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## Innovative Teaching Ideas for HRD Educators (2008)

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## **Innovative Teaching Ideas for HRD Educators (2008)**

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*This innovative session is sponsored by the AHRD Program Excellence Network (PEN) which is a cooperative network of HRD academic programs committed to excellence in teaching and learning. The primary purpose of this session is to promote excellence in teaching HRD by providing participants with ideas for effective and creative teaching in higher educational settings. It will provide a forum for the discussion of teaching methodologies, activities, and assignments that enrich classroom environments.*

**Keywords:** HRD Education; Learning; Teaching

Ernest Boyer published a groundbreaking book in 1990 titled *Scholarship Reconsidered* where he introduced the concept of four categories of scholarship:

- 1) the scholarship of discovery;
- 2) the scholarship of application;
- 3) the scholarship of integration, and
- 4) the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Since that time, the attention directed towards scholarly activities on the scholarship of teaching and learning in many fields has dramatically increased. Although the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) has provided a forum for scholarly research and discussion around the topics of training and development within workplaces, we have only begun (during the past year or so) to offer opportunities for our membership to learn and discuss innovative ideas for improving our own teaching within HRD undergraduate and graduate classrooms.

At the 2007 International Research Conference of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD), we joined the ranks of other academies and organizations (e.g., Academy of Management, Western Academy of Management, Eastern Academy of Management, American Association of Higher Education, and the Society of Human Resource Management) in making the scholarship of teaching and learning in academic classrooms an important focus for its membership. This was accentuated by the establishment of the AHRD Program Excellence Network (PEN), a preconference session dedicated to its new members, a successful effort focused on sharing innovative teaching ideas through written descriptions and packets, and a well-attended, enjoyable innovative session on creative teaching ideas for HRD educators. Regarding the later, attendees in 2007 innovative session requested that we offer this session each year so that new ideas can be shared and incorporated in HRD academic programs around the world.

### **Session Purpose and Goals**

The primary purpose of this innovative session is to promote excellence in teaching HRD by providing participants with ideas for effective and creative teaching in college/university classrooms. The goals of this session are threefold. First, this session will provide a forum for academy members to obtain and discuss new and creative ideas

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that enrich classroom environments and facilitate increased student learning. Second, it will provide participants an opportunity to be involved in an active, experiential, and interesting session that is designed to motivate current and future faculty to use HRD/AE principles, techniques, and theory to provide innovative learning experiences for their post-secondary students. Finally, it is designed to foster awareness of the importance of teaching excellence to the members of AHRD. By providing forums for scholarly discussions on improving the undergraduate and graduate experiences of our students, we can improve the effectiveness of our academic courses and programs. HRD academics and practitioners argue that there should be continuous efforts to improve performance in the workplace. We argue that we (HRD educators) should challenge ourselves to do the same in our classrooms.

### **Session Description and Format**

This innovative session will provide participants with teaching ideas (assignments, activities, and techniques) that can provide students with unique and interactive ways to learn HRD concepts. Faculty members from institutions across the United State will present, demonstrate, and discuss five specific creative ideas in 15-minute segments:

1. How Do You Know They ‘Know’? Three Evaluative Teaching Techniques: Blogs, Learning Boards, and Plusses & Pearls
2. HRD Action-Reflection: A Three-cycle Approach to Exploring and Experiencing Action Research
3. Applying Poster Session Concepts to Teaching and Learning
4. On-Line Scavenger Hunts: A Tool for Continual Learning
5. Using Academic Service-Learning in a Training and Development Course

The session will conclude with a 15-minute large group discussion focused on the segments, AHRD’s role in providing resources and forums focused on excellence in teaching HRD, and ideas for future scholarly dialogue and research on the scholarship of teaching and learning in HRD classrooms.

