A Living Case Study: A Journey Not a Destination

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**ABSTRACT**

Living Case Studies (LCSs) in the discipline of business provide a bridge from knowledge acquisition to knowledge practice in a real world context. They offer the facilitator a knowledge to application methodology and the student a learning by doing experience, which are oftentimes lacking in business courses. The Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) offers a Diploma of Business leading to either the University of Adelaide or University of South Australia’s degree programs in business-related fields. From 2010-2013, EIBT introduced a simulated LCS in its Diploma of Business program to extend collaborative methods and understanding of how different business courses can work together to achieve heightened student engagement. This chapter provides an overview of the journey from planning to implementation, different approaches adapted in courses, reflections on what was learned, and future recommendations if the LCS were to be re-implemented at EIBT.

**INTRODUCTION**

There is the need to formulate teaching and learning strategies that bridge the business divide from the classroom to the boardroom and in between. Properly facilitated, the interdisciplinary and interactive nature of learning communities introduces students to complex and diverse perspectives, with expectations that they will somehow come up with the “right” answer, which is characteristic of traditional lecture-style pedagogical approaches. The structure of effective learning communities promotes critical thinking and contextual learning, with skills that are increasingly important in an “era of information...”

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overload” (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 118). Engaging students in intellectual activities is powerful when faculty members require students to apply what they are studying in one course to other courses. Taken together, these features strengthen the social, intellectual and professional connections between/among students, which in turn, helps to build a greater sense of community.

Business students do not usually get opportunities to work in real-time dynamic workplaces and to apply their theoretical skills as do students studying architecture, medicine, nursing, social work and teaching for example (McHann & Frost, 2010). The challenge for business educators is to develop teaching and learning strategies that enable students to practice techniques that are “authentic” and “hands-on” to fill the void related to a lack of work-related experience. The simulated workplace case study is reflective of the real world and enables students to be creative in being responsive to and predictive of a dynamic and rapidly changing authentic business environment.

Continuous learning approaches that foster creativity which is a forerunner of innovation in business success, are important to implement in business courses for students, so that they can develop real business skills as part of their graduate qualities. However, at Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT)—a member of Navitas, a private company involved in the competitive international education provider market—creativity is understood to be essential in fostering an entrepreneurial culture and in assisting in long-term economic growth (Amabile, 1997). The challenge for EIBT is to create a culture that encourages and supports creativity in both lecturers and students, so that they can work with knowledge to generate ideas (Bink & Marsh, 2000; Weisberg, 1999). A motivational element in the lecturers themselves is an imperative in order to act as a stimulator to implement creative activities into the teaching and learning environment (Kaufmann, 2003). The challenge presents in how to build this creative culture and develop creativity both within educational staff and within the students they teach.

This chapter is largely descriptive. It elucidates an innovative methodology that was implemented within the Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) in 2010-2013. A Living Case Study (LCS) methodology was implemented to help deliver a more dynamic and real workplace-related business context to build opportunities for Diploma-level pre-university pathway students to creatively engage with events in the news before transitioning to mainstream higher education in Australia and then the business world. A LCS attempted to elevate cultural, educational, linguistic and social collaboration and performance within EIBT to advance knowledge and understanding. Throughout this work, “international students” or “students” will be specific to individuals enrolled in EIBT on temporary student visas and who are almost exclusively from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB). The program in focus was a Diploma of Business, in which the vast majority of students have never had work experience. McCarthy and McCarthy (2006) added that there was an inadequacy of text-based case studies for preparing students to be business persons of the future. Hence, the LCS provided the opportunity to address real-world business engagement often lacking in “business” graduates (Garvin, 2000). There are few, if any, LCSs at the undergraduate level as described in this chapter and thus, this work addresses this gap in the literature.

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1998, EIBT offers pre-university pathways in the form of a Diploma of Business (DB), Information Technology (DIT) or Engineering (DIPE) with provisional entry into The University of Adelaide
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