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The Collaborative Classroom: New Technology Brings New Paradigm

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Abstract - Today, technology is the agent of change that is revolutionizing education. The collaborative classroom, where teachers and students openly gather and share information to empower one another for the purpose of learning, is quickly replacing the existing reality of the traditional classroom where teachers lecture and provide their expertise.

Collaboration is a tool used in classrooms not only to engage students but also to bring them together and teach them how to work together. Peer review is an important collaborative technique that allows students to share their work and ideas for the purposes of improvement and shared learning. With the invention of new technologies such as Google Docs, Google Drive, and Prezi Meeting students and teachers are able to use these new techniques to improve student skills in communication, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Keywords - collaborative learning, open leadership, pedagogy, peer review

Relevance to Marketing Educators: Collaboration teaches students and teachers to think more precisely and makes it essential to think more strategically. It sparks student communication and the exchange of student ideas. The secret of the collaboration is a culture of open communication. The collaborative classroom is not only about implementation of technology but also about changing how teachers teach and how the student learns.

Introduction

Learning in the classroom is changing as technology changes. Students are growing up in a world of easy access to information and ideas. While a professor lectures on a subject students can check online with their laptops or phones to see the most recent knowledge and facts on the topic. In a collaborative learning environment both the student and professor take advantage of this easy access to a vast reservoir of data, facts, quotes, news, and details at their fingertips.

Literature Review

The New Paradigm Driven by Technology

In 1962, Thomas Kuhn wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, and furthered, defined and popularized the concept of "paradigm shift." Think of a paradigm shift as a change from one way of thinking to another (Kuhn 1962). It's a revolution, a transformation, and a metamorphosis. It is driven by change (Bird, 2000). Today, technology is the agent of change that is revolutionizing education. The collaborative classroom where the teacher and students openly gather and share information to empower one another for the purpose of learning is replacing the existing reality of the traditional classroom where teachers lecture and provide their expertise.

The Collaborative Classroom

A collaborative classroom is where students are self-organized into small teams so that members can learn from one another by following a few simple rules and a set of shared expectations. This approach creates an enhanced learning environment by allowing participants to take on various roles, including that of teacher. Collaborative learning promotes the sharing of ideas and knowledge and gives learners the opportunity to review and comment on each other's work. It also allows them to coach, model, teach and learn by using the abilities of individual team members as well as the team's overall synergy as part of the learning process (Marquardt, 2002).

A collaborative classroom works the way nature works. We are social beings. We congregate in groups like a swarm of birds, a school of fish, or a colony of ants. Following the rules of nature, the collaborative classroom shapes itself into existence by following the intent of the teacher and by following a few simple rules that directs the behavior of each student in the classroom.

Students do not come to school knowing how to work effectively in groups or teams. They may exhibit competitiveness, egocentrism, ethnocentrism, and criticism of other student's values, emotions, beliefs, and knowledge. Collaboration skills need to be taught directly and practiced repeatedly. Skills of listening, speaking, consensus seeking, empathy, compassion, leadership, and knowing how to support group efforts are behaviors that are best practiced and learned in a collaborative system. (Senge, 2000)

All living systems have the ability to self-organize and to self-direct their behavior. By exchanging information they can quickly respond to change and continually reorganize themselves into adaptive patterns of communication and structures that improve their ability to perform. The collaborative classroom is a self-organized, self-directed classroom that offers a simpler and more effective way to accomplish its work. It is an alternative to the traditional classroom and challenges the most fundamental assumptions on the structure of a classroom and the role of the teacher.

A collaborative classroom is a system of connections of students who collaborate to get their work done. For example, students organized into teams search out answers to a wide variety of problems and share this information with all members of the class. It is not only about being completely open and transparent; it's also about finding the right balance of structure, technology, and student interaction.

