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From the Selected Works of Susan R. Madsen

March 2, 2007

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/susan_madsen/61/

Innovative Teaching Ideas for HRD Educators (2007)

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This innovative session is sponsored by AHRD's new Program Excellence Network (PEN) dedicated to strengthening HRD programs and promoting excellence in teaching HRD. The primary purpose of this session is to promote excellence in teaching HRD by providing participants with benchmarks for effective and creative teaching in higher educational settings. It will provide a forum for the discussion of teaching methodologies, activities, and assignments that will enrich classroom environments and facilitate increased student learning.

Keywords: HRD education; Learning; Teaching

One of the central foci established in 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) is that of the scholarship of teaching and learning in academic classrooms. In 1990 Ernest Boyer published a groundbreaking book titled *Scholarship Reconsidered*. He introduced the concept of four scholarships: 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 (e.g., research, journal publications, conference presentations, dialogue) 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 just begun to offer opportunities for our membership to learn and discuss innovative ideas for improving our own teaching within HRD undergraduate and graduate classrooms.

The AHRD Board of Directors recently made it a strategic priority to foster activities that will support professors and academic programs. As a result, AHRD has recently founded the Program Excellence Network (PEN) which is dedicated to strengthening HRD programs and promoting excellence in teaching HRD.

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 to enrich classroom environments to 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 country will present, demonstrate, and discuss five specific creative ideas in 15-minute segments:

1. Using Music to Teach Introductory HRD to the I-pod Generation
2. Teaching HR and HRD through Creative Debates
3. Teaching Business to “HRD Types”
4. Teaching Mentoring through Film—The Seinfeld Way
5. Teaching Work-life Integration through a Reflective, Action Planning Exercise

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 facilitator will begin by briefly presenting the purpose of the session and introduce 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:

Segment #1: Using Music to Teach Introductory HRD to the I-pod Generation (Kenneth R. Bartlett)

Ken teaches an undergraduate “Introduction to HRD” course with about 50 percent non-HRD majors. Each week he assigns readings in the Swanson and Holton (2001) *Foundations of human resource development* text. One required assignment involves students identifying a song or piece of music that they feel relates to the content/theory behind a particular chapter. The assignment includes writing a short paper listing and describing 1) the song or music, 2) reasons for its selection, 3) connection to the HRD chapter concepts and theories, and 4) Web link to the cited song/music where the song can be found. Each class those students who have selected that weeks assigned textbook readings submit their paper. The provided weblink is used to play a segment of the song or music (done in the format of a “Name that Song” contest). Then, having collected the written assignment, students are asked individually to stand and explain why they selected the song and how it relates to the week’s reading. Other students in class are invited to respond or to ask additional questions of the presenter.

The use of music in this course follows recent research that has explored both the act of listening to music and the metaphors associated with music as appropriate mechanism for management related education (Fairfield & London, 1993; Tinari & Khandke, 2002). A recent study by Weinrauch, (2005) used music lyrics and the interpretation of songs to teach concepts related to market strategy. This study highlighted the importance of evaluation to examine outcomes, although most reported data utilizes student reactions. At the end of his courses last year Ken distributed a brief survey to the students inquiring whether the assignment increased their motivation and likelihood to read the text each week, to think about what they were reading, and to consider how the music related to the chapter contents. Responses were positive. Both Likert-type and open-ended data were collected for the fall and spring (2005-2006) offerings of the course representing over 120 students. During this presentation, Ken will play a couple of song clips and then read selections from the student’s assignments on how they felt the song reflected HRD idea/theories. His segment will conclude with a discussion of ways to integrate music into teaching.

