale of people with higher education at the age of 25-34 years (55,5 %). Germany – 28th place (23,9 %).

One of essential indicators of innovative activity of the countries is attraction of the venture capital in new-created companies in sphere of new technologies. The venture capital - an important source of financing of the young and dynamically developing innovative companies, many of which are too small to involve the capital in open stock markets and too unstable, to ensure bank credits, but nevertheless have extremely high ability to growth. The venture capital also creates highly skilled workplaces. For example, 12,1 million workplaces exist at the American enterprises based on venture investments. In Germany a share of venture investments is 0,09 % of gross national product, in Russia less than 0,01 % of gross national product.

In the country for small progressive forms of business we consider as indirect indicators of a favorable innovative climate indicators of the rate of refinancing and indicators of bank rates under credits. Availability and cost of loans sometimes is a corner stone in small-scale business existence. Unfortunately, situations in Russia it is far from the European conditions – the refinancing rate makes 8,25 % against 1,5 % in territory of the countries of the Euro area. The average rate of commercial banks under credits for legal bodies to the refinancing rate in Russia – 6,7 % (87th place in the world), in Germany – 2,7 % (28th place).

For formation of the new effective mechanism of management at country level application of hi-tech electronic systems in all state structures - «the electronic government» is necessary. Electronic technologies allow making document circulation process between citizens, the companies and state structures more functional, with the least expenses of means and time. As introduction of "the electronic government» allows to get rid of such negative phenomena as corruption and excessive bureaucracy. The share of use of electronic information means in state structures of Germany makes 54,9 % (17th place), in Russia - 33 % (41th place).

Labor productivity is considered one of important indicators of technological level of the country and quality of life of the population. It is expedient to allocate 2 indicators - gross national product share on 1 working and gross national product share for 1 working hour of time. Both show fuller and real picture of a standard of living in the country. Gross national product share on 1 working in Germany – 57034 US dollars (14th place), in Russia – 23576 US dollars (36th place). Decrease in the first indicator is influenced by a high rate of unemployment and a preschedule retirement. As the advanced age population in Japan, the Western Europe, and the United States becomes more for next decade, indicators of growth of productivity should be accelerated for these countries to correspond to an escalating standard of living.

Gross national product share per 1 working hour the most important indicator of national economic well-being (Germany – 52,60 US\$ per hour, (6th place) Russia – 18,58 US\$ per hour (33d place)). The given indicator can be more exact tool of measurement because pays off from quantity of working hours which can depend on the voluntary decision of the worker to replace free time by work. Productivity is substantially stimulated with innovations (use of new technologies in working process will promote manual skills replacement machine). For example, four American farmers could provide with the foodstuffs ten persons in the beginning of 20 centuries, now with new agricultural innovations, the same quantity of farmers can provide food for 388 persons. Similar example, with application of technologies of self-service, such as self-registration at the airports, hotels, cinemas, self-service and self-checking in retail shops have raised productivity in the given branches.

In the field of innovations in Germany and Russia many common features have directions of development. So the purposes of «Russian Program of scientific and technical development and modernization of economy till 2015» and «Strategy of high technologies for Germany till 2020» are very similar and directed on creation of the best conditions for innovative activity, cooperation development in large-scale projects of the advanced researches and interoscultations of a science, formation and economy.

We believe that education – as process of generation of knowledge is a basis of system of formation of the intellectual capital of the nation. This system – one of the main spheres of manufacture of innovations, – creates base conditions for the accelerated growth of the markets based on updating of technologies, products and services that proves its direct influence on innovative activity.

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From Contact Teaching to Blended Learning

Silvia Pina

Abstract

This study deals with the transformation from a basic language contact course into a blended course. The essence of blended learning is the combination of face-to-face contact instruction (in the classroom), computer-mediated instruction (accessible via Internet) and online classes (via Internet). Blended courses offer an environment in which an innovative teacher can set up authentic learning tasks in which both the processes and the goals are stimulating and engaging, and which could take individual student differences into account. A blended course will increase the possibility to reach more students at the same time from different locations. The primary goal of blended learning should be to unite the best features of in class contact teaching with the best features of online learning and to promote active, self-directed learning opportunities for students. The purpose of the study was to create a ready-made blended language course that can be adjusted for the need of different educational fields of the University of Applied Sciences. This study was carried out during the autumn of 2011.

The study includes a theory section and an empirical section. The theory section focused on online pedagogy, online learning, interaction and learning community. In terms of pedagogical concept this study is student centered. It focuses on the student activities primarily from the support perspectives. The study is based on a constructivist view. According to constructivist theory, students participate actively in tasks in which they "construct" new knowledge derived from their prior experience. Students also assume responsibility for their learning, and the teacher is a facilitator rather than a provider of knowledge. The constructivism aspect in the language theory emphasizes also that comprehending, speaking, reading, and writing skills are interrelated, reinforcing each other in complex ways. This study connects the theory and practice, in the following concepts: communication, cooperation, interaction, motivation, support, promotion of reasoning and reflection. The empirical part dealt with the creation of the course content. Thereafter it was uploaded on the platform Optima and the online class was delivered using Adobe Connect. The empirical data collection was based on the qualitative research method. Before the actual implementation a survey was conducted among a selected group of people with a wide knowledge and experiences in the field of online learning (via Internet). Fifteen questionnaires with open-ended questions were sent to determine the most important characteristics of the course. The result of the study is positive both from the teacher's and the students' point of view. Feedback showed that a blended course is a useful means of enhancing learning. This idea is also commonly expressed outcome in literature.

Keywords

Blended course, online didactics, online language teaching, interacting online, synchronous online learning

Introduction

Today's world is changing fast and students' nature is changing as well. New technologies provide a range of opportunities to adapt to these changes. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt new experimental and innovative approaches to their teaching. In consequence, new teaching and learning methods are needed.

One solution is to invest in computer mediated education and online classes. This approach can enhance the learning experience "any place" with more constructive learning and new opportunities to reinforce learning. Computer mediated education and online classes can help as well to satisfy the needs of different students, such as adult students who share their time studying and working, those with family responsibilities or those with disabilities (Tisha Bender, 2003).

This development project aims to create a ready-made blended language course that can be adjusted for the need of different educational fields of the University of Applied Sciences and provide some suggestions on how computer-mediated education and online classes can enhance learning opportunities.

