USING THE MOST EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS: A COMPARISON OF MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

To determine the degree to which professors are likely to use teaching elements that can be classified as either passive or active, 522 responses to a survey of management and marketing faculty across the country were analyzed. Comparisons were made between marketing and management faculty, between faculty teaching at private and public institutions, between male and female faculty, and between tenured and non-tenured faculty. Other independent variables were also assessed to determine if they have an impact on whether faculty use passive or active methods in the classrooms. These variables include faculty age, number of years of teaching experience, average class size, and average number of course preparations. Results indicate that faculty at private universities, faculty with less teaching experience, and faculty with fewer class preparations are more likely to use active methods in their classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

The view that business education needs to be revised and revamped has become more noticeable since the turn of the century (Leavitt 1989), with much attention being focused recently on business education due to the rash of businesses being exposed for engaging in unethical business practices. Business schools must adjust their curriculum to deal with an environment that requires employees to ethically maximize profits. In addition to a strong ethical content, the curriculum must also equip students with strong communication skills, flexibility, and decisiveness. Students must be taught to maintain the highest ethical standards while they analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources, make decisions, and implement courses of action. They must also be prepared to apply knowledge in diverse situations, remaining ethical as they implement key programs within their companies.

Business schools today must therefore accept the responsibility of providing students with these necessary skills and focus on teaching methods that emphasize and include the most effective elements for student learning. Faculty must concern themselves with a dual purpose: imparting knowledge and developing the skills required in today's dynamic business environment. Identifying and utilizing characteristics or styles of education that can have the greatest and most permanent impact on business students is therefore becoming an increasingly crucial issue.

Are we, as faculty, designing courses with the most effective elements for learning and influencing our business students to become the world's next business leaders? This study reviews current literature to identify the most effective teaching and learning elements and methods that should be included in our classrooms. It then reports the results of a comparative study of 522 marketing and management faculty across the United States to determine if these methods are being used in our university classrooms and to begin to identify variables that predict the frequency and amplitude of these active learning methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the existing teaching styles literature indicates a clear distinction exists between active and passive types of teaching styles. Active course design, in all its forms, incorporates increased student involvement in the classroom, whereas passive designs are more instructor-centered. Active course designs are based on the assumption that an active learner, or one who is more engaged in the learning process, learns much more effectively and the learning experience is more intense and permanent than passive learners enrolled in a traditional lecture-style course (e.g., Allegretti and Fredrick 1995; Derrick and Carr 2003; Hargrove 2003; Klein et al. 1997; Kolb 1983; Labinowicz 1980; Orsmond and Stiles 2002; Sharan 1980). Recent research has specifically examined business students in colleges and universities and shows that course design and teaching styles can significantly impact student performance (Black and Wingfield 2006; Filbeck and Smith 2001; Keltgen 2006; Laditka and Houck 2006; Sims 2002; Smith 2005; Tucker et al. 2003; Wingfield and Black 2005).

A preponderance of recent business education literature suggests business school curriculum is experiencing a shift from passive course designs to active course designs (e.g., Frontczak 1998). Empirical evidence sug-

gests business students prefer designs that are active over more passive designs (Nulty and Bennett 1996). Evidence also suggests that favorable attitudes toward course design lead to higher achievement (Young et al. 2003) and that matching course design with learning styles results in greater learning (Dunn et al. 1990; Prosser and Trigwell 2006).

Active Learning

Experiential Learning. Experiential learning is a type of active course design. It can be defined as *"the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 1983, p. 38). Kolb indicates the crucial first step is to provide the experience from which the learning comes.* Experiential educators are generally aware that experiences alone are not inherently good for learning. The experiences have to be relevant to the learning goals and then the learners must have time and opportunity to reflect on the experience. Kolb's definition is based on six assumptions: "Learning (a) is a process, not an outcome; (b) derives from experience; (c) requires an individual to resolve dialectically opposed demands; (d) is holistic and integrative; (e) requires interplay between a person and the environment; and (f) results in knowledge creation" (Kayes 2002, pp. 139–140). These assumptions intimate that learners will be required to respond "to diverse personal and environmental demands that arise from the interaction between experience, concept, reflection, and action in a cyclical . . . fashion" (Kayes 2002, p. 140).

