

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN THE CAPSTONE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COURSE: COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING, THE STUDENT LIVE CASE, AND MODELING

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This paper presents the application of experiential learning theory to the capstone strategic management course. The history of the capstone course is reviewed and the primary objectives for requiring this course discussed. Traditional methods of instruction for teaching the capstone course are presented, along with a discussion of the limitations of these approaches. The development of the Student Live Case is presented and advantages of this teaching approach discussed. The use of modeling to facilitate the experiential approach is described and student perceptions on the use of this technique are presented. Future research designed to compare the use of modeling with the traditional feedback approach is suggested.

Today's business organizations expect college graduates to possess competencies that go beyond mere content knowledge. Because most businesses now find themselves competing in a rapidly changing global marketplace, they need graduates who not only know their content areas well, but also are skilled in innovative problem solving, research capabilities, and self-empowered learning.

The emerging needs of today's organizations place new demands on institutions of higher education and are forcing educators to modify both what is taught and how students are taught. The traditional educational practice of having faculty impart information to students is being

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replaced by educational methods that emphasize the learning process and promote learning partnerships between instructor and learner (Bradford, 1993; Weil & McGill, 1989). This article describes an instructional approach that combines experiential learning with modeling, an approach that was used by the authors in teaching the undergraduate capstone strategic management (policy) course. The history and evolution of the strategic management course is briefly reviewed, along with the traditional methods of instructing the course. The authors' experiential learning approach is presented by describing how the components of collaborative problem solving, the student live case, and modeling were integrated into the course.

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE CAPSTONE COURSE

According to Christensen, Andrews, and Bower (1978), the business policy course originated at Harvard Business School in 1911 when a small group of faculty first developed course materials designed for managers who were studying business. The role of the course has been to culminate and integrate the various functional and tool areas of instruction. Traditionally, students have been given business case studies that require application of many areas of content knowledge to successfully perform the assigned analysis. The course has long been a required course for colleges of business accredited by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (Schendel & Hofer, 1979).

Prior to World War II, the primary focus of the course was the integration of the various functional areas (accounting, finance, marketing, and management) as they pertained to daily operating decisions. At most colleges and universities, the name of the course was *Business Policy*. Following World War II, however, the emphasis of the course began to move toward concern with the organization's external environment. Massive social, political, legal, technological, and economic changes confronted American companies. The course was restructured to include an analysis of the organization's external environment as well as an analysis of the organization's internal environment based on an integrated view of the functional areas. Many texts in the 1970s were titled *Business Policy and Strategic Management*. Strategic management can be defined as the process of matching or fitting an organization with its external environment in the most advantageous way possible (Digman, 1995). By the early 1990s, many textbook authors had dropped the use of *Business Policy* in their titles and had opted for titles such as *Strategic Management*. To date, the objective of the course remains the analysis of the firm's complex external environment, followed by the development of strategies that will enable the firm to compete successfully. An inherent component of this strategic process is an integrated assessment of the various functional areas within the organization.

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

The long-standing tradition for teaching this capstone course has been through the use of business case studies. Students, either individually or in teams, have been required to analyze cases written about real or fictitious organizations. The use of the case approach remains very popular today, and most strategic management texts include a collection of cases.

In the early-to mid-1980s, a number of simulations which utilized mainframe computers began to appear. The computer simulation exercises challenged students to make a number of successive operating decisions during the semester. Typically, students would compete with one another in teams, with each team representing a separate competitor within a fictitious or simulated industry. A number of strategic management computer simulations are now available to run on personal computers.

There are, however, some problems associated with the use of both the case method and the simulation method in the capstone course. When using the case method, students are often limited to the information and data presented in the case. Second, the lead time necessary for getting a case published and into the students' hands is very long. Often the case data are several years old before students read the case. Strategic management is very future oriented, but the use of the case method relies on archival data from years past. Third, there may not be sufficient material in the case to expose students to the entire strategic management process. Fourth, instructors typically have all students read the same case information, providing no opportunity for intragroup interdependence. In reality, organizational decision makers possess some relevant information but not all; they are often dependent on others who have needed information or varying perspectives. Fifth, the instructor usually assigns the specific cases to be analyzed, leaving no opportunity for choice on the part of students, thus reinforcing the teacher-as-expert role.