### **Innovative Session Content**

Much of the theoretical framework for this session comes from the work of David Kolb (1984) who is recognized by andragogical and pedagogical researchers (e.g., Carver, 1997; McGoldrick, Battle, & Gallagher, 2000) as a leading theorist in the active learning dialogue. Kolb defined learning, as “the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience” (p. 38). He also noted that, because learning is a continuous process that is grounded in experience, all learning could be seen as relearning. His theory started with a model for experiential learning. The model has four steps which, according to Swanson and Holton (2001), include (1) concrete experience—being fully involved in here-and-now experiences; (2) observations and reflection—reflecting on and observing their experiences from many perspectives; (3) formation of abstract concepts and generalization—creating concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories; and (4) testing implications of new concepts in new situations—using these theories to make decisions and solve problems (pp. 167-168). The model has had widespread use and has also provided the general framework for a large number of studies related to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Although not all of the session segments use all four steps, each presenter will utilize two or more components in his or her demonstration.

The two facilitators will begin by briefly presenting the purpose of the session and introducing the presenters. Each presenter will then have 15-minutes to demonstrate and discussion his/her segment. The following paragraphs are descriptions of each of the five segments, organized alphabetically by the presenter’s last name.

#### *Segment 1: How Do You Know They ‘Know’? Three Evaluative Teaching Techniques: Blogs, Learning Boards, and Plusses & Pearls (Jamie L. Callahan)*

Jamie uses a variety of techniques in her classes that serve both as vehicles for reflective learning and as mechanisms of evaluation. As facilitators of learning, we sometimes forget to incorporate evaluations into every phase of the learning activities we guide. Very often, our evaluations are relegated to the obligatory ‘smile sheets’ handed out as end of course evaluations. Further, we establish learning outcomes or objectives for our courses and we measure our own ‘success’ by the extent to which students ‘learned’ what we thought they should learn—or what we thought we were ‘teaching.’ But, what if we could encourage reflective learning while, at the same time, capturing the real learning experienced by those learners we hoped to reach? Blogs, learning boards, and plusses & pearls are three mechanisms to do just that.

All participants in Jamie’s classes maintain a blog that captures their individual reflections on class readings; these blogs highlight key points the learners glean from the readings. Learners have control over access—the blog

can be public or by-invitation-only. Learning boards are purely public and visibly document the learning points after each module of the class. Finally, plusses & pearls are anonymous reflections on what worked and what didn't work during the module. Each of these techniques provides formative evaluation information while stimulating reflections on both readings and class experiences that reinforce learning. During this session, Jamie will describe the use of each evaluative teaching technique and will engage the session participants in the use of learning boards.

*Segment #2: HRD Action-Reflection: A Three-cycle Approach to Exploring and Experiencing Action Research* (Toby Egan)

HRD is inherently grounded in action research (Hamlin, Reidy, & Stewart, 1998; Lee, Stewart, & Woodall, 2004). Toby challenges his organization development (OD) and training and development (T&D) courses to consider the notion that *action research may be the course itself*. That is, the OD/T&D course is in and of itself an action research project. Toby's course design engages students in five core principles of action research: 1) engages change experiments on real problems in social systems; 2) involves iterative cycles of identifying an issue/problem, planning, acting and evaluating; 3) focuses on re-education through an exploration of norms and values as expressed by action; 4) changes the status quo toward more effective learning; and 5) frames course and project processes by theory-practice reflection and extension activities (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1995; Coghlan & Brannick, 2001).

The approach of engaging in action research project in an OD/T&D course has been utilized for several years (Thomas, 2002). A major challenge for instructors is often how to move students beyond normative classroom expectations to engaging organizational contexts in ways that are meaningful for students and participating client organizations. Toby uses three "action cycles" to engage students in the design, development and implementation of an OD/T&D course being taught and the out-of-class course team project. The three cycles include:

- *Cycle 1—Course Creation:* Learning about the basics of action research by applying them to action on the OD/T&D course design whereby students contribute to the framing of key issues (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1995; Coghlan & Brannick, 2001;) related to the course and finalization of the semester long course design during initial class meetings. Student input leads to an agreed upon final syllabus for the course.
- *Cycle 2—Team and Project Creation:* Learning about shared and different interests in OD/T&D issues and contexts for engaging organization change. Students use several decision making tools including a web-based Delphi/affinity technique and a networking exercise to assemble teams with key goals for engage in an action research approach (entry, start-up, assessment and feedback and action planning) with an organization students identify.
- *Cycle 3—Client Project:* Students engage an actual organization in an action research project informed by course material and information students developed in Cycles 1 and 2. The final presentation for the course is done at the client organization and feedback is provided by the instructor, student group peers and, most importantly, the client organization. As part of their action learning experience, students use "process checks" and journaling along with an "after action review" following the meeting at the client organization.