Keeping these assumptions in mind, experiential learning can encompass a wide array of methodologies from outdoor, adventure-based learning, such as Outward Bound, to other forms that are more conducive to a classroom setting. Case studies are commonly used in many business classes. In addition, giving students self-learning instruments also provides experiential learning opportunities. Many universities offer business credit for internships which are also effective experiential learning experiences. Also, many in-class activities are experiential in nature. In addition, assignments can be experiential if they require students to apply concepts learned in the classroom to things they will be expected to do in the "real world" after they graduate. For example, professors may require students to write a marketing plan, create an actual advertisement, develop a performance appraisal system, or design a compensation plan. Experiential methods rely heavily on discussion and practice, emphasize personal application of material, encourage students to develop belief systems, understand how they feel about an area of study, and take appropriate actions given a specific environment (Jones and Jones 1998).

Participative Learning. Participative learning is also a form of active learning. It can be defined as engaging the learner in the learning process (Mills-Jones 1999). Many may be confused by a similar term known as cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is a mode of learning that requires students to work together in groups and participate in class discussions. Participative learning, on the other hand, gives students the opportunity to take an active role in determining the types of activities and/or assignments they perceive will best help their learning. Methods that can be utilized in the classroom to assure participative learning include student participation in syllabus design, students writing potential exam questions, student participation in determining the grading scheme for a course, etc. By involving students in these decisions, participative learning theory suggests the students will feel more accountability for completing assignments, etc. (Mills-Jones 1999).

Passive Learning

Passive Learning Is Best Exemplified by Traditional Lecture Classes. This teaching style emphasizes learning of conceptual knowledge by focusing on facts and theoretical principles (Jones and Jones 1998; Thornton and Cleveland 1990; Whetten and Clark 1996). The conceptual emphasis of this design can be important to the development of a strong theoretical foundation upon which students can build in future courses. This design typically involves few opportunities for students to learn experientially or to participate in the decisions in the classroom. Professors or instructors basically provide a syllabus and class schedule, they deliver daily lectures, and the majority of grades are based on exams, especially exams made of multiple-choice, true-false, and matching items. See Table 1 for a summary of these three designs and the types of classroom activities each employs.

The Evidence

It has been suggested that students learn more effectively when they are able to experience learning through active participation in the learning process (Allen and Young 1997). Active learning has also been linked to critical thinking (Paul 1990), experiential learning (Kolb 1983), and reflective judgment (King and Kitchener 1994; Kitchener and King 1981), which are all important educational concepts (Allen and Young 1997). Research also suggests experiential learning leads to higher levels of retention for student learning (e.g., Van Eynde and Spencer 1988). Because of the empirical evidence, it is still generally accepted that active learning methods are more effective, but their use in business classes, in the past, appears to be modest, at best (Whetten et al. 1991). Understanding the extent to which active learning methods are used in the business classroom should provide key information to assessing the impact of business classes on student learning and preparation for the business world.

TABLE 1
ELEMENTS OF ACTIVE AND PASSIVE COURSE DESIGNS

Course Design		
Passive	**Active**	
Traditional Lecture	**Participative**	**Experiential**
a. Lecture	a. Student-Designed Syllabus	a. Internships
b. Multiple Choice Exams and Quizzes	b. Student Input Throughout Semester	b. Case Studies
c. Emphasize Basic Concepts and Definitions	c. Student-Written Exam Questions	c. Marketing Plan
d. Grading Options for Student Selection		d. Compensation Plan
		e. Advertisement
		f. Self-Assessments
		g. Emphasize Application of Concepts

HYPOTHESES

The previous discussion suggests that active learning methods examined in this research are more effective than are passive learning methods. Some hypotheses assessed in this study have no precedent in previous literature, so the resulting proposals may hypothesize that there will be no differences in the utilization of active course elements that are caused by the various independent variables. A general model representing the hypotheses to be examined in this study is presented in Figure 1.

Both marketing and management classes tend to offer more opportunities to implement active learning methods than do other business disciplines. This is the case because professors teaching in these disciplines often such features in their classes as the following: analysis of companies via case studies; developing compensation plans in human resource management and sales management classes; developing and delivering sales presentations in sales and marketing classes; creating advertisements for various media, from magazines to television; developing marketing plans, sales plans, and advertising plans; etc.