With respect to computer simulation games, problems exist as well. Experience has shown that technical problems in running the program often create frustrations for both instructor and students alike. Second, many students tend to focus their efforts on trying to figure out the computer program in order to "win the game," rather than on using sound analysis and decision-making skills. Third, the simulations are nearly always fictitious situations that the students tend to relate to as a game, not as a matter deserving serious thought. Fourth, many of the simulations have been marketed as *strategic* simulations, but in reality the decisions required by students are *operational* in nature. Fifth, these simulations tend to produce very clear outcomes in response to each set of student decisions, a situation perhaps not representative of the ambiguities present in real industries and organizations.

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These and other characteristics of the case and simulation methods do not represent the complexities of strategic management as it realistically exists in today's dynamic industries. The purpose of this paper is to present an alternative teaching methodology that has been used very successfully by the authors in the classroom—an approach which more closely mirrors the strategic management process faced by managers. Additionally, and equally important, this experiential approach shifts the student's focus from specific outcomes to the learning *process*, a skill deemed critical for success in our current work environment. Finally, our approach redistributes the responsibility for learning, creating an equal and reciprocal partnership between instructor and student.

THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH

Experience as a Vehicle for Learning

Drawing on the works of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, David Kolb offers the most-often cited definition of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Kolb defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984). Kolb points out that this definition emphasizes several critical aspects of the learning process with respect to the experiential approach. First, the process of adaptation and learning is emphasized rather than content or outcomes. Second, knowledge is a transformation process that is continuously created and recreated. Third, learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms.

Learner-centered aims of experiential learning methods include an atmosphere of trust in the classroom whereby curiosity and the desire to learn are nourished, a participatory mode of decision making in all aspects of learning, experiences that help students build confidence and self-esteem, and the excitement of intellectual and emotional discovery—all of which encourage students to become life-long learners (Rogers, 1983). Experiential learning methods focus on stimulating learner motivation to acquire the skills that will allow them to become assertive, adaptable, proactive, and effective communicators; in short, competent individuals who know how to find relevant information and apply it (Henry, 1989). A distinction can and should be made between learning from experience and experiential learning. Brah and Hoy (1989) suggest that the two are not synonymous. Learning from experience relies on starting from personal experience. Experiential learning uses experience as a vehicle for learning.

The role of the facilitator in experiential learning is to provide a helpful structure which enables learners to clarify their expectations, develop plans to meet their goals, and draw on resources which are available. Most forms of experiential learning are based on some notion of freedom and autonomy for the learner (Boud, 1989).

Experiential Learning in the Capstone Course

The idea for creating an experiential approach in the capstone strategic management course originated as a result of our experiences with the previously discussed limitations of the case and simulation methods, from our recognition of the need to focus attention on the *process* of learning, and from our desire to shift the emphasis from specific problems to more complex issues. As Hutton (1989) states, a *problem* is associated with a specific answer or solution, whereas an *issue*, or *situation*, or *focus of concern* more readily accommodates ongoing change over time. Hutton believes the experiential approach helps students learn how to make sense out of complexity and act constructively with whatever information is available to them. Hutton's approach for experiential learning relies on the *process* of making judgements as opposed to the *outcome* expected.

Lau and Shani's *Behavior in Organizations: An Experiential Approach* (1992, 1995) also served as a motivation. It made sense to teach business students about organizational behavior by involving them in behavioral situations which exemplified the theories and concepts being taught. Students have repeatedly indicated their strong preference for the experiential organizational behavior approach over traditional lecture and case classes.

The capstone course presented a dilemma in terms of providing an experiential approach, especially for undergraduate business students. Most undergraduate students do not have first-hand experience with strategic management. Environmental analysis, industry structure, mission statements, corporate diversification, turnaround strategies, networks, strategic alliances, and functional area integration are content topics learned only from textbooks, with little opportunity for actual experience by students. The challenge was to find a way to *involve* the students in their strategic management learning experiences in a way that would emphasize the learning process.

