

Introducing learning strategies to increase student engagement on a BA Event Management final year course

Dr Ewa Krolikowska and Emma Abson
Marketing, Events and Tourism Department
Business School



**UNIVERSITY
of
GREENWICH**

Structure of our paper

- ◆ **Background to the course being researched**
- ◆ **Presentation of findings**
- ◆ **Conclusions: Did our learning strategies increase student engagement?**
- ◆ **Issues for consideration**



The problem...

Contemporary issues in Event Management

Year 3 / level 6, 30 credit, core course.

- ◆ The course content?
- ◆ The course structure?
- ◆ The course timings?
- ◆ The lecturers?
- ◆ The students?

= ?



We identified the issues...

- ◆ **Motivation – extrinsic or intrinsic**
- ◆ **Engagement in learning**
- ◆ **Understanding the value of the teaching and learning strategies**



Our attempts at a solution....

Active Learning Strategies introduced in 2014-15

- ◆ Peer-teaching (student-led lectures and tutorials)
- ◆ Choice of course content (ten topics)
- ◆ Choice of assessment topics and format



Research Objectives

Research Objectives:

1. **To explore whether the new learning strategies introduced increased student engagement**
2. **To better understand the student perspective of these new learning strategies**



Four data sets

1. **Questionnaire** given to students during lectures and tutorials (43 completed - 50% response rate)
2. **Focus group** run with six students (skewed towards highest performing students)
3. Term 2 **assignment** required students to reflect on their experience of taking part in a lecture/tutorial – 82 out of 86 submitted (95% response rate)
4. Online **course evaluation forms** – 18 students completed (21% response rate)



Key themes from data analysis

◆ Motivation

◆ Engagement

- Drivers
- Barriers

◆ Value



Motivation

- ◆ **Biggest factor which demotivated students was that the delivery of the lecture/tutorial was **not graded**:**
- ◆ **25% of students said they would have worked harder if the lecture/tutorial had been graded.**

‘Personally this assignment did not motivate me as much as others. The main reason behind this is because it was not graded so I prioritised other tasks over this one because I had other deadlines’



Motivation (higher performing students)

- ◆ ‘It was an **interesting and different challenge...The chance for us to be creative** and cover things that we are actually interested in’
- ◆ ‘I was more motivated if **[content] it was really relevant to the industry** (e.g. alcohol licensing). It’s not just theoretical anymore. We might actually need to use this!’



Motivation (higher performing students)

- ◆ ‘For me, it was really about what I’m going to put on my CV and talk about in my interviews...After delivering the lecture, I did mention this project example in an interview. It does impress employers’
- ◆ ‘It’s one of not many courses which **encouraged me to go out and look in event industry articles and different newspapers** that are relevant.’



Engagement Driver 1– peer teaching encouraged greater communication between students

‘[The course] encourages students to talk in tutorials and lectures as well.’

‘A lot of the most interesting things come from other students because so many of us do work...the chance to talk about our own experiences and examples’



Engagement Driver 2 – peer teaching led to greater integration among students in the year group

- ◆ Especially important for direct entry students and those who had taken a placement year

‘The overall experience of being taught by my course mates and teaching them has **made us closer as a year group**. Coming into the final year at Greenwich, I could have easily felt like an outsider but **the student-led learning is actually one of the aspects that helped me integrate.**’



Engagement Driver 3 – peer teaching encouraged taking ownership of learning

‘Personally I really enjoyed the experience. I’d love to do it again because **I did take ownership of my learning and as a result of teaching the tutorial, I felt more actively involved and engaged in the contemporary issue at hand.**’

‘**We learnt much more doing our own research into the topic than if we had all the materials delivered by lecturers...Personally I remember much more and I can be critical and confident in the topic since we did a lot of research and reading.**’



Engagement Driver 4 – choosing course and assignment topics encouraged greater engagement in research

‘They [the lecturers] finally trust us! We can actually pick our own topics. It’s not painful to write. You have so much in the third year going on so it’s nice to write about something that you’re interested in.’

‘On this course we go online and pick our own topics so that’s quite engaging.’



Engagement Barrier 1 Students lacked confidence and disliked peer teaching

‘How can I possibly teach others when I’m still learning myself?’

‘The experience was one I won’t forget – the experience made me feel **uncomfortable**, I won’t do it again.’

‘Overall delivering a lecture seemed **very daunting and overwhelming** at first as it was something I had not had to do before.’



Engagement Barrier 2 Negative impact of peer teaching on attending students

‘Some lectures were really painful...a waste of time!’

Some students said they were put off going to the student-led lectures after a bad experience

- ◆ Some lectures were **too short**
- ◆ Some students were **not confident** in presenting
- ◆ Some students did **not** come up with **new content**



Engagement Barrier 3: Problems with team work

‘Not again – teamwork!’

‘Big group – just a few of you doing the work!’

- ◆ **Groups of nine were too large**
- ◆ **Some groups only met via social media**
- ◆ **Students who gave the lectures tended to prepare the content too**
- ◆ **No leadership (no-one wanted to make the effort as the work was ungraded)**



Engagement Barrier 4: Lack of willingness to engage with new assignment formats

Choice of format:

82 submitted:

◆ Blogs	74
◆ Podcasts	6
◆ Videos	2



Why a blog?

- ◆ 'The easiest'
- ◆ 'The quickest'
- ◆ Unwilling to take a risk with technology not used before
- ◆ Previous experience of blogging
- ◆ Students are used to writing:

'We spend our whole time writing essays and all we know is essays and now we're given these options and everyone wants to put it in word format.'



Value of peer teaching

1. Transferable soft skills

- ◆ Public speaking
- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Organisation
- ◆ Time management
- ◆ Group/team work
- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Decision-making
- ◆ Flexibility
- ◆ Improvisation/
thinking on the spot
- ◆ Creative skills
- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Educating people



Value of peer teaching

2. Confidence linked to future employment

‘Undertaking the task to host a tutorial **increased my confidence** and has led me to consider applying for more managerial roles in the future.’

‘The whole process was very profitable as **it took me outside of my comfort zone** and was rewarding in terms of skills development. **I now feel more confident in a professional environment** which will help me with my career in the future.’



**Did the new learning strategies
increase student engagement?**



Peer teaching

Yes

- ◆ Intrinsic motivation shown by higher performing students
- ◆ Encouraged by positive approach of other group members

No ✓

- ◆ Lack of motivation to engage due to no grade (extrinsic motivation)
- ◆ Groups too big
- ◆ Uncomfortable with teaching
- ◆ Did not attend classes due to poor experience of student-led lectures



New assignment format (blog, podcast or video)

Yes

- ◆ Engaged with the less formal style of the blog

No

- ◆ Few students engaged with the podcast or video as it required more effort



Choice of course and assignment topics

Yes ✓

- ◆ **This was popular with students who valued the opportunity to select their own topics**

No

- ◆ **No negative feedback**



Issues for consideration

- ◆ **How can we encourage students to engage more with student-led lectures and tutorials?**
- ◆ **How can we encourage students to be more innovative and creative on this course (experiment with technologies and come up with genuinely new content?)**
- ◆ **Can you suggest any relevant theories and research to develop our study further?**



Thank you for listening

Any Questions?



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