Before the actual implementation of the course a survey was conducted among a selected group of persons believed to have relevant knowledge and experience in the field of online learning and among a selected group of students.

The development project consists of four parts. The first part creates background for analysis. The concept of blended learning and synchronous and asynchronous online interaction is defined. The second part describes the methods used to implement the project. The third part deals with the project process. The differences between contact and computer-mediated learning and teaching are briefly introduced. Then the practical development and the structure of the course is presented. The last part of the report contains reflections on the impact of computer-mediated education and online classes on current practice.

Background

I decided to explore this arena since this could be the way to attract students in the future. I also believe that there are expectations to increase computer-mediated education in the University of Applied Sciences. Educational institutions feel the pressure to control costs, improve quality, focus on customer needs and respond to competition. Information technology has the potential to facilitate more learner-centered teaching and personalized education.

In computer-mediated education, the teacher, who acts as a facilitator, delivers the content of the course and the written assignments through a learning platform, e.g. Optima, and uses an online synchronous tool, e.g. Adobe Connect, to deliver the live lecture, to interact with the students and to enable the participants to practice the communication skills. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate in the online sessions active learning techniques, such as working collaboratively in assignments, participating in small-group discussions and role-playing. Computer-mediated learning and online classes can't be passive (Tisha Bender, 2003).

The shift to computer-mediated education poses enormous challenges to the teachers. When the only connection to the students is through the screen, the teachers must pay attention to many issues that normally are taken for granted in the face-to-face classroom. For example, how does the teacher know when a student is engaged? How does the teacher know if a student has difficulties? How does the teacher deal with students that are not participating? Therefore, it is extremely important that also educational institutions train and support teachers, as they move into this arena.

Concept of Blended Learning

Blended learning is defined as “the combination of multiple approaches to teaching. It can also be defined as an educational process which involves the deployment of a diversity of methods and resources or to learning experiences which are derived from more than one information source”. (URL <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/blended+learning>).

Examples of blended learning include combining contact teaching and online learning, technology-based materials and traditional print materials or infusion of web based technologies into the learning and teaching process. It involves provision of teaching materials and activities online; online tools for student-student and student-teacher communication; use of internet resources and other learning activities involving the internet (Blended Learning in Finland, 2010, URL: http://www.helsinki.fi/valtiotieteellinen/julkaisut/blended_learning_Finland.html).

One of the advantage of using blended courses is that the different phases of learning can occur in different environments. According to Kolb’s (1984) Learning Cycles there is a continuous cycle of four processes when learning takes place: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization and (4) planning active experimentation. Contact teaching and the online class teaching should be the most suitable environment for gaining concrete experience and also for planning, the online learning platform, due to its asynchronous environment, might be the most appropriate place for reflection and conceptualization (Designing ee-Learning Environments: Lessons from an Online Workshop, 2006).

Concept of Synchronous and Asynchronous Online Learning Interaction

Initially, blended learning has been used to complement synchronous lectures (face-to-face teaching) through the use of asynchronous discussion forums (interaction that occurs at different times, not in real time, such as messages sent via email, blogs, etc) (Blended Learning in Finland, 2010, URL: http://www.helsinki.fi/valtiotieteellinen/julkaisut/blended_learning_Finland.html).

With the advent of synchronous tools (real time interaction, online learning, such as instant messaging, online chat, live web conferencing, etc.), like Webex or Adobe Connect, opportunities have been created to combine asynchronous experiences and synchronous online learning providing students with new distance communication possibilities.

Synchronous online learning can be defined as live, real-time and usually scheduled, facilitated instruction and learning oriented interaction. Interaction and collaboration is essential to learning and above all to language learning (Asynchronous and Synchronous E-Learning, 2008)

Table 1 describes some of the advantages of synchronous and asynchronous online learning.

Synchronous online learning	Asynchronous online learning
Interactive participation: via real-time interaction	Flexibility: information can be accessed at anytime
Immediate feedback	Possibility to go back to the content if needed
Costs and time saving	No time- zone problems and cost- effective
Stimulate motivation: to see and hear others	Time to reflect: learns have time to think before reply
Collective and often collaborative	Individual or intermittently collaborative

Research Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative research method. Before the course implementation a survey was conducted among a selected group of individuals believed to have relevant knowledge and experience in the field of online learning. For this purpose two online questionnaires were developed, one for the teachers (see Appendix 1) and one for the students (see Appendix 2).

Questionnaire for Teachers

The questionnaire for the teachers consisted of 13 questions and is grouped into three sections related to practical, content and evaluation issues. The survey served to understand the best features to create a successful course and how to use the technology in online teaching and learning.

The survey took place from April to June 2011. Fifteen questionnaires with open-ended questions were sent by e-mail to determine the most important factors affecting the implementation of the course. Of fifteen persons who received the e-mail request, eleven completed the survey. The survey confirmed that blended courses - which combine face-to-face with online offerings - seem to be the best solution to engage students and promote collaborative learning. Most of the respondents wrote that being active, facilitating and encouraging students is important for effective online teaching. With regard to the needs for improving online students' success, respondents said that learner-centered techniques should be used, e.g. Problem Based Learning, online teaming, cross-cultural collaboration and other form of interactive work.

These are the most important issues that emerged in the survey:

"I prefer the blended one. Meeting each other face to face would help students to engage to the course, trust each other and also form the teams or groups."

"In online course introduction, scaffolding, facilitation and feedback are important and teacher should take time for them."

"Being active, encouraging students, going together."

"Giving online feedback is not easy. Students may misunderstand it but perhaps they don't ask what you really mean. In classroom you have your expressions and your body language which softens your words."

"Note that this was my first year ever having done anything else than normal classroom teaching, so everything was new to me, too. A positive thing was that I didn't have to do this alone, so I had a colleague of mine and we did this together."

"What I have heard, the whole virtual course would require very detailed planning beforehand from the beginning to the end, and how every single session and step during the sessions should be proceeded, what tasks and how they are to be done, readymade slides, how to evaluate and what and when, keep book about the participation, although the sessions can be recorded so that the students can listen to the sessions again whenever they want to etc etc. Also the students need guidance how to use the virtual technic and they must have a proper equipment (webcamera, headphones and PC-programmes),too."

“Then you should have a named technical IT support from your school, who could be with you when at least the first sessions are held and make a test trial before the first actual meeting with your students. Also it would be a good idea for a teacher to take part in such sessions as a student role so that she/he can see how it works from a student's point of view.”