Group and Interpersonal Competencies

Given the emphasis in today's organizations on working in teams, Bradford (1993) contends that group-centered teaching is especially relevant in management courses. Students should increase their specific subject content knowledge *as well as* their group and interpersonal competencies. Bradford believes, however, that the traditional form of instructor-to-student lecture still prevails in most business school classrooms.

An extensive amount of literature has been generated with respect to groups, cooperative learning, and collaborative problem solving. Our interest in these areas stems from the primary integration objective of the capstone strategic management course, our desire to improve students' teamwork skills, and our desire to emphasize the process of learning.

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According to Johnson and Johnson (1975), learning environments can be structured competitively, individualistically, or cooperatively. In competitive learning situations, students' goal achievements are negatively correlated. Students seek to improve their individual performance at the expense of their classmates. In an individualistic learning structure, students seek to improve their individual performance without regard to the performance of others. Self-paced learning and programmed instruction are examples. In a cooperative learning situation, students seek to improve their individual performance as well as the performance of those to whom they are cooperatively linked. The cooperative learning situation represents the type of work environment college graduates will encounter when they begin their careers.

Numerous empirical studies have shown a wide range of positive outcomes from cooperative learning and collaborative problem solving (Johnson & Johnson, 1975, 1978, 1983, 1993; Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1983; Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson & Skon, 1981; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1977). Johnson and Johnson (1993) contend there are at least seven positive instructional outcomes from cooperative learning: higher achievement, greater motivation, better attitudes toward subject area and professor, more positive relationships with other students, higher levels of self-esteem and psychological health, greater cognitive and emotional perspective taking, and better interpersonal and small-group skills.

Boud (1989) also discusses the appropriateness of the group-centered approach in experiential learning, pointing out that much learning occurs from the interactions among group members. Individuals pursue their own learning needs within the context of the group, relying on others for feedback and support. Emphasis on democratic decision making and the consideration of different points of view are characteristic of the group approach.

Collaborative Problem Solving in the Capstone Course

Collaborative problem solving is especially appropriate in the capstone strategic management course. The course objective is to enhance the student's understanding of the organization's complex relationship with its external environment and the interrelatedness of the various functional areas within the organization. Students are taught that strategic management is a continuing *process* by which attempts are made to match or fit an organization with its external environment in a way that will enable the organization to survive and prosper (Digman, 1990, 1995). However, organizations do not make strategic decisions—people in organizations make decisions. It is imperative that students learn how to work together to effectively accomplish this complex process. Organizational members with diverse backgrounds and various agendas must work together to analyze future trends, assess perceived organizational strengths and weaknesses, and develop what they feel will be the best game plan for the future.

Development of the Live Case

The label "Live Case" or "Living Case" was suggested to the first author by Allen Wedell, Professor of Marketing, Colorado State University, during discussions of various teaching methodologies. According to Learned (1991), in living cases, students are teamed with local businesses to develop strategic plans for the businesses. This concept is quite similar to the Small Business Institute course found in many business schools. In the SBI course, students are teamed with local businesses to develop strategic plans for the businesses or to solve the business client's problems. Wynd and Wedell (1992) define a live case somewhat differently. Clients bring their problems into the classroom in person and interact with students to define the problems, determine alternatives, and agree on recommendations.

The capstone strategic management course is a separate course from the Small Business Institute course at many business schools. The strategic management course tends to focus more on industry structures and their associated characteristics, global competitiveness, and strategies for those competitors within given industries. It would be impossible for most undergraduate or graduate business students to maintain ongoing contact for an entire semester with the CEOs and other line managers of the major corporations they are studying. Thus a modified form of the live case has been created. This adaptation of the live case will be referred to as the *Student Live Case (SLC)*. The *SLC* concept described below has been extended from earlier ideas developed by Robert E. Jones, Professor of Management, University of Wyoming.

As mentioned previously, the capstone strategic management course is required for all business majors in schools accredited by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business. Normally, there is a fair representation of the various business majors in each class: accounting, computer information systems, finance, general business, management, and marketing. In order to create the *Student Live Case* approach, the instructor assigns students to teams based primarily on the students' majors. An attempt is made to provide representation from each functional major. In the real world, strategic decisions are affected by every functional area within the organization. This form of team structure forces the finance major to collaborate with the marketing major, the accounting major with the management major, and so on. Team size is usually four to six students, depending on total class size.