The Collaborative Classroom

The Role of Open Leadership

At the center of the collaborative classroom is the role of the teacher as leader. It is the job of the teacher through his or her leadership to create a culture that creates a collaborative classroom. Charlene Li, in her breakthrough book, *Open Leadership*, calls this type of leadership open leadership. Li defines open leadership as: having the confidence and humility to give up the need to be in control, while inspiring commitment from people to accomplish goals.

Open leadership creates a collaborative culture where people are transparent in their sharing of information for the purpose of carrying out the organization's mission, goals and objectives. In the case of the classroom, the mission is learning.

There are four key elements to open leadership:

- The first element is collaboration. Open leadership is people working together to get things done. It is about teamwork and team building.
- The second element is transparency. Information not only has to be open, frank and candid, it has to be honest and correct. Open leaders not only have to articulate the values and the important information of the organization they must “also exhibit a certain style or posture when doing so. They have to “talk the talk” and they have to “walk the talk.”
- The third element is sharing the information. The word share comes from the word shear, which means to cut from the main body and to distribute equally to everyone. Transparency is the communication of information but sharing is giving up the assets of intellectual property so that everyone benefits. Teachers who want collaboration from

others must not only share responsibility but they must be open and transparent in the process. (Senge et al, 1999)

- The fourth element is empowerment. Knowledge and intelligence is power and as it becomes distributed, there is a concomitant distribution and decentralization of power within the organization. Open leaders create a culture of freedom. It is the culture connected with the technology that results in open information systems and open organization. Ultimately, culture and relationships trump technologies. It is people working together that make all the difference. (Li, 2010)

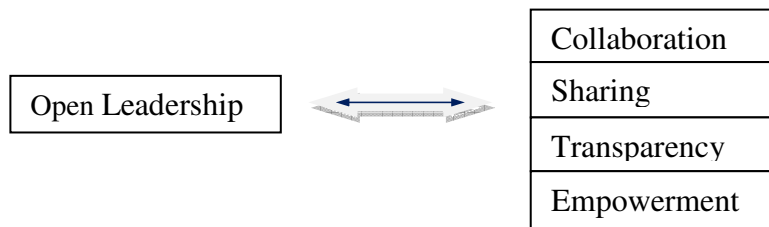


Figure 1

Ultimately open leadership not only creates an open, collaborative classroom but also a classroom that “thinks and acts differently.” People can connect and network inside and outside the classroom.

Connective Information

“Information,” wrote Gregory Bateson, “Is any difference that makes a difference.” Bateson claimed that the source of most of our problems is “the difference between the way man thinks and the way nature works” (Bateson, 1972). This idea is supported by Margaret Wheatly who writing in *Leadership and the New Science* (1999) writes that in nature simplicity is the first rule of order A few simple connections generate orderly patterns that create a structure that enhances not only the safety of each of the members but also the survival of the organization.

Wheatly, like Bateson followed a systems approach and believed that in order for any organization to be successful it had to connect information in three critical areas.

- First, members need to identify with the organization.
- Second, members need to connect to all the information or the organization, both old and new.
- Third, members must be able to develop relationship with other members anywhere in the system.

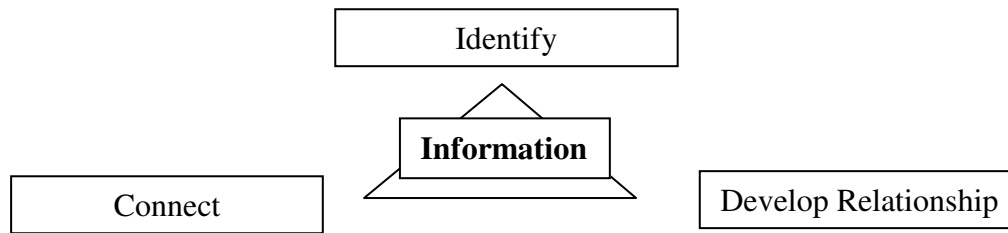


Figure 2

The Power of Intention

A collaborative classroom begins with intent. Actions and plans follow the intent of the teacher. It is the role of the teacher to articulate, exhibit, reinforce, and reward the rules of the classroom. The rules focus on the behavior of the each student’s behavior in relationship to the behavior of the other students in the classroom.

