Delivering Management Education via Tutored–Video Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

The University of San Francisco (USF) initially contracted with a Hong Kong-based, Chinese multinational firm, China Resources Holding Company (CRC), to deliver an entire MBA program to approximately 40 of its fast-tracked employees. The technologies known as Tutored-Video Instruction (TVI) were selected as the means of delivery. The success of the first cycle resulted in a contract with a second Chinese company, Guangdong Enterprises (GD), based in Guangdong (Canton). During 1989–2000, a total of five academic cycles were undertaken, each lasting approximately two years. Three of the cycles involved students from CRC, designated in this paper as CRC1, CRC2 and CRC3, and the remaining two cycles involved students from GD, designated GD1 and GD2. Both programs utilized lock-step cohorts; that is, a group of students taking the same classes at the same time throughout the MBA program, with no elective course choices. Each cohort group averaged about 35 students; a total of 175 students received their MBA degrees during the five cycles of instruction.

BACKGROUND

Tutored-Video Instruction

TVI was developed by the Stanford University School of Engineering so they could teach graduate engineering to students at a remote location. The initial evaluation of this program reported that TVI students performed better than students of a similar background and age taking the same course on campus (Gibbons, 1977).

When a course is presented via TVI, classroom lectures to on-campus students are taped and shown to the TVI students at a later date. TVI students watch the videotaped lectures as a group and if they encounter something that they don't understand, they ask the tutor to stop the tape to discuss what they have seen with the other students in an attempt to learn from one another. At the end of the video discussion, the tutor then conducts a formal discussion using questions supplied by the instructor. The tutor's role is to make sure the group viewings occur, to attend to the details of handout materials, assignments and handling of the tapes, and to funnel group questions and feedback to the instructor. The early studies of TVI found that the discussions were more effective if the tutor was *not* skilled in the subject matter, but was adequately trained in the art of discussion. Further, subsequent research concluded that the tutored discussions were the key ingredient to successful learning outcomes (Gibbons, Kincheloe, & Down, 1977).

Subsequent studies confirmed the effectiveness of TVI. A study by Stone (1990) validated the Stanford study. Arentz (1993) reported on the use of TVI to teach engineering courses to distance students in Norway using a variety of distance education technologies, and concluded that TVI was clearly the students' preferred method of learning. In a study of undergraduate students, TVI was found to be more effective as a learning technology when compared to the other forms of distance learning being used by the institution at the same time: correspondence education, audio taped programs and videotaped courses. It was estimated that across a multi-campus system, TVI courses cost from 10%-15% less to deliver than other distance education technologies (Appleton, Decker, & Sharma, 1989). Thach and Murphy (1995)

and Lucey and Burdett (1991) reported similar cost reductions from using TVI.

Context

In 1988, USF contracted to deliver all of the courses required for a MBA degree to selected employees of a company owned by the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the People's Republic of China. Faculty within the School of Business Administration and Management (SOBAM) were desirous of opportunities for foreign study and to learn more about distance education. Therefore, this opportunity was solidly supported by the faculty.

After examining alternative distance education methods, we decided to use TVI, because the research on distance education, as referenced above, showed that it was effective, specifically as it related to student performance and learning. USF received specific approval for this program from its accrediting organization, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, who required that the initial cycle must include an assessment of TVI students' performances compared directly to the performances of on-campus students taking the same course "live".

Process

A USF professor flew to Hong Kong to direct the selection of 40 students for the first cycle from a pool of approximately 100 executives that had expressed interest. Two local tutors were then hired and trained.

On-campus courses were videotaped at USF and the faculty teaching these courses were required to also develop a learning plan for the TVI students in China. Faculty were required to use the same examinations and assignments that they used for their "live" students for the assessment of their TVI students. TVI students were enrolled in two MBA courses during each 10-week teaching modules. Once during each CRC module, two USF faculty would fly to Hong Kong to meet with the students daily over a 5-day period; the students received an average of nine to 11 hours of "live" classroom instruction during those five days.

In 1993, USF signed the GD contract. A similar process was used to select students from those nominated by the company. One local tutor was hired and trained to lead discussions. Because of the location of these students' jobs, USF faculty did the "live" teaching components at two separate locations, Guangdong and Hong Kong; and by agreement, the tutor was supposed to lead discussions at both locations.

Assessment

Three formal evaluations of these programs were undertaken. We first wanted to know, did the TVI students perform better than the "live" students?" As shown in Table 1, overall the students in the last four cohorts did *not*, as determined by comparing the TVI students' average grade point average (GPA) to the average of all USF MBA students who took the

Table 1. Student GPA for all programs and all courses by program and by teaching area

Program		ACC	COMM	DS	ECON	ENV/LAW	FIN	MGMT	MIS	MKT	Overall
						TEACHING AREA					
CRC2	Average of China GPA	3.34	4.00	3.30	3.13	3.55	3.37	3.28	3.40		3.37
	Average of USF GPA	3.39	3.53	3.35	3.21	3.67	3.42	3.52	3.33		3.44
CRC3	Average of China GPA	3.47	3.39	3.41	3.08	3.52	3.71	3.35	3.00		3.35
	Average of USF GPA	3.29	3.55	3.57	3.40	3.96	3.41	3.52	3.38	3.85	3.50
GD1	Average of China GPA	3.37	3.27	3.41	3.15		3.33	3.46	3.06	3.36	3.34
	Average of USF GPA	3.21	3.62	3.31	3.20	3.52	3.39	3.51	3.26	3.47	3.39
GD2	Average of China GPA	3.52	3.45	3.37				3.28		3.34	3.40
	Average of USF GPA	3.45	3.51	3.43	3.08			3.44	3.24	3.57	3.37
Overall Average of China GPA		3.41	3.47	3.38	3.12	3.54	3.41	3.36	3.15	3.35	3.35
Overall Average of USF GPA		3.32	3.56	3.39	3.22	3.70	3.41	3.51	3.30	3.59	3.43

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