Using Case Studies of SMEs and Web 2.0 in Business Studies

Why the emphasis on ‘case study’…not just learning about Business in Action

IDEA: If learning was fun, it would be easy to engage learners…it’s ok to have fun in the classroom!

Human cognitive competence is better described in terms of a set of abilities, talents or mental skills (Gardner 2006, pg 6) and this has practical teaching implications that can be appropriately and successfully fostered through the teaching of content using case studies. Core pedagogical tool in play: narrative pedagogies.

The use of the case study in teaching is therefore not only necessary as prescribed by the NSW Syllabus, but as Carolin Kreber (Learning Experientially through Case Studies? A conceptual Analysis in Teaching in Higher Education, Vol 6 No. 2 2001) asserts, a case study approach fosters skills necessary for self-directed learning.

Experiential learning provides student with concrete examples. This is important as it fosters student motivation to engage in learning and for students to reflect.

Klein (2003) acknowledges that learners have different capabilities and learning styles, as supported by Gardner’s theory of “multiple intelligences”, and they acquire new knowledge in ways dependent on their existing cognitive structures, otherwise referred to as “constructivism”. Students have the ability and desire to understand even very complex ideas when they can see how content has a context in their lives. A review of the literature suggests that the use of case studies is a useful tool for student understanding of content and teaching for understanding. Howard Gardner in his book The Disciplined Mind suggests that students need a variety of ways to see the topic presented as being meaningful; therefore they need to engage in the topic in a variety of ways. The theory of Multiple Intelligences suggest that teachers need to look at presenting their lessons in a wide variety of ways, including music, cooperative activities such as discussions and group work, roles plays, multimedia and fieldtrips.

Technology and Learning in Business Studies: A Symbiotic relationship

Some of the most common classroom tools were invented as early as 1900. But with new mobile technology tools, such as phones and iPads, any location can be turned into a classroom. Current education models are ill-equipped to engage the fast-paced minds of learners.

Fact: ‘Digital Natives’ are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach – Mark Prensky

A key concept is to explore how business connects in the real world and model that in your communication with students.

Some Links and Resources:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ukh2n0aPyw&feature=player_profilepage Fun Theory

www.youngbusinessnetwork.sbdc.com.au/05_02_newsensations.asp WA Young Business Network

www.enterprisearch.com.au

www.go2web20.net/

www.brainboxx.co.uk/a3_aspects/pages/VAK_quest.htm Try the VAC learning styles quiz, and get the students to undertake this as well. It helps to inform group work
Web 2.0 = Edu 2.0

Some ways to use Web-based communication and presentation tools in the Business Studies (and any other) classroom...

- Create a marketing video, share on YouTube....in fact, Guerrilla marketing can be demonstrated this way!
- Use Google Docs to collaborate on essays to create a high-band ideal example, benchmarking assessment. You can even post a substandard example and watch students edit it. There is a chat mechanism for you to assist.
- Create a Glogster (online multimedia poster) for easy class assessment, note taking/sharing and marketing. Great for covering dot points.
- Skype with business organisations and experts in the field. Model what good networking looks like in the classroom
- Use a template (posted on my blog), create a Facebook page for your business (it is against Facebook User policy to create a fake one...)
- Set up a class Twitter, follow SME’s of choice to daily gather information. The BOS also Tweets updates
- Edublogs for ongoing connection with the businesses, your class and a great documentation of a learning journey
- Creating contained chat rooms in tinychat, to communicate with students and model online discussions. Could also invite experts in for a mini conference
- Harness the tools that Senior Students have by opening discussion using Poll Everywhere and their mobile devices. Mobile technology is the most important tool for our learners, with 83% using it most for texting.

Check out My Blog ‘A View from the Middle’ for more resources and thoughts on Web 2.0 in the classroom. I have placed all information for this presentation and some other bits and pieces under the page ‘Tim Riley Presentation’: www.edusum.edublogs.org
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SME investigation:

Cupcakes

Idea: Look at a boom industry and look to the businesses propelling it, eg Cupcakes...

A search from www.enterprisesearch.com.au brings up at least 30 Cupcake-related businesses, most located in NSW, all with their own websites. Most also utilise Twitter and Facebook to ‘follow’, a contemporary marketing tool for Small Business and a wonderful information opportunity for students. The benefit here is there is opportunity for organising fieldwork, inviting visitors or promoting Skype opportunities; interacting with real communication methods and technologies. Inviting experts to consult in business is a good practise, and should be done frequently in the Business Studies classroom. Utilise your local and parent commercial community.

Assessment idea: Students could do an audit of each business related to ‘cupcake’ in a business directory search and map each to form a wide profile of the ‘industry’. This can be done using a range of syllabus related criteria, also negotiated by the class. A fantastic tool to utilise here could be a Google Doc, in which teacher or students set up templates and work collaboratively to avoid cross over.

Students could then build a hypothetical business, based on the investigation they have undertaken including developing a website. Furthermore, students could bake cupcakes to sell at school maybe even twice in a term to allow for review and change in the SME. Students could utilise Glogster to create online posters, Create a ‘Facebook’ Profile for the business, use YouTube to work on Guerrilla Promotion and other more traditional media sources to market and research their product. As a result of the sale, financial documents can be analysed of your class ‘hypothetical business’. This business model locks into global trend of the popularity of cupcakes, following Magnolia Bakery, and TV shows such as CakeBoss, Ultimate Cake Off and Ace Of Cakes (other great media tools, search YouTube for clips and discuss Guerilla Marketing). The other great thing about cupcakes is the flow of inputs, which is fairly easy to track.

To complete the task, students could role and scenario play for a range of options of business closure.

Some potential Syllabus areas applicable to this task:
- Financial statements
- Marketing
- Market research
- Stages of lifecycle

Look for cross curricular opportunities for students. For example; Food Technology, Economics, D&T and Geography.