It is the clarity of purpose that creates the entire nature of relationships within the classroom. The first intent is working together with a shared sense of purpose. This shared sense of purpose does not require the individual student to lose any of his/her uniqueness. The idea is to stay centered on what the work is together, rather than on individual identities.

The classroom creates itself around a shared intent and on some basic rules about how they are to work together. The teacher clarifies why they are together and what they expect from each other and from the teacher. The main intent of the teacher is to create a safe environment where caring is at the center of the classroom culture.

Three simple rules form the basis for connecting the class, for keeping the class focused, and for allowing for openness to allow for diverse and individual responses to almost any situation or problem. These three rules are: first, take care of yourself, second, take care of your team members and third, take care of the other class members.

Classroom Processes for a Collaborative Classroom

Relationships are everything in the collaborative classroom. The classroom exists with the intent of giving each student a stable and supportive place for learning. When creating a collaborative classroom there are the important elements to the formation of student teams and their use of technology to assist in their collaborative learning.

Student Teams

Following is the process to form and use teams to create a collaborative classroom.

1. Students create small student learning teams of 3 to 4 members
2. Each student team develops a team agreement document that identifies the expected roles and responsibilities for each team member. The team creates a name, a logo, a mission statement, a set of guiding values, and an evaluation review process
3. Teams select a subject area, topic or issue for their research papers, presentations, and discussion questions.

4. Each team selects a communications officer to take care of the information that the team submits to the course management system such as Moodle, and for the exchanging of information using Google Docs/Drive, Jing, and/or Prezi Meeting
5. One or two days a week is used for preparation. Each class assignment is a collaborative assignment where students are expected to work outside of class on their part of the assignment and then in class they collaborate on their presentation.
6. One day a week is a presentation day where all teams present their work before the class and where the class, using a tool like Prezi Meeting, reviews, rates, and comments on each presentation.
7. The teacher's role is to visit with each team, to assist in preparation, and to review results of the previous presentation, papers and any other assignments. All assignments are peer reviewed for the purpose of sharing ideas and information.

Technology and the Classroom Information Model

The rapid improvement of information technology has led to the emergence of its use as an important factor in the classroom. Although technology has improved dramatically, technology alone will not improve the teaching-learning process. This is where the designing of an information system or model allows for the creation of a culture of collaboration.

With the development of the digital communications revolution and the advent of social media, itself a new technology, everyone can have a voice. What this all means is that the classroom no longer has to follow a top down communication approach. Technology has permitted the teacher to transform the classroom from a hierarchical structure into more of a 'heterarchy' where all the students can feel free to have a say. An open heterarchical classroom design provides an open culture where class members/teams can send and receive information from any other class member/team concerning all elements of creating, reviewing, evaluating and improving classroom performance.

By definition classroom culture is 'how we do things'. We suggest that the teacher use a three-stage approach. The first stage is the discovery stage where the focus is on identifying the topics, ideas, and themes that will be covered in the class. This stage may be identified as the problem identification stage. The second stage is the development stage. Here the focus is on learning how to solve the problems identified in stage one. At this point the classroom culture is all about improvement. The third stage is the delivery stage. As the lessons from stage two have been learned, they need to be applied to create skilled and professional solutions to the problems.

The purpose of Classroom Information Model (CIM) is to involve all students in the final stage. By having the students collaboratively submit ideas and suggestions for problem solutions and projects. The teacher along with explaining the CIM has the class form into

teams or groups. The teacher can and should ask for volunteers to give presentations on each of the technologies to be used in the CIM. Students are technology smart and do an excellent job of presenting how to use and apply each of the technologies.

