

TAKING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION TO THE NEXT LEVEL – A CASE STUDY OF A TEACHING AND LEARNING PROJECT AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

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Abstract

This is a case study about student centered course re-design in the context of an undergraduate interdisciplinary program. As part of their program students complete a mandatory course on social entrepreneurship.

In this teaching and learning project we have first systematically evaluated the existing data for the course on learner satisfaction, learner success, and learner feedback. Second, interviews and focus groups with graduates did provide additional data. All data have been analyzed in December 2016 to inform the comprehensive and systematic evidence-based redesign of the course for the offering in the winter of 2017. Finally, targeted surveys at the end of the course have provided data on the achieved level of success of the course redesign.

Background

Since its new introduction in 2007 the course “RCLP 4002: Change Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship” always somewhat was a problem child due to its perceived business mindset. In 2014 – the baseline for substantial redesign – the challenged had shifted towards a dichotomy of pro- vs. contra-business mindsets between business minor and non-business minor students. The 2014 syllabus was still “traditional” (directive, textbook, mixed but fixed assignments).

In 2015 various Social Entrepreneurship Education (SEE) projects informed this study: RCLP 4002 participated in the Global Entrepreneurship Education Evaluation Project resulting in relevant data in Winter 2015 demonstrating grown confidence of students in management skills acquisition and business plan creation. Further, our team collaborated on researching adult learning in the context of SEE; we used Fornaciari and Lund Dean’s (2014) framework and criteria to assess course syllabi. We found that syllabi are underutilized as adult learning collaboration tools (Mengel, Tantawy, & McNally, 2015). Finally, in 2016 we received funding for this study.

Teaching and Learning Project 2016/17

In our methodology, we focused on Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2014; “The 21st-Century Syllabus: From Pedagogy to Andragogy”). We further built on Nomme and Birol (2014; “Course Redesign: An evidence based approach”).

In our first data collection and analysis phase (Fall 2016), we used existing data from other projects/activities, conducted a survey of Winter 2016 students, and facilitated a focus group with a research assistant and a Winter 2016 student. Based on this, we redesigned the course for Winter 2017. Finally, we did another survey of Winter 2017 students to evaluate the effects of the redesign.

Data

Routine Student Opinion Surveys (SOS): Comparison 2014—2015—2016



Survey of winter 2016 students

Students’ summaries – what was positive/should stay

“The entrepreneurial freedom given to the students in their projects”
“[The course] allowed for participation, and influence of our own learning”

Students’ summaries – what was negative/should change

“The syllabus objectives should be revisited”
“It wasn't totally clear what this course was about.”

Focus group Fall 2016

Facilitators (RA/co-author) summary:

“The student ...enjoyed ...[the] approach of self-directed learning...Not all of the students had positive attitudes towards self-directed learning...due to a loss of interest or unfamiliarity with the topics, especially the business topics.”

Student suggestions – “Bridging the gap...”