Segment 2: Teaching HR and HRD Concepts through Creative Debates (Susan R. Madsen)

Susan teaches undergraduate courses in human resource management, organization development, and training and development. She is strongly committed to the value of active and experiential learning activities and experiences. One such learning activity she uses is debate. There are a variety of forms of debate varying from informal to formal. Susan has used a wide range of formats that take anywhere from five minutes to a full class period. When more in-depth formats are utilized, she assigns preparatory readings and research. She has found that various forms of debate are valuable tools for students to learn course concepts. Further, debate can also be beneficial in the development and strengthening of essential skills and competencies that graduates need for effective professional careers (e.g., public speaking, argumentation, logical presentation of thoughts, thinking on ones feet, critical thinking, analysis, research, teamwork, and confidence). Susan will provide a handout of the different debate formats and ideas. She will also facilitate a mini-debate on an HRD topic with session participants. If designed and facilitated effectively, this teaching-learning activity incorporates portions of three of Kolb's (1984) steps: concrete experience, observations and reflection, and formation of abstract concepts and generalization.

Segment 3: Teaching Business to "HRD Types" (Wendy E.A. Ruona)

There is a lot of talk about how HRD needs to be a strategic partner. In fact, business acumen (in one form another) has been increasingly included in discussions of key competencies for HRD professionals (for example Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005; Christensen, 2006; Gilley and Maycunich, 1998). However, most HRD professionals lack the "basics" of business which are at the core of working in any kind of strategic role in organizations. As per Kolb's theory of learning, students need experiences in their curriculum that will allow them to be introduced to and experience these ideas that are often quite unnatural for "HR types. In this part of the session, Wendy will share how she has incorporated elements (foci, readings, and assignments) into her *Strategic Human Resource Development* class that are designed to enhance student competency around how business works, understanding the forces that affect an organization, and financial analysis.

Segment 4: Teaching Mentoring through Film—The Seinfeld Way (Troy R. Nielson)

Troy teaches a mentoring section in one of his undergraduate courses. Mentoring is a unique type of interpersonal relationship between an experienced individual (the mentor) and a less experienced person (the protégé). Research has found mentoring to be positively associated with many beneficial outcomes, such as higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment, career satisfaction, promotion rates, and lower turnover intentions (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Higgins & Kram, 2001). Recent studies have also explored some of the "dark sides" of mentoring that can occur when these relationships sour (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Scandura, 1998). College students, particularly at the undergraduate level, are neither well-informed about the advantages and disadvantages of mentoring, nor do they usually feel comfortable initiating and managing such relationships. To help them get a better feel for mentoring and some practical do's and don'ts, Troy shows them a couple of scenes from a *Seinfeld* episode that was almost entirely focused on mentoring. It will be entertaining while also effectively illustrating many important points about mentoring relationships. In this innovative teaching segment, Troy will show participants a few minutes from one of the clips and use the handout that he provides students in class as a take-away item. Recent mentoring theoretical perspectives, such as the prescription for a network of multiple mentors (Higgins & Kram, 2001), are integrated into the discussion of mentoring practices. He will conclude by offering some overall suggestions about using film clips in the classroom.

Segment 5: Teaching Work-life Integration through a Reflective, Action Planning Exercise (M. Lane Morris)

In his work-life doctoral class, Lane utilizes an exercise that requires students to reflect on their earliest understandings of work and life. Utilizing a reflective learning action planning activity, knowledge and meaning about work-life are better understood from lessons communicated through early experiences discovered through the development of an initial student work/life autobiography (e.g., steps 1, 2). This reflective learning methodology has been used by Boot and Boxer (1980) and can assist and support individuals learn as they contemplate previous experiences and messages about topical issues. More specifically, Lane uses a guided approach to assist students in writing about the lessons they have learned throughout their lives about work, life, and family. Using questions he provides, in-depth and detailed analysis and critical reflection are encouraged. Based upon the work/life autobiography, each student prepares a written action plan. Through the autobiography and action planning reflection process, Lane assists students to identify goals and aspirations, determine their definitions for "success," and better understand how the lessons we learn from influential people in our lives shape our present/future views about work, family, community, and life (e.g., step 4). In this innovative segment, Lane will discuss the assignment

while having participants involved in remembering and reflective on some of their own life experiences that may have influenced their current work/life perspectives.

Conclusion

This session will not only bring attention to the recent emphasis the academy is now placing on providing excellence and quality in the HRD educational experience for students, but it will be an interesting, interactive, and enjoyable session for conference participants to attend.

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