A post hoc analysis of twenty of the course projects implemented from the OD course over several years will be reported on. The study of these student projects determined that the action research projects implemented in organizations by students had long lasting impact on the individual client(s) as well as the client organizations.

*Segment 3: Applying Poster Session Concepts to Teaching and Learning* (Sharon K. Gibson)

Although poster sessions have been frequently employed at scholarly conferences, there is great potential to expand this method for use as a learning strategy in the higher education classroom. In this session, Sharon will discuss the application of poster session concepts in a course on *Coaching and Mentoring*. This innovative technique was used as a means to cover a vast array of coaching/mentoring application areas and to enable students to ask targeted questions on each of the topical areas explored. The purpose of this strategy was to provide an opportunity for students to both gain exposure to areas of application important to the course as well as pursue in-depth an area of special interest. Guidelines were provided on what to include on the poster boards so that comparisons between topics could be easily made. The poster session topics were combined into groups based on similarity of topical area. Students rotated among the groups, and identified questions for each cluster of topics, which were written on note cards. Each group served as a panel to respond to specific queries on their topical area and to discuss areas of commonality. Additionally, each presenter developed a marketing brochure on their topical area, as a take-away for class participants.

This session will specifically describe this teaching/learning strategy and the rationale for using this approach in this particular course. This strategy will be discussed in relation to the aims of the course, the timeframe in which the course was offered (e.g., a compressed J-term schedule), and the instructor's objectives with respect to class engagement and student involvement in the learning process.

*Segment 4: On-line Scavenger Hunts: A Tool for Continual Learning* (Brenda Levya-Gardner and Sharon Korth)

Xavier University's HRD master's program is a 2-year cohort-based weekend format. In the spring of their last year, as part of their final assignments in the program, we have developed an On-Line HRD Scavenger Hunt to expose students to online resources available to the HRD manager and help them determine their value. They participate in HRD-related online communities and document their learning. They also search for and critically analyze information pertaining to creating and managing an effective HRD department. There are six areas of research they participate in: 1) Companies recognized by ASTD as a BEST award winner; 2) Professional organizations; 3) Online communities; 4) Blogs; 5) Podcasts; and 6) Wikis. Their analysis includes what they learned in their online scavenger hunt and how they think HRD managers in organizations can leverage this type of learning. The presenters will share the development of this scavenger hunt--what worked well and its limitations--and plans for the future with other cohort groups.

*Segment 5: Using Academic Service-Learning in a Training and Development Course* (Susan R. Madsen)

Susan has integrated a full-scale academic service-learning consulting project in the undergraduate training and development course she teaches each spring. Service-learning is an emerging and promising teaching methodology that appears to provide students with the opportunity to transfer their course content knowledge and skills (learning) from the classroom into the workplace. According to McCarthy and Tucker (1999), service-learning is "changing the way that professors view the connection between classroom pedagogy and learning" (p. 554). Bush-Bacelis (1998) found that the advantage for students is that "they are able to connect the readings, class discussions, and other assignments with the real world, full of real people, with real problems that students try to help solve" (p. 27). Before the semester begins, Susan works with her county's United Way to set up training and development projects and sites with a variety of non-profit agencies throughout the area. Each agency has unique needs and requests for training. Students then work individually on their own service-learning projects with an agency throughout the semester. As they learn in class through readings and class lectures/discussions about analysis, design, development, and evaluation—the students also implement what they are learning in the "real world." Hence, a primary objective of this course is to give students some hands-on experience with training and development. The end result is the design of a training program along with fully completed training modules/lessons in one or more areas. Depending on the analysis and design phases, the final product could be materials related to a classroom training session, simulation, structured on-the-job, manual, online training, or another type of training. Projects are customized to the needs and situations of our community partners.

## **Conclusion**

This session will not only bring attention to the importance of innovative, quality teaching and learning in HRD academic programs, but it will be an interesting, interactive, and enjoyable session for conference participants to attend.

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