

12-1-2009

Introduction to the Teaching & Learning Section

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Recommended Citation

Meisel, Steven I. (2009) "Introduction to the Teaching & Learning Section," *Organization Management Journal*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 4 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/omj/vol6/iss4/4>



Teaching & Learning

Introduction to the Teaching & Learning Section

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Organization Management Journal (2009)
6, 215–216. doi:10.1057/omj.2009.29



Organization
Management
Journal

The two articles published in this issue are not closely connected in terms of subject matter or style, but they both speak to the challenge of teaching with integrity within our disciplines. In addition, they both relate to the AACSB categories of learning standards. In “Dynamic Dialogue: A Multi-perspective Approach Towards Cultural Competence” by Daria Crawley and Rex Crawley, the authors suggest two ideas for integrating conversation about race in the management education classroom.

We often talk about diversity in a general way and the value of diverse opinions in decision making. However, directly opening a discussion on these subjects can be difficult. The authors point out that “discussing race continues to be a challenging topic for many faculty.” The emotionality of the topic and potential for conflict or discomfort in the classroom may discourage business school faculty from even attempting a deeper learning event. The concerns about introducing high emotion topics in class have been discussed in various ways for many years (see Bowen *et al.*, 1988), but we seldom see a prescriptive approach that suggests methods for creating powerful learning in a non-confrontational manner. By looking at a single course structure designed to “reconceptualize ... ways of thinking about culture and race,” as well as a faculty development seminar with similar goals, the authors provide *OMJ* readers with specific suggestions for increasing skills in teaching about diversity.

The need to develop competency in multiculturalism and diversity represents one of the six learning standards proposed by AACSB. The need for a thoughtful structure to do this will be appreciated by anyone who has encountered the awkward silence of the classroom when introducing the topic.

The second article in the Teaching & Learning Section is “Evidence-Based Instruction: A Classroom Experiment Comparing Nominal and Brainstorming Groups” by Lynn E. Miller. On the surface, this seems to have little in common with the Crawley and Crawley article. However, there are some interesting similarities. The author creates a framework for bringing evidence-based management into the management classroom. This is not as common in the practice of teaching as we would like to think. Simply stated, this means using methods that “enhance(s) the overall quality of organizational decisions and practices through reflective use of relevant and best available scientific evidence” (Evidence-Based Management, 2009).

Using the well-known concepts of brainstorming and nominal group technique, Miller shows how the evidence of a superior data-generating model can be demonstrated through experiential



learning in a simple yet powerful design. There is not much conflict in this *except* for the dissonance of leaving behind what we thought we knew about brainstorming. The product is the integration of a new and tested understanding of group decision-making tools. This is an example of some of the pretty serious conflict of the mind we call learning.

The evidence-based management design relates directly to both the critical thinking aspect of AACSB learning goals as well as the ability to utilize qualitative and quantitative data. In short, this exercise helps create better thinking.

In both articles, the authors advance the goal of creating a more informed dialog between instructor and students. The power of evidence-based management and critical thinking is clearly important and complementary to finding better ways to engage the issues of race and a multicultural society. In both cases, classroom learners benefit by new ways of thinking. I believe that our *OMJ* readers will benefit as well and find ways to introduce both designs into their practice of management education.

References

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