“Students need to take more responsibility in order to pass an online course. Therefore it doesn't suit to those students who prefer to have a spoon-feeding type of learning and teaching. “

“When planning a virtual course put your focus on the needs of your students and on clear learning objectives. It's also good to ask your colleagues to have a look at your course and ask for comments before implementing the course with your students.”

“Very detailed and explicit instructions - better to have them too much than less. Students should have the experience that the teacher is "all the time" present and available if needed (i.e. response somehow in few hours, or in agreed time). There should be activities to meet other participants before and during the actual study/learning processes - in a way to know mates personally. Together with resource materials and assignments there have to be guided interaction (discussion) and sharing activities. There should be synchronous meetings (virtual class) about once a week, if possible.”

Pre-Enrollment Questionnaire for Students

The pre-enrollment questionnaire for students consisted of 17 questions grouped into three sections related to general information concerning (1) IT abilities, (2) learning style consideration and (3) expectations issues. The survey was to understand students' previous IT knowledge and skills, their learning needs for the course, their opinion towards online learning and their expectations.

The survey took place between April and June 2011. Of twenty students who received the e-mail, four answered the survey. Everyone responded to have a good knowledge of computer literacy but nobody had previous experience with the synchronous online tool, Adobe Connect. They were conscious that working online it means more efforts and self discipline. With regard to the learning styles, respondents wrote that they can stay on task without direct supervision and they enjoy sharing knowledge with peers and teacher.

These are the most important issues that emerged in the survey:

I would like that the teacher would actively comment on our assignments and give feedback on our progress. Just to be genuinely interested in our learning.

Positive thing about the online teaching is that I don't have to travel far away, for example from Espoo to Kerava but I can use that time for studying.

In class I like listening to presentations about the culture and I like writing essays and doing presentations about the things I'm interested in.

I think my least favourite part is the talking exercises because they are the most difficult ones, but they are still important. Maybe if we have to talk through the microphone it would be the least favourite thing for me if we think about the on-line course.

At least I would like to write small essays during the course. I also like that the time table for the on-line meetings is informed in advance and they are always in the same time so it is easy to arrange time from work for example.
On mukavaa jos opettajalla on webkamera päällä ja puhut niin lähellä mikkiä että äänesi kuuluu hyvin (Translation: it's nice if the teacher has the web camera on and if she/he speaks close enough to the microphone to be clear)

Brief Overview of Online Pedagogy

The theory section focuses on online pedagogy, online learning, interaction and learning community. The literature addresses that online courses designed from constructivist principles should be relevant, interactive, project-based and collaborative, while providing learners with some choice or control over their learning (Online Pedagogy – Innovative Teaching and Learning strategies in ICT- Enviroments, 2001). This project is based on a constructivist view. According to constructivist theory, students participate actively in tasks in which they "construct" new knowledge derived from their prior experience.

In terms of pedagogical concept this study is student-centered. It focuses on the student activities primarily from the support perspectives. Students' interaction and active participation is encouraged. Students also assume responsibility for their learning, and the teacher is a facilitator rather than a provider of knowledge.

The constructivism aspect in the language theory emphasizes that comprehending, speaking, reading, and writing skills are interrelated, reinforcing each other in complex ways. This study connects the theory and practice, in the following concepts: communicating, cooperating, interacting, motivating, supporting, promoting reasoning and reflecting. Therefore, my own teaching philosophy is to approach language learning with the combination of reading, writing and speaking exercises within each lecture. In keeping with this emphasis on communication, students are highly encouraged to exercise their knowledge during the online sessions and possibly in real-life situations.

The teacher can incorporate constructivist methods into the online classes by using activities that call upon students to seek answers to real-life problems (Virtual Student, A Profile and Guide to Working with Online Learners, 2003). With regards to this research, students had to write in the target language several assignments related to situations that they could encounter in the real life (e.g., email to book a room; letter to rent an apartment; letter to find pen friends).

Finally, through the inclusion of technology in the lecture broadcasting the teacher can easily provide more authentic tasks and culturally-based exercises. Computer mediated education helps students to practice the language actively and encourage them to challenge themselves in discovery activity.

Project Process

Differences between Contact and Computer Mediated Teaching and Learning

When developing a course using a synchronous and asynchronous online learning tool, there are a multitude of factors to be taken into consideration. When the teacher transforms a course from the face-to-face environment into an online setting, some of the benefits of being in the same room with the students are lost. Teacher and students can't see each other and talk back and forth with the same immediate level of interaction. During online sessions, the teacher, using the web camera, can use the facial expressions but not the body language that can help students in understanding. Additionally, the teacher can't observe students during the lessons and determine how well they understand the topic.

However several aspects of the contact learning can be re-purposed to apply in online classes using synchronous online tools, such as Adobe Connect. Some ways of bringing contact lesson elements into online learning include the use of the synchronous online tool functionality, e.g. hand raising, whiteboard, podcasts, etc. This helps to structure the learning experience and provide a familiar context where participants and presenters can interact. Broadcasted synchronous online lectures enhance auditory learning and the use of Power Point presentations, photos, images, video clips and chat discussions enhance the visual learning.

Additionally, computer-mediated education holds some advantages that traditional contact education doesn't have. For example, students have online access to the course material and the lessons may be recorded for future use. This allows flexible use of time, possibility to join the course from different locations, greater levels of accessibility for students with physical disability.

Technical Issues

Technical capabilities are a major consideration for the effective use of computer –mediated learning and teaching. Technical problems can arise from a multitude of elements: software, telecommunication, users' skills, poor planning of online implementation, etc. (Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom, 1999). For this reason it is essential to deliver technical support and guidance not only to teachers but also to students during their studies. It is also vital during the online sessions that teachers have an extra plan ready, in case of problems, to move on and keep working.

Project Development - Online Teaching in Practice

As stated at the beginning of this report, this study deals with the transformation of a basic language contact course into a blended course. The essence of blended learning is the combination of face-to-face contact instruction (in classroom), computer-mediated instruction (accessible via Internet on a learning platform, Optima) and online lectures (via Internet using Adobe Connect). The course outlines, materials and exercises were uploaded on a learning platform (Optima) and weekly online lessons were held via Adobe Connect.

The purpose of the course was to ensure that the students gained basic skills of Italian language but also to study with the new synchronous online tool (Adobe Connect). One outcome of this study is that the implementation of the online lectures content and feeling competent in using the functions of the synchronous online software tool took more than three months.