The team works together for an entire semester and must complete a major strategic analysis term project. At the beginning of the semester, the team is allowed to choose any industry and company within that industry for extensive analysis during the semester. Instructor guidance is recommended to help students avoid selecting highly fragmented industries or extensively diversified companies that would be difficult to analyze in the course of one semester. The team is then responsible for researching and collecting all data relevant to their *SLC* project, applying all concepts learned during the semester, and presenting a complete

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written executive summary of their strategic analysis to the professor near the end of the semester. A strategic management text, such as Digman (1995), Hunger and Wheelen (1996), Pearce and Robinson (1994), or Thompson and Strickland (1996), covering the basic strategic management process is used to supply the conceptual foundation for the course. Examples illustrating the application of each text concept are presented as the semester progresses to encourage transfer to the students' analyses of their *Live Cases*. Class time is provided for team meetings, thus enabling the instructor to facilitate application of the concepts learned. Providing time in class for team meetings also helps circumvent the common student complaint that the diverse schedules of their team members make it almost impossible for them to meet outside of class.

Advantages of the Student Live Case Approach

The advantages of utilizing the *SLC* are numerous. First, the students feel actively involved in a number of ways. The team has the freedom to choose which industry and company it wants to analyze. Often this decision takes a week or two as students struggle to find an industry and company that interests every team member. Once consensus is reached, however, all members tend to move forward with a commitment that is shared. Students cannot blame the instructor for the choice of text cases, they cannot complain about how the text case was written or how old the case data are, and they cannot claim that there was insufficient information on which to base recommendations. Text concepts can be covered while teams move toward consensus on choosing their companies.

Second, the students improve their research abilities. Students must discover ways to find the information they need. Students with weak library research skills can be led to the primary information sources through handouts listing the call letters of various business and economics holdings in the library, as well as CD-ROM and online index services that are available to students. Many colleges of business or their main libraries also subscribe to computer-readable sources of information that may be useful. Standard and Poor's PC Plus and Bridge are popular sources for corporate data. Online access to a wide variety of electronic databases can be gained through CompuServe, Prodigy, Lexis/Nexis, America Online, Delphi, DIALOG, and many other sources on the Internet. Additionally, most students write or telephone the companies and request information.

Third, the students become more skilled at sorting through information and determining what is applicable. In both the case and simulation methods, students often complain that there is too little information provided for sufficient analysis. In the *Student Live Case*, students usually gather too much information and are then faced with the dilemma of what is useful. This information overload is a much better representation of real-world decision environments. Experience has shown that it is desirable to set a page limit for the executive summaries. Thirty

pages, double spaced is a good target. A "no page limit" policy has resulted in 100-page summaries replete with student rambling. No outline is provided for the executive summary, forcing students to decide what information is critical to their analysis. Experience has shown that students prefer to be told exactly what the professor wants, but this is not representative of the job environment they will face upon graduation. Students are encouraged to explore a number of complex issues and present a range of alternatives rather than a single recommendation. Further comment on this desire for structure is made later in this paper.

Fourth, the use of the *SLC* requires the students to actually work through the strategic management process rather than just read about it. This allows students to experience all of the challenges associated with collaborative team efforts. Dealing with conflict resolution, personality conflicts, and individual contribution differences are powerful learning experiences for students. Jalajas and Sutton (1993) offer an entertaining and useful article for instructors who plan to use student groups. The title of their article is "Feuds in Student Groups: Coping with Whiners, Martyrs, Saboteurs, Bullies, and Deadbeats."

Fifth, from the instructor's perspective, the *Student Live Case* term projects are much more interesting to read and grade than traditional cases or simulation reports. Most professors are pressed for time to keep up with what is happening in the global marketplace, and we would all love to have more time to read *Business Week* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The term projects result in interesting student accounts of the current issues facing a variety of real industries and companies. Students feel more responsible for their share of the instructor-student partnership, as they will actually be providing information and analyses of benefit to the instructor.