These authors can find no evidence in previous research, nor in their experience in the profession, to suggest that marketing utilizes these active learning methods more than does management or vice versa. In fact, the opportunities to use the active learning methods appears to be nearly equal in both areas, so we expect there to be no significant differences. Therefore, the first hypothesis is based on this lack of previous evidence and suggests the following.

H_1: There are no differences between marketing and management faculty in using active learning methods in their classes.

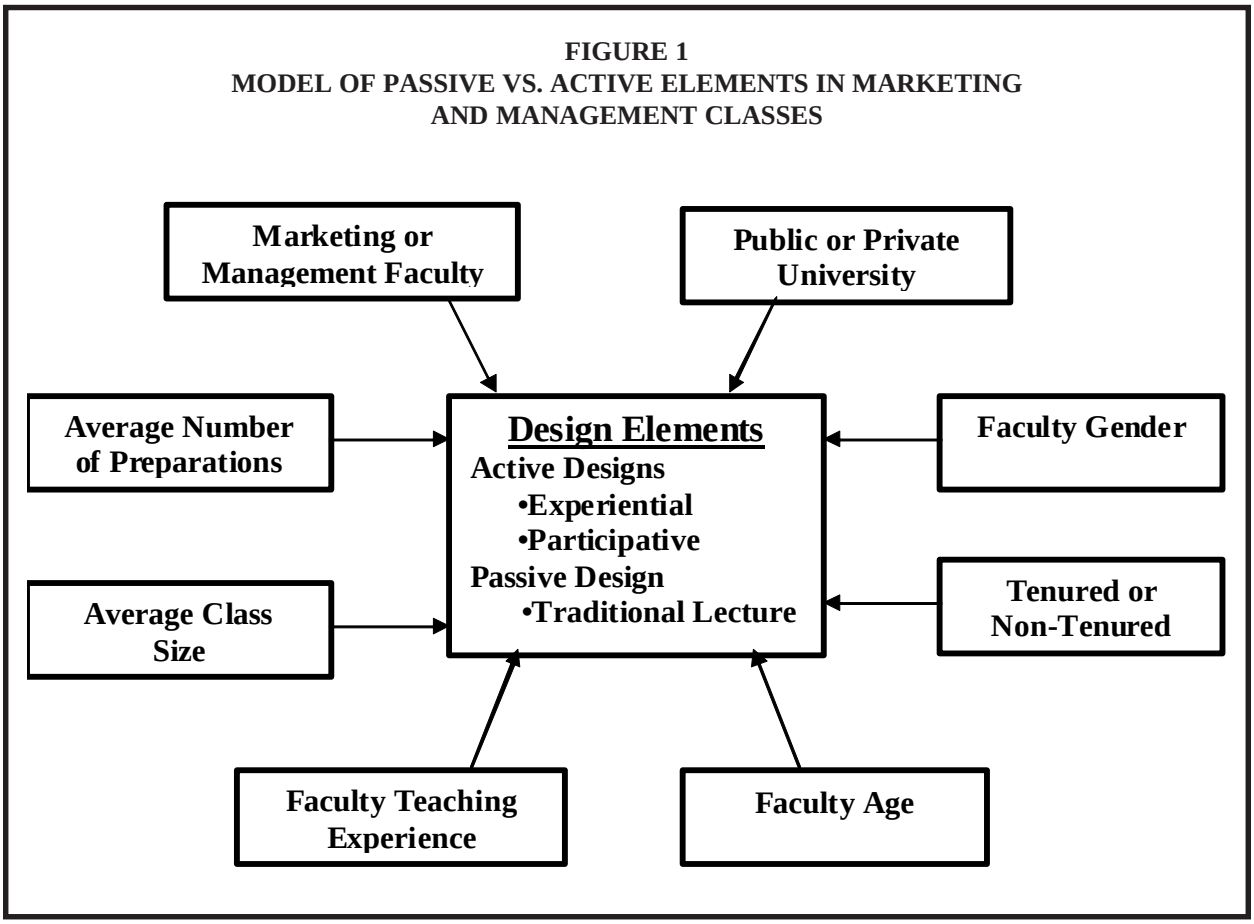
Smaller classes present an easier atmosphere in which to include many of the active learning methods. Many private universities emphasize their smaller class sizes to entice students to attend their school, implying that these universities provide a higher quality of education, in part because of the smaller classes. One study found that graduates of private universities are more satisfied with their education than are graduates of public universities (Nasser and Abouchedid 2005). However, the study does not detail the reasons why the graduates feel this way. Could it be that the smaller class sizes allow for more active learning methods to be used in the classroom, which increases student satisfaction?