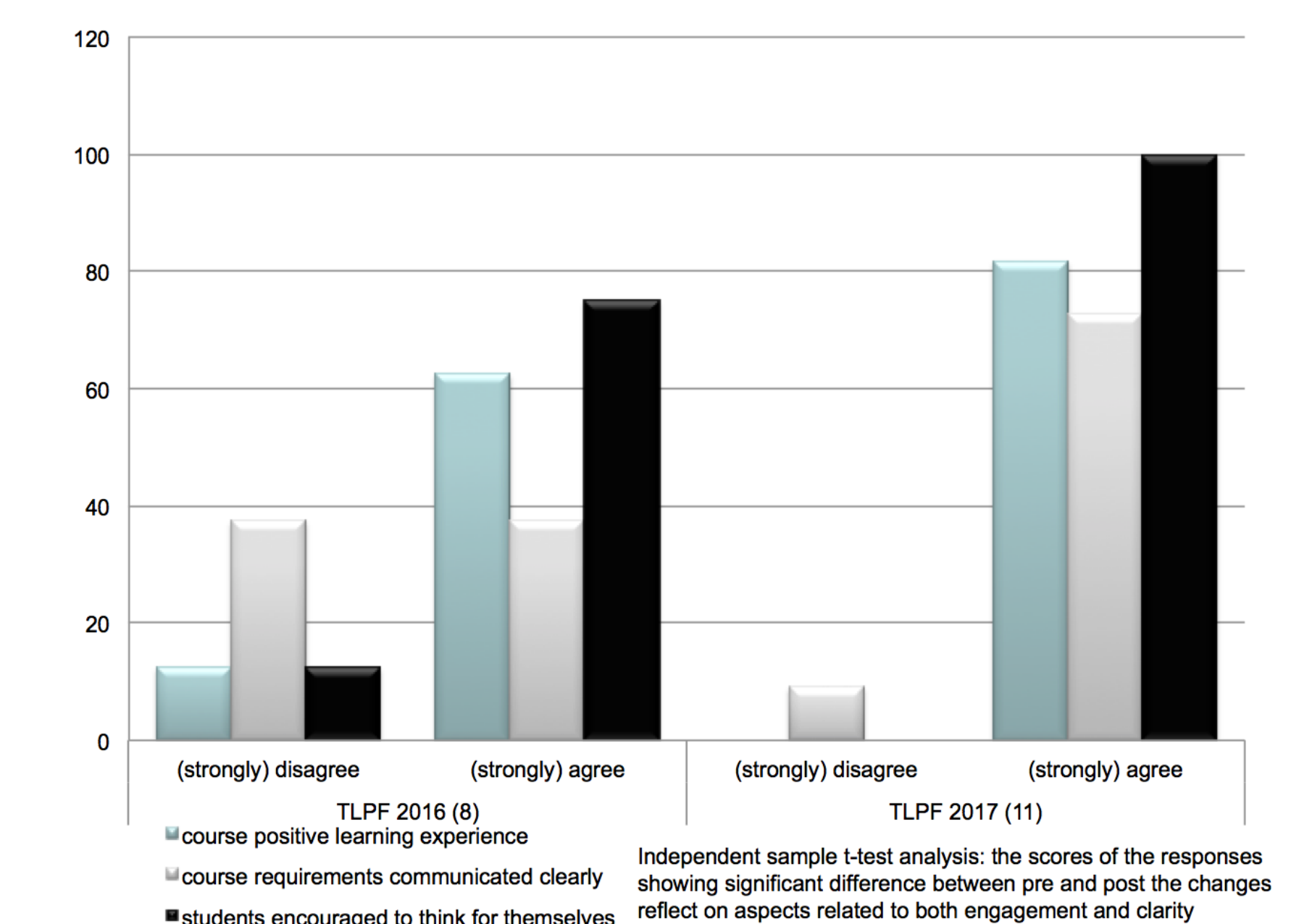
“balance between self-directed learning and class discussions...
[Introduce] more guest speakers ...[and] more clear guidelines and set of deliverables”

Evidence-based Redesign for Winter 2017

- ✓ Adult-learner oriented syllabus design
- ✓ Balance: Self-direction (choices) AND clear direction (criteria)
- ✓ More multi-media: role models and current issues
- ✓ Flipped classroom and supporting case-work
- ✓ Mandatory learning portfolio
- ✓ Guest speaker (social entrepreneur) with cases (again, flipped)

Results

Survey of winter 2016 & 2017 students



Survey of winter 2017 students

Student summaries – what was positive/should stay

“Class discussion should remain the same. Enforcing we complete readings before class.”
“Enjoyed the films and speakers”
“I found the guest speaker very... I really enjoyed the case studies and freedom to choose our own analysis model”

Student summaries – what was negative/should change

“I think it could have been better to do an overview of the readings all together, and then split into small groups.”
“I would introduce the critical readings closer to the beginning of the course and use it as discussion throughout.”

Conclusion & Next steps:

Our findings align with recent research by Fellnhofner & Puimalainen (2017) on the positive effect of role models on entrepreneurial attitudes of learners. Further, Fellnhofner (2017) also demonstrate the supportive role of multi-media, web-based toolkits, and entrepreneurial story-telling.

We will continue to monitor student feedback closely and to improve on balancing between direction (clarity) and self-direction (choice and engagement).