In order to broadcast an online lesson the teacher needs a quiet place to work, a computer and, if possible a backup (to display the participant's view), an internet connection, headsets, web camera, access to the online session room, own materials and possibly an IT expert nearby, in case of problems.

Here examples of some items to consider when implementing an online lesson:

- Identify learning objectives, develop materials, and plan activities to engage learners and confirm learning. Thinking events and tasks through, making and following a plan, scheduling carefully the timing, improve the likelihood of getting a good outcome the first time.
- Experiment and practice a lot the online teaching beforehand, follow the advices from the literature and colleagues.

Here examples of functions offered using a synchronous online tool:

- a display that allows to show students teacher's materials (e.g. Power Point slides);
- a whiteboard for brainstorm, creative activities and to share material;
- chat and polling to share ideas and keep the students active and interested;
- breakouts (virtual rooms) to interact with other students and maximize participation and collaboration possibilities.

The blended course in Italian began in September 2011 with nine students. It consisted of seven meetings, two contact days, one at the beginning of the course, the other one at the end, and five online lessons.

At the beginning of the course participants were invited to come to a live orientation session. The purpose was to introduce the course content, explain how to use the synchronous online tool (Adobe Connect), how to log in and simulate the online lecture, e.g. give a live demonstration and experiment it with the basic features, such as buttons that indicate status, thumb up and down, smiley face and learn about the chat tool.

At the end of the course the participants and teacher met together once again for the oral and written examination, for the summative feedback and for the final evaluation about the course (see Appendix 3).

In between five online meetings (using Adobe Connect) were held to lead the online lesson. Before each online session an invitation with the session agenda was sent to the participants. It contained information concerning assignments to be done prior to the online lesson, time estimates, topics and possible attachments with material to be read.

Since students need to be oriented to their new role and the ways in which learning occurs online, two weeks before the course beginning, two written communications were sent to participants. One message presented the course description, the goals and the assessment methods. The other one defined the course content description which was uploaded on the learning platform, explained the meaning of the blended course and how to use Adobe Connect. The effort was to help students to be successful during their first experience with online lessons.

Before online sessions the participants were given an initial preparatory task. They had to prepare a presentation in Italian about themselves, which they then shared with the class, as a way to begin to know one another and to facilitate future group dynamic.

Each online session consisted of short lectures, followed by group discussions or peer discussions, focusing on engaging learners directly. It was extremely important to schedule regular (every 10-15 minutes) relevant interactions, particularly questions, throughout the session. These activities focused on topics of their interest. The practice occurred interacting in small groups or in pair (using the virtual rooms offered by the program), discussing items related to the lesson or doing oral exercises.

During the online sessions the teacher had the possibility to make sure that all students had understood the information given, before moving on, asking directly or using the chat. If students wanted to ask something, they could either use the microphone or the online chat.

Photos, quiz and graphics were included to keep students interested and to illustrate better the point. These bolstered the visual appeal and helped the knowledge transfer and retention.

A disadvantage of the online session is the difficulty of sharing or observing the body language. However, seeing the teacher through the web camera, or at least a photo of the teacher, in my opinion, involves the participants.

All sessions were videotaped. Wherefore, it becomes possible also to edit recordings. This allows teachers to clip out what they don't need. The recordings were saved on the learning platform and were accessible to those with a valid user login. After each online lesson students could exercise more and reinforce their knowledge using the information uploaded on the learning platform.

An important part of delivering an online session is respecting the time available. For this reason careful advance planning is essential: what should be said, showed and what students should do at every point of the program is essential.

The learning platform (Optima) was always available to the students and also the virtual meeting room (in Adobe Connect) was always accessible. Students could go there, repeat sections and do extra exercises, if they wanted. Specific learning materials were assigned weekly and should have been delivered into that week's folder. When the delivery deadline had passed, the correct answer and the following week's material were published.

It was extremely important to design the course as a coherent entity where the aims of learning the language, collaborating, interacting and practicing were integrated and supported by online lessons.

Impact of the Online Teaching on Current Practice

Opportunities Offered by Online Learning and Teaching

Online learning and teaching offer opportunities for innovative learning experiences and the development of autonomous learning skills.

Computer mediated education, through synchronous and asynchronous online tools, can improve opportunities for student-teacher and student-student interaction, as well as stimulate students' reflection and independence. The availability of the course material on a learning platform offers further opportunity to enrich the learning process and to re-use the digital teaching material.

Broadcasted synchronous online lessons, used effectively, can avoid the power dynamics of the face-to-face learning environment, where extroverts can dominate.

Furthermore, in today's job market, information technology skills are increasingly important. The embedded use of computer and internet to deliver a course ensures that these skills are developed as part of the course. The students attending the blended course in Italian stated that this was a great opportunity to learn better a new language but also to improve their IT skills.

What makes Online Learning and Teaching Effective

The biggest key to making online learning and teaching effective is to maintain communication with the students and among the students. By keeping an open communication beforehand and throughout the duration of the course, the teacher can help students feel engaged about the topic, students can learn by interacting with other students and feel free to contact the teacher when something doesn't go according to the plan.

Online learning is not passive neither an isolating experience. For this reason, I found of extreme importance the use of a synchronous online tool to include learning activities that stress communication with the teacher and other students. This is the reason why I often used (during the broadcasting of my online lessons) the "Breakout option (virtual rooms)" in Adobe Connect, where students can share and discuss with other students what they learn. Online learning is more effective if students know beforehand that they are expected to participate in shared experiences in peers or in small group.

As said before communication affects students engagement, but the teacher's own level of enthusiasm for what is teaching is also very important to keep students participating in the course activities. Rather than spending a lot of time on grammatical explanations, I expected the students to have read the text or the vocabulary in advance and the online lesson was used primarily for exercising new concepts, reinforcing old material and communicate with me or among students.

In order to sustain productive levels of attention, it is also important that the teacher has good “entertainment skills” . These include the ability to use to advantage a variety of aural and visual aids, a sense of humor and an interactive teaching style.

Challenges in Online Teaching and Learning

As stated before when developing a course using a synchronous and asynchronous online learning tool, there are a multitude of factors to be taken into consideration. Teachers need new pedagogical skills to design the online lessons, e.g. the creation of a suitable content, the use of appropriate activities, the ability to facilitate online learning through online tutoring, the ability to create online activities that support autonomous learning.