Finally, students have a finished product they can show to prospective employers when they are interviewing. Students typically show a great deal of pride in their finished projects and are pleased when they have an opportunity to tell employers about their research and analyses capabilities.

FACILITATING THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH THROUGH MODELING

Two observations led the authors to believe that there was a need for incorporating model reports into the experiential learning process described above. First, anyone who has ever taught management is familiar with the frequent student comment, "How do we know if we're doing it right?" as if management were a perfect science analogous to mathematics. Students continually ask for an outline of what the professor wants and how it should be presented. Second, in past semesters, copies of previous strategic management student projects were made available for student guidance, but the students had to check them out of the reserve section of the library. Typically, the better students were the only students to take advantage of this

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learning opportunity; the average and poorer students would not make the effort to check out and read the prior term projects. These observations led the authors to explore further the use of modeling to facilitate the experiential approach.

Modeling as a Vehicle for Learning

Bandura's Social Learning Theory is a behavioral theory that takes into account intrapersonal and environmental determinants. Social learning refers to the idea that individuals acquire much of their behavior by observing and imitating others in a social context. People's behavior and the environment influence each other (Steers & Porter, 1991). Cameron and Whetten (1993) have suggested that Social Learning Theory is an excellent approach for teaching management skills to business students. These well-known researchers argue convincingly that students must be taught to develop critical management skills in the classroom. Learning *about* management is not sufficient, and it is too late for the students when they have to learn *to manage* on the job. "Social learning theory focuses on changing behavior through the modeling process" (Cameron & Whetten, 1993).

Modeling is a component of the social learning theory framework (Steers & Porter, 1991; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Individuals can expand their knowledge and skills by observing the behavior of others and the consequences of that behavior (Bandura, 1986; Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978). An overview of ways that modeling can be used to develop intellectual, social, and behavioral competencies can be found in Steers and Porter (1991).

Jernstedt (1986) extends the application of modeling to experiential learning. Vicarious learning techniques such as handouts, recalled personal experiences, instructor modeling, and demonstrations serve as examples of others' behavior. Jernstedt has studied the impact of these vicarious learning methods and reports an increase in student achievement and motivation.

Modeling in the Experiential Approach

Rather than providing previous student projects for library reserve checkout, the authors prepared model strategic analysis reports on four different corporations for use in team assignments. The reports were prepared specifically to model the type of research and level of reporting expected of the students in their *Student Live Case* term projects. Each report contained relevant information about the company's external environment, the industry, the company's history and mission, product mix, competitive position, and strategies. The reports were typed using appropriate writing style, headings, paragraphs, referencing, etc. The students were told that the model reports had been prepared for their reference in completing their *SLC* projects. Each model report was sufficiently different in approach and content to show the students that strategic management can take various formats for reporting issues and analyses.

The idea was to demonstrate for students that there is not just one right way to present their findings and analysis.

Team members were given a copy of the first model report and were then required to meet in class one week later to discuss it. The students were told that they were to be prepared to identify and analyze the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, strategic issues, and strategic recommendations, but that they were not to write out any responses in advance.

Each team met in a separate room, without the instructor, during their collaborative problem-solving sessions. The professor was available nearby, however, to answer any questions as to what was expected of the group. The instructor was often asked specific content questions regarding the model report, but in responding always made an effort to facilitate group learning rather than offering a definitive answer. The instructor must be prepared to say, "What do you and your other team members think?" At the end of the class period, each team handed in a handwritten summary of their analysis. The second model report was then handed out and the process repeated until teams had read and analyzed four model reports during the middle portion of the semester.

It is important to note that in this modeling approach, the turned-in collaborative responses were not graded immediately and returned to the students. The responses were held by the instructor until the end of the semester. Students were told that the responses would be graded when all four had been turned in, and, in fact, the responses were not graded until after the students had turned in their term *SLC* projects. The intent was to have students learn how to prepare their *SLC* projects from the modeled reports and their successive collaborative experiences, rather than by any form of feedback from the instructor.