Eser and Birkan (2004) also found similar satisfaction patterns when comparing graduates of marketing programs from private and public universities and went further in identifying and examining some of the reasons for these differences. Among the reasons for higher satisfaction with private schools were smaller class sizes and increased use of active learning methods. Another study confirms that smaller class size does result in utilization of more active learning methods in the university classroom (Siegfried and Kennedy 1995). Therefore, the following is hypothesized.

H_2: Marketing and management faculty from private universities utilize more active learning methods in the classroom than do those faculty from public universities.

Common sense and conventional wisdom suggest females are more caring and prefer the more personal touch than do their male counterparts. Do these beliefs carry over into the marketing and management classrooms at America's universities? If so, female faculty members should be using more active learning methods in

FIGURE 1
MODEL OF PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE ELEMENTS IN MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT CLASSES



their classrooms than are male faculty members. One recent study confirms this intuition by finding that women are using more of some types of active learning in their management classrooms than their male counterparts (Peluchette and Rust 2005). In addition, Witt (1994) found further support of the differences between male and female faculty members, with females using more active methods in the classroom. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered.

H_3: Female marketing and management faculty utilize more active learning methods in the classroom than do male faculty.

Differences in utilizing active learning methods between tenured and non-tenured marketing and management faculty are not intuitively clear. On one hand, due to more experience and a longer duration in the profession, tenured faculty have had more opportunity to develop experiential and participative methods which admittedly require more effort and time. On the other hand, the ages of tenured faculty tend to be higher than ages of non-tenured. Older faculty have been shown to be less likely to put the extra effort into developing non-traditional teaching styles and methods, in this case, those methods included in active learning (Eser and Birkan 2004). Thus, linking greater age with tenure and based on the empirical findings of Eser and Birkan (2004), we hypothesize the following.

H_4: Non-tenured marketing and management faculty utilize more active learning methods in the classroom than do tenured faculty.

As discussed above, evidence shows that age is a factor in a faculty member's willingness to put forth extra effort to develop active learning methods for his/her classroom. Eser and Birkan (2004) suggest one reason is older faculty are reluctant to improve themselves, so they will continue to use outdated teaching techniques and even outdated information in the classroom. Therefore, we hypothesize the following.

H_5: As both marketing and management faculty get older, they will be less likely to use active learning methods in the classrooms.

Experience should be an avenue to developing better teaching methods and should lead to more active learning techniques being used in the classroom. However, teaching experience of a faculty member is connected to both age and tenure, suggesting the following hypothesis.

H_6: As both marketing and management faculty gain teaching experience, they will be less likely to use active learning methods in the classroom.

A preponderance of research suggests the benefits of smaller classes (e.g., Costea and Crump 1999; Karakaya et al. 2001; Naser and Peel 1998). As suggested in the discussion for H_2 above, smaller average class size provides more opportunities to implement active learning methods (Eser and Birkan 2004; Siegfried and Kennedy 1995). Thus, the following hypothesis is postulated.

H_7: As class size increases for both marketing and management faculty, the likelihood of active learning designs being used in the classroom decreases.

No empirical research has linked the number of course preparations to a professor's inclusion of active learning methods in the classroom. However, each course preparation for which a professor is responsible is time-consuming, leaving less time for other efforts. Faculty members recognize that active learning methods require more effort and preparation if they are to be utilized effectively. Thus, faculty with more course preparations should be less likely to use active learning methods in the classroom. Thus, the last hypothesis of this study is as follows.

H_8: As the number of course preparations for both marketing and management faculty increases, the likelihood of active learning designs being used in the classroom decreases.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected to determine the extent to which these different designs are used in marketing and management classrooms in the United States. The investigators gathered data from a random sample of 522 management and marketing faculty across the United States. The sample was drawn from membership rosters of the American Marketing Association and the Academy of Management.

