Chapter 12

Student Use of Cell Phones to Conduct Real–Time Polling

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the process that graduate students in a Student Affairs in Higher Education class used to implement real-time polling in group presentations. Students used Poll Everywhere to create their own real-time polls. This process is examined through the lens of Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle. The researchers in this study reviewed students’ experiences using real-time polling in each of the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC): Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). The chapter also captures the successes and challenges of implementing real-time polling at each stage. The data from this study suggests that students had high levels of success in all four of the ELC stages when implementing real-time polling. The results also identify challenges which were realized during the process and areas of improvement for future consideration.

INTRODUCTION

Technologies such as real-time polling are being implemented in higher education classes, but the majority of the time the instructor is the one running the show. The instructor is usually in the active role of setting up the session and the student in the passive role of clicking the buttons to respond. In order for students to learn how to create their own real-time polls, students need to move away from passive forms of learning. Therefore, instructors must ask students to develop these polls themselves. Moving

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students to active forms of knowledge acquisition such as learn-by-doing will enhance students’ learning (Dewey, 1916; Kolb, 1984; Martin, Franc, & Zounkova, 2004).

Students in a graduate program in Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) indicated they would be interested in learning how to administer real-time polling, a skill that could enhance their market-ability. A SAHE professor developed her course so that students could learn how to conduct real-time polling by incorporating it into their group presentation assignment. Poll Everywhere was selected as the real-time polling solution due to the ease of use and low cost. Poll Everywhere allows students to use their cell phone to respond to polling questions, so students do not need to purchase specially designed clicker devices. Poll Everywhere also has a free educational subscription for classes under forty. Students were given a short in-class tutorial to teach them how to integrate their polling questions into their PowerPoint presentation.

The objectives for this chapter are to examine the process students used to incorporate real-time polling in their group presentations through the lens of Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle. The chapter measures students’ successes, challenges, and experiences during each of the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle that include:

1. Concrete Experience,
2. Reflective Observation,
3. Abstract Conceptualization, and
4. Active Experimentation.

The research questions being asked are:

1. What were the students’ experiences using their cell phones to conduct real-time polling at the Concrete Experience stage?
2. What were students’ experiences using their cell phones to conduct real-time polling at the Reflective Observation stage?
3. What were students’ experiences using their cell phones to conduct real-time polling at the Abstract Conceptualization stage?
4. What were students’ experiences using their cell phones to conduct real-time polling at the Active Experimentation stage?

BACKGROUND

Real-Time Polling

Lecture is the oldest teaching methodology and the most common method used at universities today (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). Most college faculty continue to teach using didactic lecture, with the majority of faculty selecting lecture as their primary teaching methodology in the classroom (Cashin, 2010). While effective lecturing is an important teaching skill for faculty, it is equally important for faculty to develop other teaching methodologies that actively engage students in the learning.