As expected, many students asked repeatedly for immediate feedback, offering the previously cited comment, "How do we know if we are doing it right?" It was explained to the students that strategic management is not a perfect science and that the instructor was more concerned that they learn and understand the strategic management *process* from their collaborative efforts than specific content. In the real world, the CEO does not "grade" the strategy team's report and say, "Your team got an *F*. Do it over." Making complex decisions involves judgement, and learning the process of making judgements is a key task for professional education (Hutton, 1989). However, since the problem-solving assignments represented a moderate portion of the students' final grades (an incentive deemed necessary for committed student participation), students still begged for feedback, albeit unsuccessfully. This apparent need for feedback is often a topic of discussion among faculty members and is discussed again later in this paper.

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Our approach to modeling incorporates several elements suggested by Wood and Bandura (1989). These researchers contend that modeling has been used very successfully to develop intellectual, social, and behavioral competencies, provided three components are present (Bandura, 1986, 1988; Wood & Bandura, 1989). First, the appropriate skills are modeled to convey the desired competencies. The students in our research were provided with modeled strategic analysis reports. The second component involves guided skills mastery. Our students were provided structured opportunities to practice their new skills throughout the semester. The third component requires a transfer program whereby the newly learned skills are actually tried out in a job situation. In our research, the students had to apply their new skills in order to complete their *Student Live Case* term projects.

Student Response to Modeling

By the end of the fourth model report team discussion, there appeared to be a significant level of improvement both in terms of collaborative processes and content analysis. Comments such as "at first we were clueless" and "we could have done better" seem to indicate some improvement over the four meetings—at least from the students' perspectives.

In order to assess student perceptions regarding the use of the modeling technique, a questionnaire was administered to the students. The results indicated that the students felt very strongly about the usefulness of the modeling approach (see attached exhibit). The modeled reports seemed to provide an example of what students needed to do regarding their *SLC* term project and showed them that there is not just one right way to present their findings and analyses. The individual student comments suggest that the modeled reports helped students in other ways as well. Several comments indicated that the modeled reports served as a confidence builder and motivator.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As mentioned previously, students continually asked for immediate feedback on their collaborative problem-solving responses. Many college courses are taught with the traditional feedback technique, thus conditioning students to expect feedback on all their class work. Experience has shown that students exhibit a low tolerance for ambiguity and lack of clear structure from the professor. Many teaching evaluation forms include an item on whether or not assignments were graded and returned promptly to students. This student expectation of clearly structured tasks and immediate feedback is not representative of today's work environment. We believe Hutton's (1989) suggestion of "habitual expectation" probably applies here. As Bradford (1993) points out, however, the traditional methods of instruction may no longer be appropriate. We may actually be doing a disservice to our students if we lead them to believe they will find

a clear sense of direction with immediate feedback once they enter the work place. This observation is particularly important for undergraduate students. Graduate students with work experience may more readily discern the differences between the classroom and the work environment.

Of further interest are questions concerning the use of the feedback technique as compared with the modeling approach. We are currently extending this research project by analyzing the application of the traditional feedback approach in the capstone course. In the future, we hope to make direct comparisons between the use of the modeling and feedback methods within the experiential approach. The impact of the findings may affect both students and instructors alike in terms of motivation, achievement, satisfaction, student-professor relationships, and instructor assessment.

Student Response to Instructional Use of Modeling

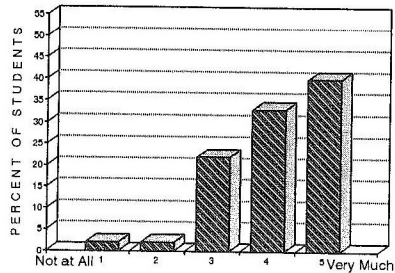
Summary of Questionnaire Responses by Students in Business Policies and Strategic Management Classes Taught Using Modeling as an Instructional Technique

General instructions given on the questionnaire distributed to students:

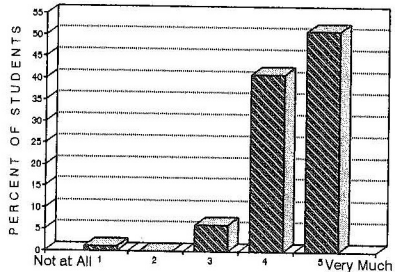
"Please rate how helpful you thought the assigned model reports were in showing you what you needed to do regarding the following aspects of your term paper."