Students as well should change their attitude towards learning. When students enroll to a course implemented using online synchronous and asynchronous tools, they should be motivated and possess a serious attitude towards their course, because more responsibility for learning process and outcomes is needed. An online course often demands more disciplined time management and independent motivation from participants than a traditional contact course would (Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt, *A Profile and Guide to Working with Online Learners*).

The online teacher doesn't have the benefit of the body language and the benefit of voice tones can be stressed only partially. The teacher can't see students' facial expressions and body language that help in understanding students understanding. This means that teachers should be prepared to ask more challenging questions and asking for specific responses.

Teachers' opportunities to be spontaneous and to improvise decrease, since the online lesson content and timing progression has to be planned and prepared in advance.

Teachers need to be supported concerning the IT related technical challenges.

The transition from contact to online teaching and learning involves also investments. The educational institution should be ready to invest and encourage teachers.

Another challenge concerns the copyright in regard to both the ownership of materials produced by the teacher and the use of third party materials.

Conclusions and suggestions

The purpose of this research was to outline the needs for the implementation of a blended language course which aim to facilitate interaction and collaboration using synchronous and asynchronous online tools.

The preliminary experiences with the blended course held at Laurea Otaniemi have highlighted that online lessons are appreciated by the students. Some comments of the students have emphasized the “seeing the teacher and being actively involved” aspect helps and motivates to work. Students were also satisfied about the atmosphere, supportive and relaxed. On the other hand, students admitted that learning online is more demanding and requires more efforts and responsibility from the students' point of view.

Building and delivering a blended course takes a lot of preparation time and efforts, but it gives the opportunity to create effective learning experiences.

Last suggestion is to use more blended courses as alternative to traditional classes. These courses give flexibility to studies. This is especially important for adult students who work and study at the same time and for students with disabilities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire concerning online teaching and learning.

The information you provide will help me in developing and implementing a successful virtual course in Italian.

Many thanks for taking the time to answer this questionnaire!

Practical

1. According to your experience would it be better to offer and why:

a. a virtual course only (using Connect Pro and Optima/Moodle)

b. a blended one (most virtual with a few contact days)

c. a mixed course, i.e. students also in the classroom in the same time as online

2. How many teaching hours does a virtual course consist of (usually)?

3. Do you have fixed online meetings? How often?

4. Which teaching software would it be better to use to offer virtual courses?

5. Do you normally upload all the course content/material at the beginning of the course?

6. Do you tape record your lesson to be seen by the students later on?

Content

7. How can I promote warm-up/icebreaker activities on line?

8. How can I promote students participation/interaction?

9. How can I make students work together, i.e. build in opportunities for talking and sharing opinions online?

Evaluation

10. Which assessment methods do you normally use?

11. With regard to dropout, according to some teachers' experience, it seems that some students learning online take more responsibility for their learning process, and some become less motivated. What is your opinion?

Others

12. Can you recommend any internet references on language teaching and learning in an online setting?

13. What else should I take into consideration?

Thank you for your valuable opinion!

Appendix 2

Online Courses Pre-Enrollment Questionnaire

Ciao a tutti,

The information you provide will help me in developing and implementing a successful online course in Italian and making it more interesting for students. It would be great if you could answer **before the 23rd of June. Many thanks for taking the time to answer this questionnaire! Grazie mille!**

Underline the option that best describes your response to the statement.

General information

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Have you already taken part in an online course? | yes – no |
| 2. | What is your level of computer literacy? | None – fair – good - excellent |
| 3. | Do you know how to use the program Adobe Connect Pro? | yes – no |
| 4. | Do you know how to use the platform Optima? | yes – no |
| 5. | Will you be able to set aside some time to participate in weekly asynchronous (not real-time, f.e. email-exchange) online discussions? | yes – no |
| 6. | Are you comfortable communicating online? | yes – no |

Learning Style Considerations

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------|
| 7. | Do you stay on task without direct supervision? | yes – no |
| 8. | Do you work best when someone is there to help keep you focused? | yes – no |
| 9. | Do you learn best from reading text and assignments? | yes – no |
| 10. | Do you learn best from spoken or visual presentations or both? | spoken - visual |
| 11. | Do you usually understand written instructions ? | yes – no |
| 12. | Would you feel that less time and effort is required in online class? | yes – no |
| 13. | Do you enjoy sharing knowledge with peers and teacher? | yes – no |

Please feel free to answer the following questions in Finnish if it is more comfortable for you.

14. **Teacher role:** what do you expect from the teacher during an online course?

15. What is your favourite part of the online teaching ?

16. What was your least favourite of the online teaching ?

17. Any other suggestions or comments to help me improve future online classes?

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

Appendix 3

FEEDBACK FORM - Italian kielen ja kulttuurin perusteet 1B - (2 op) - Online course

Please tell your opinion about the course (also in Finnish if you want). It will help me to improve the course, my teaching skills and make it more interesting for students. Thank you for your opinions!

1. What did you learn during the course?

2. Where the goals of the course stated in course description achieved?

3. What kind of positive feedback would you give of the course? What succeeded?
Give a thought to for example teaching, facilitation and support, assignments, group activity, study atmosphere etc.

4. What kind of negative feedback would you give of the course? What should I do better next time? What did not succeed?

5. Any other comments/opinions/suggestions you would like to tell to me? Ideas for further developing and improving the course. Greetings

Would you like to continue to study Italian language and culture in the future?

Yes _____

No _____

May-be _____

Please give your feedback according to the following scale 1 – 5; 1 the worst 5 the best.

ONLINE COURSE IN GENERAL

- | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | It was easy to get a general impression of the course subject | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | Timetables were clearly informed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | How would you rate the overall quality of this course? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

STUDYING AND LEARNING

4. It is easy to get a general impression of the course activities
1 2 3 4 5
5. Course objectives and content are clearly expressed
1 2 3 4 5

LEARNING ASSIGNMENTS AND MATERIAL

6. Learning assignments and exercises are relevant for the objectives of the course
1 2 3 4 5
7. It is easy to find learning assignments
1 2 3 4 5
8. Learning assignments are easy to understand
1 2 3 4 5
9. Students have enough instructions
1 2 3 4 5
10. Learning material is easy to access (you can open all material needed)
1 2 3 4 5

Grazie per la tua opinione! / Thank you for your opinions!