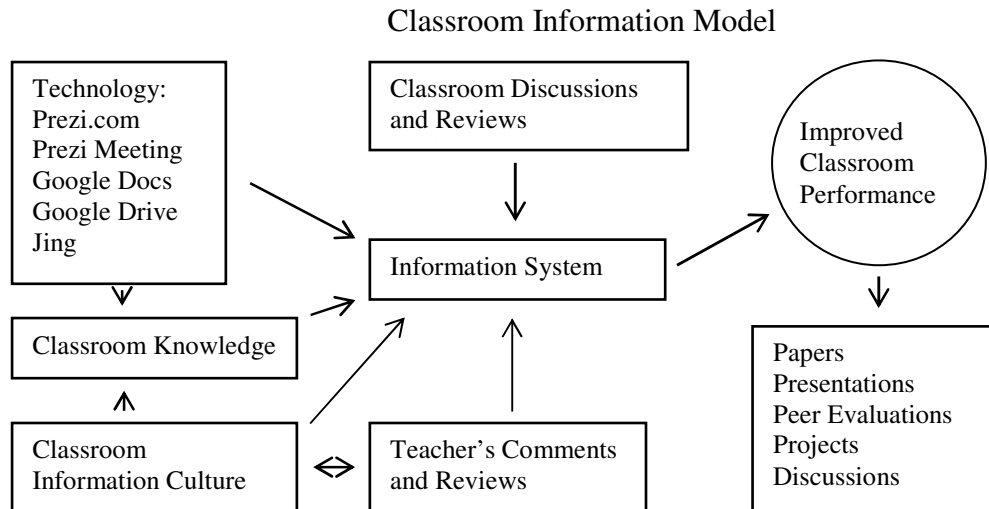


Figure 3

By adopting the CIM students are presented with the ability to make iterative improvement in papers, presentations and problem solutions. The improved classroom design will create a better student experience featuring more imaginative, professional papers and presentations. Moreover, classroom use of technology will create a culture of working together which results in not only a classroom that runs better but also a classroom that can adapt to changing conditions.

In the process of having team member's work together it is important to use the technology available that allows them to collaborate in and out of the classroom. The Model contains examples of readily available technology for collaborative work in and out of the classroom.

- Prezi Presentation is best known as a free presentation tool but it also can be used as a Web 2.0 tool to enhance collaborative learning environment. Prezi is a cloud-based presentation software and storytelling tool for exploring and sharing ideas on a virtual canvas.
- Prezi Meeting is an online collaboration feature that allows up to ten people (co-located or geographically separated) to co-edit and show their Prezi in real time. This allows teams to meet virtually whereas previously they were restrained by having to meet physically. Users participate in the Prezi simultaneously, and each is visually represented in the presentation window by a small Prezi avatar. Any text, image, and/or video that is added to the Prezi is visible to the whole team, giving remote team members the sensation of being in the same creative space together.
- Google Docs is a free web-based office suite offered by Google within its Google Drive service. It also was a storage service but has since been replaced by Google Drive, which

allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with others.

- Google Drive is a file storage and synchronization service provided by Google, which enables user cloud storage, file sharing and collaborative editing. Google Drive is now the home of Google Docs.
- Jing is a screen casting computer program launched in 2007 as Jing Project by the TechSmith Corporation. The software takes a picture or video of the user's computer screen and uploads it to the Web, FTP, computer or clipboard. If uploaded to the web, the program automatically creates a URL to the image that can be shared with others.

Conclusion

A traditional classroom may be run efficiently but it will not be able to create a collaboration culture that allows each student to connect his/her information and knowledge with those of team members or classmates. The foundation of the collaborative classroom is a developed learning culture and the foundation of this culture is shared information and shared expectations. Technology implementation is a driving force in the collaborative classroom but at the end of the day it is the active participation of the teacher and the students that creates the culture that empowers students to achieve improved performances. The teacher needs to give up the role as the sole provider of information and become one of many available sources of information. The teacher will conduct the process as the students/teams gathers information and assembles the information into a presentation or paper.

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