Student Responses (n=82)

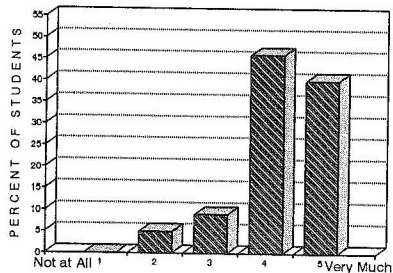
1. Showed me what my instructor's expectations were for an "A" paper.



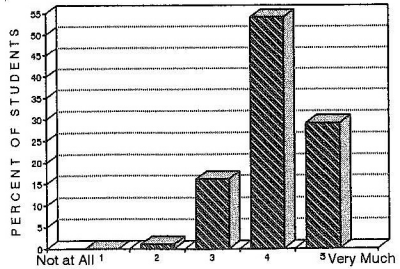
2. Served as a model of how to organize the information in our paper.



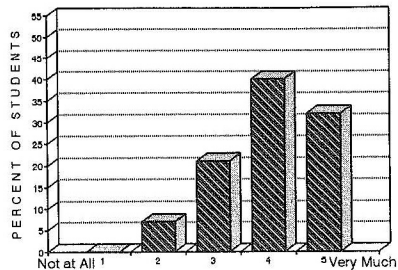
3. Helped me understand the strategic management process by having us go through it several times with different model reports.



4. Illustrated different ways of presenting information about a corporation, its environment, and its product line.



5. Gave me a better idea of what information we needed to research for our term paper.



6. Please specify any other ways that the four model report assignments may have helped you with your term paper.

- Helped to determine format and flow of paper.
- Variety in formats, use of info. sources--good ideas as to what is expected.
- Helped me determine good SWOT analysis and how to relate to strategic issues.
- Helped our team understand the project as a whole, and got us moving.
- Gave our group an overall direction to follow, kinda like a motivation factor.
- Allowed me to learn more about other companies that I didn't know much about.
- They were good guidelines/outlines.
- Seeing the negatives/positives of the different model reports helped with ours.
- Helped me analyze the information that I have collected.
- Each model report was somewhat different; showed different ways to write ours.
- Reinforced my understanding of the subject matter, as well as what was needed for our paper.
- The four model reports helped our team interact as a group by working together to resolve issues. I know this will help us in our final paper.
- These model reports were an excellent confidence builder for doing our own case.
- The different formats used in the model reports helped me to organize our project into a better format.
- Helped on how exactly to organize it.

- Pointed out certain weak areas (e.g., external environment).
- Reading the model reports helped me realize that the final paper is not as hard as I thought it would be.
- Helped to see the format and the structure that the final paper was to be in.
- Helped to know which areas we were leaving out or doing in too much detail.
- Gave us ideas on different ways to outline the case study for our final paper.
- Showed us how to format our term paper and how to do the analysis.
- It gives everyone a basic format for the term paper.
- Gave us examples of writing styles and format of paper.
- Gave us a basis of what we needed in our paper and how to coordinate it.
- Better able to understand each group member's ideas and to relate them to paper.
- Once you do or see a process more than one time you get much further on the experience curve.
- Helped in generating viable alternatives and useful recommendations.
- Able to look at good and bad things in the model reports, which will help with ours.
- Format for organizing the term paper.
- Helped show ways of presenting a paper for clarity purposes.
- Learned to listen to others' ideas.
- Helped us understand where our focus should be when preparing a SWOT analysis.
- Helped us decide which style we liked and which way we were going to organize our own paper.
- Structure of paper and content of critical parts was shown in the model reports.
- Showed me how NOT to write a term paper.
- Eliminated uncertainty with regard to time spent on researching nonuseful info.
- How to work in a group.
- Gave an indication of what a strong, organized paper should look like pertaining to this assignment.
- I took a lot of ideas from the model reports and applied them to my paper.
- Some of the model reports brought out aspects that I had not thought of.

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