Diagnostics of Corporate Culture of an Institute of Higher Education

Kulapov Michael, Anokhina Marina, Kolesnikov Anatolii & Ponomarev Maxim

Keywords

IHE corporate culture, loyalty of the IHE staff, efficiency of internal communications at the IHE, external and internal image of the educational institution, typological peculiarities of the corporate culture of quality and innovations.

Diagnostics of Corporate Culture of an Institute of Higher Education

However in the real practice of management at institutes of higher education (IHE) solving of this problem requires sufficient assessment of the state of corporate culture, its ability to facilitate quality and innovativeness of educational activity.

Quantitative and qualitative assessment of the condition of corporate culture is reasonable to conduct taking into consideration minimum of three basic components: the level of loyalty of the university staff, efficiency of internal communications and characteristics of internal and external image of the institute of higher education.

Loyal personnel of the institute of higher education is integrated into its corporate culture and accepts it at the level of personal values. Quantitative meaning of the number of employees, identifying themselves as members of a team is the main indicator of the level of loyalty of university personnel. However acceptance of corporate culture takes place at emotional level as well. It predefines the need for mandatory assessment of the level of work satisfaction at the institute of higher education as a whole and in some separate aspects of it.

Due to peculiarities of educational activity, when assessing corporate culture it is sensible to take into account such factors of motivation and discouragement as: professional growth, conditions for professional development, job content and design, accessibility of professional information, satisfaction with the system of work assessment, acknowledgment of scientific and pedagogical achievements, moral climate, organization of social support, and so on.

When doing so as an independent component of assessment it is necessary to highlight the level of self-actualization, characterizing completeness of application of professional expertise by the IHE staff when fulfilling their tasks.

Evaluation of the level of university staff loyalty also comprises description of their behavioural patterns, which can be defined by the level of potential turnover based on identification of the level of readiness to save one's belonging to the corporate culture of the IHE.

Satisfaction of employees reflects the level of emotional 'comfort' caused by work at the institute of higher education. It is one of the conditions of loyalty, however not all of employees with high loyalty level can be loyal to the university. Nonetheless, just the low level of satisfaction has the biggest impact on behavioural patterns, particularly, on the readiness to move to another university for work (on the best terms of payment and use of their professional opportunities). Therefore factors, which form satisfaction, require thorough analysis. When estimating potential rate of turnover it is important to set an alternation level for this indicator depending on the work experience of the employee at the IHE based on the basic categories of employees.

To completely describe the satisfaction level of employees it is essential to assess efficiency of various management subsystems, which the system of lecture management, the system of facilitation of the quality of teaching, the system of payroll, the system of material and technical provision of the learning process, and so on include (based on the peculiarities of the university activities).

It is important to take into account that assessment of the management subsystem work efficiency as a rule has more rational nature while satisfaction with the results of their work is rather emotional by nature.

An important condition for acceptance of the university corporate culture is awareness of the employees, teachers and students of it. Therefore in the course of identification of the state of the IHE corporate culture it is necessary to assess the level of awareness of various aspects of the IHE activities and the level of demand for information.

It is crucial to find out whether the university staff gets sufficient information on the activities of the institute of higher education and to what extent this information can be useful and necessary for their work.

It is reasonable to define which of the channels are the most useable and what kind of channels are more preferable for the staff to convey their opinion to the top-management of the university. These are the indicators which enable to judge the quality and efficiency of the communication channels.

Then it is necessary to estimate real interrelation between the level of self-identification of the employees with the team of the University and the level of their self-actualisation.

As the research reveals, often the stronger the level of employee's self-identification, the higher the level of their self-actualization and vice versa, the stronger the self-actualization of an employee the more he is likely to identify himself with the university team.

Nevertheless, complete coincidence of the answers on these two questions takes place not always, that identifies the following:

- high level of self-actualisation does not lead to definite identification with the university
- and identification with the university by turn does not always drive to high level of self-actualisation.

I.e., the more the loyal the employee is to the university the more self-actualised he or she feels. However we should always remember that by facilitating conditions for self-actualisation, we will not provide drastic increase in the ratio of loyal employees. It is not possible to get consumers loyalty only via sales, as well as it is not possible to win university employees loyalty by creating conditions for their self-actualisation.

It is also rational to identify interrelation between awareness of employees and their self-identification with the university while assessing corporate culture.

As the research reveals there is often correlation between these indicators. In the meantime more loyal employees are also keener on acquiring information on the IHE as well as can sharply feel lack of it.

However, on the other hand awareness of employees does not often result in unique and direct increase in the level of self-identification with the IHE.

Loyalty is a complex integral indicator increase of which can be reached by aggregate impact of a great number of various factors, undoubtedly including awareness, use of professional opportunities, satisfaction with different aspects of job at the IHE, so on.

Creation of conditions by turn to increase the level of loyalty of the IHE employees, that is conquer or 'purchase' of it (that is considered as a probable element transforming from the practices of large companies, often acquiring loyalty of the key employees through a 'trade transaction') that further facilitates more positive attitude of the employees towards the IHE and finally higher level of comfort, experienced by them during their work at the IHE.

It is possible to define assessment of characteristics of the internal image of the institute of higher education with the help of open question about peculiarities of the IHE in the perception of staff.

Taking into account frequency of called paronyms, the content of the more frequent characteristics should be interpreted.

Using the method of semantic differential, introduced by Ch. Osgood, it is necessary to bring out intensity of the IHE features in three sectors, which are close to the factors of activeness, power and emotional and evaluation qualities by their meaning. Option of dimensions for identification of the internal profile of the IHE image should be made taking into account specificity of educational activities.

Among such dimensions are: progressive- conservative, stable- unstable, developing – stagnating, leading –overtaking, innovative – inflexible, prestigious – not prestigious, famous – unknown, qualitative – inferior, etc..

It is sensible to carry on estimation of the structure of 'internal image' of institute of higher education based on frequent list of spontaneously called features rooted in comparison of profiles of internal image and its stability in polar groups – those who do self-identify or do not self-identify themselves with the IHE team.

The higher level of loyalty as a rule is combined with more positive assessment of features of internal image as a whole.

The state of the IHE corporate culture is reflected in the behavioural patterns of employees and in their opinion about the IHE, which they transfer to the external environment.

The IHE image today is regarded as the key success factor, therefore on the one hand it is important to ensure high level of employee loyalty and on the other hand, loyal employees will contribute to establishment of the positive image of the institute of higher education by their positive attitude towards it.

