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## THE EFFECTS OF SYNERGOGY ON THE POLICY COURSE: SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT LEARNING AND TEACHER EVALUATION

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### ABSTRACT

Developing the conceptual skills essential for managing in the information age is one of the principle goals of the capstone course in business policy. However, this objective is one not easily achieved through conventional teaching methodologies so policy professors must constantly seek improved techniques to maximize student learning. In this experiment, two forms of Synergogic methodologies are used to significantly improve learning in the policy course while achieving, at the same time, significantly better student evaluations of instruction.

### THE STUDY

The purpose of this inquiry was to measure the effects of two synergogic methodologies (Team Effectiveness Design and Team-Member Teaching Design) on the undergraduate capstone business policy course. Two policy classes were assigned to the same professor. A traditional pedagogic technique was used for the control class (n=26). The two synergogic techniques were employed in the experiential class (n = 28). Both classes also used the same experiential exercises and the same case studies. The same learning objectives and the same learning levels were established for both classes. Grades were determined by the scores on two common exams (a mid-term and a final exam). Just prior to the final exam, both sections evaluated the instruction using a common evaluation questionnaire.

#### Team Effectiveness Design

Mouton and Blake describe the Team Effectiveness Design (TED) as follows:

"In the Team Effectiveness Design, each of a team's learners assesses his or her knowledge prior to the team discussion. After an initial review (prestudy) of the material to be learned, each learner completes a given set of true-false or multiple-choice questions. The team members then work together to reach consensus on the best answer to each test question. Members present their choices and reasons for them and learn about other members' choices. Since the task is to achieve consensus, participants have the opportunity to exchange information, to explain their reasoning, to assess the reasons and evidence provided by others, and to use logic in weighing the pros and cons of each alternative as the best answer. Later, in general sessions, objective scoring enables team members to assess their individual work, and the team's consensus answers are scored for comparison with other teams. The answer key also provides a rationale for each answer, which further aids team members in understanding why each correct answer, according to the key, is regarded as most valid. Team members then use an evaluation period to assess how well they worked as a team and to plan how to increase their effectiveness.

#### Team-Member Teaching Design (TMTD)

The Team-Member Teaching Design is described by Mouton and Blake as follows:

"In the Team-Member Teaching Design, participants are responsible for learning an assigned portion of the subject matter and teaching it to the others. Once each member's part is fitted with the others, the entire body of knowledge is known to all. Thus, the TMTD somewhat resembles a jigsaw puzzle.

...This design requires that the subject matter be subdivided and a part assigned as prestudy to each member. When the team assembles, the member with the first part teaches that material to the others; then the other members in turn teach their parts. A comprehensive test of the material is administered to assess each participant's understanding. The answer key provides the expert rationale for each item and helps learners understand whatever questions each may have missed. In a subsequent brief critique period team members assess how well each seems to have learned and communicated the assigned subject matter, and members suggest how individuals could increase their effectiveness."

### FINDINGS

The grades for the two sections of policy, based on a 4.0 grading scale, resulted from two common examinations (a mid-term and a final). The experimental class, utilizing the two synergogic methodologies, earned significantly higher grades than the control class, which utilized traditional pedagogic techniques. Just prior to the final examination, both sections evaluated the course, using a common questionnaire. The results of the student evaluation of instruction indicate that the experimental class gave the course and instruction significantly higher evaluations on all fourteen items tested. They even gave significantly higher ratings to the text, which also was the same for both classes. The synergogic class also expected to receive significantly higher grades in the course.

### SUMMARY

The results of this study certainly provide strong support for the potential of the two synergogic methodologies -Team Effectiveness Design and Team-Member Teaching Design. The policy class that used these innovative techniques that make students responsible for their own learning earned significantly higher course grades than the students receiving conventional 'teaching.' Because the learning objectives were the same for both classes and were carefully planned around Blooms Taxonomy of Learning Objectives, it can be concluded that the experimental class did, indeed, learn significantly more than the control class.