Marketing and management faculty members were asked to indicate on a five-point scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) how often they used each teaching method in their respective classrooms. As revealed in Table 2, there were six passive elements and thirteen active elements. The composite measures of passive and active learning methods were computed by summing the various items for each and dividing by the number of items. After creating the composite variables, the dependent variable to be assessed in the hypotheses was computed by subtracting the composite passive learning methods score from the composite active learning methods score.

This calculation was performed to determine whether any particular professor's teaching methods were passive or active, and to further determine to what magnitude each professors methods were passive or active. For example, if a particular professor's score was negative, the overall rating of that professor's methods were passive in nature and the more the number was below zero suggested the magnitude the methods used by the professor were passive. On the other hand, if a particular professor's score was positive, the overall rating of that professor's methods were active with more positive numbers suggesting greater magnitudes, or greater utilization, of active methods in the classroom.

Table 2 is a summary of the data collected from these faculty members. As can be seen from this table, the response rate was acceptable with a 43.83 percent overall rate (522 usable responses). Of those responses, 247 (47.32%) were from management professors and 275 (52.68%) were from marketing professors. Other notable information includes the proportion of male (317, 60.73%) vs. female professors (205, 39.27%); the proportion of tenured (279, 53.45%) vs. non-tenured professors (243, 48.55%); and the proportion of professors employed by public universities (265, 50.77%) vs. those employed by private universities (257, 49.23%).

In addition to the general demographics of the respondents, as summarized on the following page, Table 2 also reveals the frequency of marketing and management professors' utilization of various elements associated with passive and active learning. One should exercise care in interpreting these results because though nearly 90 percent of management and marketing professors employ at least one passive element in their course designs, 96.36 percent are also using at least one active element in their course designs. These numbers are of further interest when they are compared to the self-reported course descriptions of these professors where only 12.84 percent classify their overall course designs as passive, while 7.66 percent classify them as participative, and 79.50 percent classify their courses as being primarily experiential in design, making an overall 87.16 percent classifying their classes as active in design.

RESULTS

Results of hypotheses testing are found in Table 3. Regression analyses shows support for H_1 by indicating no statistical difference between marketing and management faculty in their use of active and passive learning methods ($t = .982$, $p \geq .10$). Simple linear regression also revealed support for H_2 by indicating a significantly higher usage of active learning methods by professors from private universities ($t = 1.783$, $p \leq .10$).

Support was also found for H_6 by revealing a significant difference in using active learning methods based on faculty teaching experience, where faculty with less teaching experience use more active learning methods in the classroom ($t = 1.844$, $p \leq .10$).

Finally, support was found for H_8 by a statistically significant difference in the use of active learning methods based on the number or preparations, with faculty members with lower numbers of preparations utilizing more active learning methods in the classroom ($t = 1.708$, $p \leq .10$).

TABLE 2
SUMMARY RESULTS OF FACULTY SURVEY

Item	Marketing	Management	Total	%
Surveys Sent	638	553	1191	
Respondents	275	247	522	
Response Rate	43.10%	44.67%	43.83%	
Respondent Gender				
Males	170	147	317	60.73%
Females	105	100	205	39.27%
Tenure of Respondents				
Tenured	164	115	279	53.45%
Not Tenured	111	132	243	46.55%
University Type				
Public	131	134	265	50.77%
Private	144	113	257	49.23%
Average Age	50.34	47.94		
Average # of Years Teaching	16.39	12.70		
Average Class Size	30.77	28.28		
Average # of Preps for Respondent	2.52	2.54		
Passive Learning Methods				
Research Papers	161	148	309	59.20%
Attendance	168	175	343	65.71%
Multiple Choice Exams	162	132	294	56.32%
Textbook Assignments	160	153	313	59.96%
Lecture	251	218	469	89.85%
Test Banks	115	82	197	37.74%
Active Learning Methods				
In-Class Discussions	261	242	503	96.36%
In-Class Group Exercises	194	212	406	77.78%
Internet/Intranet Group Discussions	58	61	119	22.80%
Student-Developed Exam Questions	39	16	55	10.54%
Student Help in Grading Standards	40	52	92	17.62%
Case Studies	157	200	357	68.39%
Experiential Exercises	191	187	378	72.41%
Simulations	57	86	143	27.39%
Presentations	204	181	385	73.75%
Student Self Assessments	104	134	238	45.59%
Business Design, Marketing Plan, etc.	158	85	243	46.55%
Field Trips	46	33	79	15.13%
Guest Speakers	149	123	272	52.11%
Self-Reported Course Description				
Traditional	44	23	67	12.84%
Participative	19	21	40	7.66%
Experiential	212	203	415	79.50%

Faculty gender, tenure, faculty age, and average class size had no significant impact on the use of active learning methods in the classroom. Thus, H_3, H_4, H_5, and H_7 are not supported.