Less loyal employees are potential carriers of abrupt image estimation of the IHE. It is necessary to conduct a survey and analysis of the IHE employees to unmask the motives of employment and estimate their changes in the course of one's functioning at the university, as these very trends to the greater extent form basic messages, which are transformed to the external environment of the IHE by its employees.

In order to conduct a survey in this field it is necessary to form a set of opinions, reflecting common features of the university, attitude of its top-management to employees and probable behaviour of top-management in the conflict situation with an employee. The structure of image assessment of the IHE as an employer can be estimated by the number of positive and negative judgment in accordance with the opinions as well as by their correlation. Problem condition of the IHE corporate culture as a rule forms high

potential of disloyal behaviour of employees towards it and causes movement of negative estimations of the university image into the external environment by its employees.

The blind spots in the image of university call for reputational risks, such as: lose of prestige and its impact on the market of educational services, outflow of professional employees of the educational field, diminution of basic characteristics of the university image, drop in the flow of applicants, reduction of demand for graduates.

In the contemporary conditions the quality of offered educational services and use of innovative technologies in the learning process have become a crucial driver for the IHE successful performance. Therefore it is important to identify the level of corporate culture, assuring the IHE innovative development and the quality of learning process.

The most optimal method of assessment of the degree of innovativeness of the IHE corporate culture is the approach, offered by G. Hofstede [1]. Taking into account specificity of the educational field, this approach was a bit expanded by the authors by adding a group of questions into the questionnaire, which enable to assess the degree of innovativeness –conservatism and quality and inflexibility of the corporate culture for various category of employees. Later a general profile was created which characterises IHE corporate culture as a whole.

Dimension “individualism –collectivism” enables to estimate to what extent is combination of such continuum favourable for implementation of innovative activity. Individualism supposes maximisation of individual activities of each person, that is typical for scientific work, but in the meantime, quite an important dimension of collectivism means the capability of university employees of cooperation, readiness for emotional dependence on the colleagues. High importance of this indicator points out the ability of team work for the purposes of fulfilment of innovative tasks.

The dimension **“power distance”** indicates hierarchy and authoritarian management style in contrast to democratic style. By the value of this indicator for various categories of employees we can identify the reserve of enhancement of the IHE innovative activity. For the university faculty which should become the source of innovativeness and the generator of changes, the high value of this dimension reveals low degree of innovativeness at institute of higher education.

The next criterion of the suggested method is dimension **“uncertainty avoidance”**. The medium level of this dimension pinpoints readiness of the majority of employees to take risks for the success sake, and unavailability of employees for dominating mandatory rules and instructions. However extreme forms of competition and rivalry between the employees will also not be approved. This situation favours to achievement of innovative goals. High degree of uncertainty avoidance among the university staff in this respect becomes symptomatic, that can be interpreted as readiness of employees to become a barrier on the way to implementation of innovative programmes in particular situations.

Dimension “masculinity-femininity” of the corporate culture reflects motivational direction of the staff towards achievement of innovative goals and fulfilment of a creative task. High value of this dimension among the IHE faculty indicates that employees pay more attention to harmonious and friendly relationships within the institute rather than to individual success and opportunity to promote an innovative product. Obviously activation of innovative activity in these conditions will relate to the higher attention of the top management to humanisation of the research work, and support of good relationships between the staff members.

If the personnel demonstrate more ‘masculine’ culture, it shows the readiness of the focus group for being acknowledged, for self-actualisation and career path.

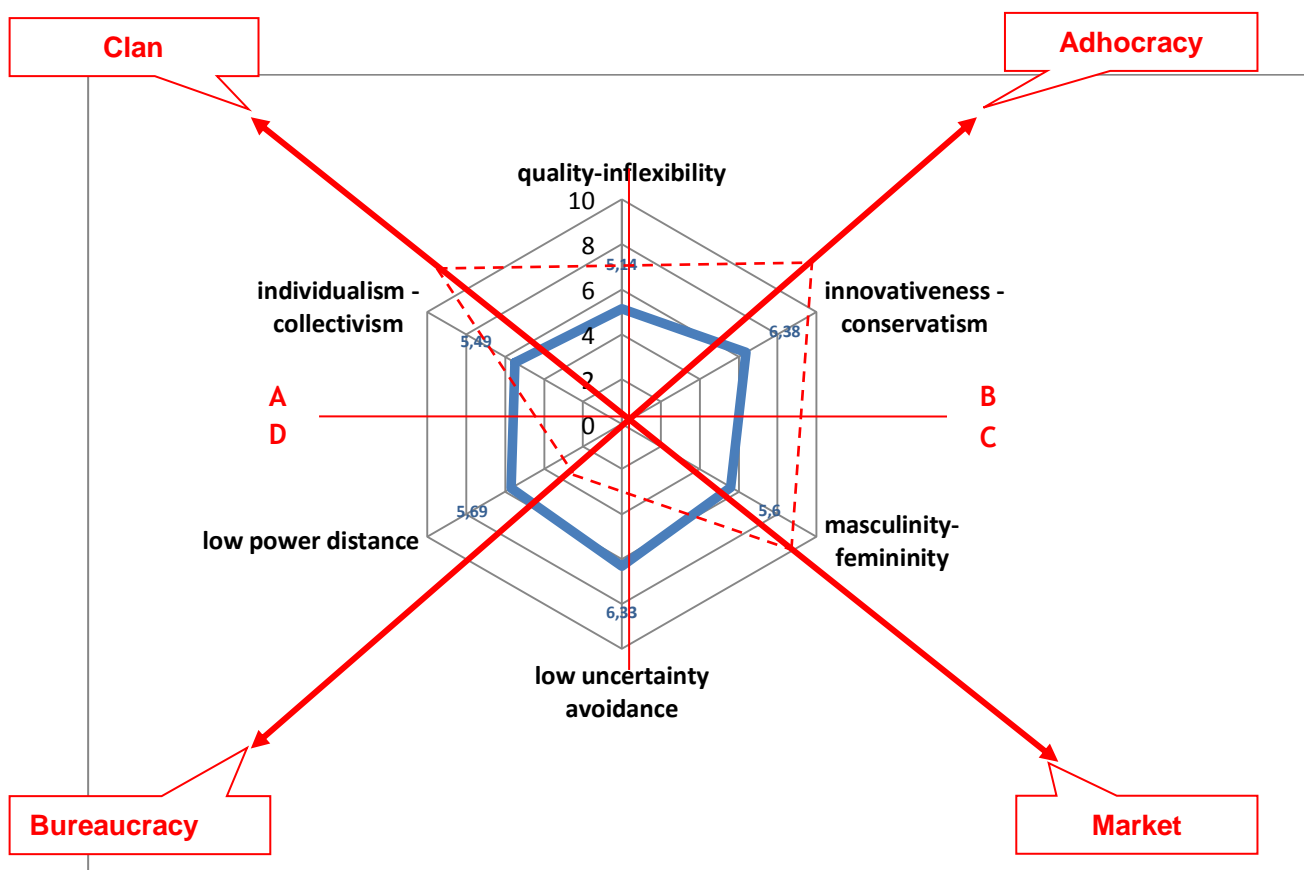
The next indicator integrated to the research method by the authors is dimension **“innovativeness-conservatism”**. For example, high value of this dimension demonstrates negativity of teachers to lead

innovative processes and unwillingness to use new research and learning forms and methods. In the meantime low level of this dimension tells about clearly defined request of employees for innovations, about ability to act in the particular circumstances, without relying on traditional methods of implementation of tasks.

And finally, dimension “**quality - inflexibility**”. In terms of the attitude of various categories of personnel, high level of this dimension indicates the absence of any problems in the field of quality of education. The most demonstrative within the boundaries of this estimation is the opinion of students – the consumers of educational services. When forming an assessment scale it is important to correctly fill it with content, reflecting significant criteria of the quality of the education – the level of the learning process arrangement, use of advanced educational technologies, technical support, practical part of the learning process, and so on.

Graphic interpretation of data revealed in the course of corporate culture evaluation enables to visualise its profile and to see the blind spots.

Combining the derived profile with the Kameron-Quinn’s method of corporate culture estimation [2], it will be possible to get an integrated profile of the university corporate culture and to identify which direction to move in the space of establishment of corporate culture of quality and innovations in order to ensure resistance to the settled traditional corporate culture. For visualisation the picture 1 depicts the profile of the university corporate culture, revealed in the course of the research.



Picture 1 Integrated profile of the university corporate culture

Letters A, B, C, D make quadrants each of which meets its idea about efficiency, values, and management styles and shape their culture. Thus there are four types of cultures: hierarchical (bureaucratic), market, clan, and adhocratic.

Institute of higher education as a bureaucratic organisation is a very formalised and structured place of work and study. Managers and leaders are proud of being rationally thinking coordinators and administrators. It is important to support the smooth pace of the IHE work. Educational institution is united by formal rules and official policy. Long-term concern of the university management is to ensure stability and indicators of implementation of planned educational activities (rate of admission, salary level, number of implemented programmes, and so on). Success is defined by the terms of reliability, absence of leaps in the planned indicators and low level of costs. Management of such institute is preoccupied by the employment guarantee and by provision of long-term predictability. IHE with bureaucratic corporate culture on the one hand is undoubtedly characterised by high level of organisation of the learning process, planned character of its activity, streamlined methodical support of learning technologies, and high level of compliance with legislative requirements. However tough regulation, significant power distance, high level of uncertainty avoidance will hardly contribute to formation of innovative urge in the university activity. Therefore it is important to provide “healthy” level of bureaucracy of the educational activity.

Market corporate culture is such type of relationships within which university is focused on the result and fulfilment of the settled task. Employees are purposeful and compete with each other. Leaders are strong managers and severe competitors, they are firm and commanding.

University unites aspiration to win in the market of educational services. Manifestation of it is leadership in mastering new educational programmes, application of advanced educational technologies, high quality of educational services, acknowledged by the employers at different levels. Reputation and success are general concern. Perspective strategy is aimed at actions of competitors on formation of core competencies of the university, fulfilment of settled tasks and achievement of measurable goals. Success is rooted in the terms like penetration into markets and increase of market share in the educational space. Management style of the IHE – hard orientation on competitiveness, motivation of the teachers and faculty for victory in the competitive confrontation within the staff as well as in the external environment of the educational institution. Therefore conditions for self-actualisation, development of creative potential, reduction of resistance to changes are welcomed, encouraged and facilitated to high extent. It is important to provide efficient and reasonable system of change management at the IHE, focused on innovativeness and quality of the educational process.

Clan corporate culture is a very friendly place to live where people have a lot in common. The institute looks like a big family. Leaders and managers of the IHE are perceived as educators and perhaps as parents. Educational institution is united by loyalty, tradition, high commitment. Emphasis is put on to the long-term benefit of the enhancement of personality, team spirit of high level and moral climate are also of high importance. Success is rooted in the terms of benevolent relationships and concern for people. Universities encourage joint work and consent between the employees.

However, by ensuring clan corporate culture, it is important to understand that its characteristics reduced focus of educational institution on the external environment. Very often differences in the corporate culture of universities (namely, clan structure does mainly define this factor) become a barrier during employment of the graduates, by reducing the process of their specialisation for the employer. Therefore, while emphasizing innovative way of development, the IHE must form appropriate content of clan corporate culture.

Achocratic culture describes the university as a dynamic entrepreneurial and creative workplace. People are ready for sacrifice and risks. Leaders are considered as innovators and people who are ready to take risks. A linking point of the IHE is loyalty to experimenting and innovating. Need for activity in the current century and being a leader in the market of educational services is underlined. The IHE focuses on growth and acquiring new resources in the long run. It is important to be a leader in the market of education. Success means production of unique and new services and not only educational. The IHE management encourages private initiative and freedom.

Such a graphical combination of the IHE corporate culture profile can ensure transparency of identification of directions of its growth. In the researched example the dotted line reveals the ideal state of the IHE corporate culture for fulfilment of the task of enhancement of innovativeness and quality of educational services.

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Annotation

This work discloses peculiarities of the IHE corporate culture, defines its role in provision of quality and innovativeness of the educational process. There is designed a method of assessment of corporate culture and defining directions for its development taking into account modern trends of the educational services market

Propositions

- The IHE corporate culture in the modern conditions is an important resource providing quality and innovativeness of educational actions.
- Assessment of the corporate culture state is reasonable to conduct by taking into consideration the level of IHE employee loyalty, efficiency of internal communications in the characteristics of the image of the IHE faculty.
- A method of assessment of the level of the IHE corporate culture and identification of directions of its development taking into account modern trends of the market of educational services.

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