Another interesting result is related to how the faculty classified their own classes. As presented in previous discussion, 87.16 percent of all marketing and management faculty respondents classified their own classes as being overall active in nature. However, based on the results of the composite measures used in the statistical analysis of this study, only 27.78 percent of the professors actually have predominantly active learning classrooms.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Much research has been performed in the area of active versus passive educational methods, resulting in empirical evidence that active methods are more effective in terms of student outcomes. Even with the overwhelming evidence that such is the case, it is interesting that research actually assessing the frequency and amplitude of the utilization of these methods has been largely neglected. This study is one of the first of its kind in which actual usage of active versus passive methods in university business classrooms is assessed and factors that influence that usage are examined.

As predicted, and as common sense suggests, there is no difference in the utility of active methods between marketing and management faculty. Both fields of study offer many classes in which active methods are readily included. Other fields of business, such as accounting and finance, may experience more difficulty in adopting many of these active methods into their classrooms. However, as evidence mounts to suggest that these methods are superior to passive methods, it would enhance the learning experience in all business classrooms, regardless of the business discipline. Further research should be conducted with faculty of other business disciplines to examine the frequency and amplitude of active learning methods.

It was also predicted that there would be a difference in the utilization of active methods based on whether professors were teaching in a private or a public university. The findings of this study support this prediction. Faculty members at private universities are more likely to use active learning methods in the classroom. Several factors may contribute to this. Many private universities have smaller enrollments making it possible to have smaller average class sizes. However, class size was also examined in this study and was not found to be a significant predictor of the use of active learning methods.

In addition, at many private universities, professors are expected to teach more classes per semester, resulting in a larger number of annual course preparations. The larger number of preparations would seem to decrease the likelihood of active methods being used because active learning methods require more preparation time and more effort. In fact, this variable was also examined in this study

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Test Statistic
H1**	Active vs. Passive	Marketing or Management Faculty	.982
H2**	"	Public or Private University	1.783*
H3	"	Faculty Gender	.217
H4	"	Tenured or Non-Tenured	1.375
H5	"	Faculty Age	.972
H6**	"	Faculty Teaching Experience	1.844*
H7	"	Average Class Size	.976
H8**	"	Average Number of Preparations	1.708*

* Statistically significant at $p < .10$
** Hypotheses supported

and it was found that a smaller number of course preparations led to a greater likelihood of a faculty member using active learning methods. Therefore, this reason for the increased use of active learning methods at private universities is also not valid, though the predicted hypothesis was supported.

One study also suggested that faculty at private universities tend to be older and have more teaching experience (Eser and Birkan 2004). In fact, as predicted, an increase in teaching experience actually led to a smaller likelihood of active learning methods being used in the classroom. Also, no evidence was found to support a significant influence of faculty age on the utilization of these active methods. Therefore, additional research is necessary to discover the differences between private and public universities that lead to the significant differences in utilizing active learning methods.

This study also revealed that both marketing and management faculty tend to think they are utilizing more active learning methods than they actually are. This finding should be a reminder to examine our teaching methods and try to include more elements that have been empirically shown to improve student learning and preparation for the "real world."

IMPLICATIONS

What is the bottom line of this research? Assuming the previous research findings suggesting that active methods of teaching are more effective, it is gratifying to know that many marketing and management professors at least think they are using these methods in their classrooms. More experienced faculty, however, showed less of a tendency to use these methods, so to enhance the likelihood of them using these methods, mentoring or rewards could be instituted. In addition, faculty should be made to realize that they are not using active methods as regularly as they think they are. They should be given more incentives to incorporate these methods into their classrooms. Finally, wherever possible active methods should also be used at higher frequencies in the classrooms of business faculty from other disciplines.

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