

USING MUSIC TO ENHANCE THE HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION OF THE iPod® GENERATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines student reactions to the use of music in the classroom to enhance education. Students in an undergraduate course selected songs and related them to class topics. First, an overview of the use of media in education is provided. Next, human resource development and andragogy are discussed as frameworks for this study. A description of the song related assignment is given, and quantitative and qualitative results of student reactions to the assignment are presented. Results found that the music related assignment made class more interesting for students, and that it caused students to think more about class topics.

INTRODUCTION

In order to remain relevant and future-focused, management educators in higher education must continually search for innovative ways to generate and capture student interest to promote enhanced learning. The use of multi-media in the classroom is one approach to this, and by simply observing student behavior in higher education settings, many ideas for the classroom can be generated. A walk across almost any campus would reveal that many students carry portable music players, such as the ever-popular iPod®. The iPod® is known as the 21st century walkman. Such devices allow students to carry hundreds or even thousands of songs with them throughout the day, making music an integrated part of daily activities. This study is the result of a learning innovation that incorporated music into the classroom. Specifically, this study examines student reactions to the use of music in the classroom as a technique for enhancing management education.

First, an overview of innovations in management education is given, with a focus on the use of media in the classroom. Next, human resource development (HRD) is discussed both as a field, and as an approach to classroom instruction. Then, based on data from three semesters, methods and results of the study are presented. Last, suggestions are given for management educators and future research in this area.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Few authors have considered the use of music in higher education to enhance management education, and even fewer have examined this using student data. Young people in general, and college students in particular, have long valued the role of listening to music as a leisure/life activity. However, the recent proliferation of music in electronic formats via the internet has spawned a number of products that have made music more mobile and accessible.

Of digital music player owners, the average person has 375 songs on his/her player (Solutions Research Group, 2005), and the latest players are able to hold tens of thousands of songs. A common method for obtaining music is by downloading from digital music service providers via the internet. The largest provider, iTunes Music Store, announced in February of 2006 that one billion songs had been downloaded since the store's opening in 2003 (Apple.com, n.d.). There has also been a downturn in compact disc (CD) sales recently. The Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) reported that between 2000 and 2005 the number of CDs shipped in the United States fell by 25% (RIAA, 2004).

Rising student interest in music has led many colleges to take advantage of advances in music technology by signing deals with online music service companies and offering the services to students, usually at discounted rates (Young, 2004). Some of these services have over 1 million songs available for download. Reasons for offering such services to students include wanting to encourage legal music sharing, and encouraging students to live in campus housing. Another benefit is that the same technology can be used by professors who wish to provide or assign class-related audio activities. One example is the use of podcasts, or recorded multimedia files that can be downloaded and played back on a mobile device such as the iPod[®]. In a study looking at the effectiveness of mobile learning, Evans (2008) reported that students found podcasts to be more effective than textbooks and more efficient than their notes in helping them to learn.

In addition to the proliferation of music delivery options in recent years, studies in various disciplines have examined the psychological effects associated with listening to music. For example, there is evidence that music has effects on cognitive processes and that music evokes emotional responses in listeners (Lacher & Mizerski, 1994; Sarnthein et al., 1997). As Fairfield and London (2003) noted, "the paradox of both learning and the impact of music is that they are ephemeral and fleeting, on one hand, and profound and enduring on the other. Employing music to enlighten our learning and teaching is more natural than meets the eye" (p. 657).

Using music as metaphor in education is a conceptualization that has been discussed by several authors (Depree, 1992; Fairfield & London, 2003; Weinrauch, 2005). When viewed as metaphor, music serves to illustrate or make connections between concepts. Weinrauch (2005) further explained that metaphors enhance understanding by offering alternative ways of thinking about concepts and experiences, making them more memorable. This was one objective we had in mind when incorporating music in our classroom. In addition, we hoped to learn and build on this teaching technique by examining student reactions to the use of music in the classroom. The

specific research question for this study was: Does relating songs to course topics enhance student perceptions of engagement in the learning process?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Educators use various forms of media to enhance management education. Examples include literature (Harrison & Akinc, 2000; Mockler, 2002), motion pictures (Bumpus, 2005; Champoux, 2001; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2004), and music (Fairfield & London, 2003; Tinari & Khandke, 2000; Weinrauch, 2005). While instructors might have many reasons for using different media to enhance education, one underlying rationale for utilizing music for instruction is that it stimulates thought processes that differ from traditional classroom approaches (Fairfield & London, 2003; Mockler, 2002; Tinari & Khandke, 2000).

Mockler (2002) discussed the use of drama, dramatic literature, and symphony orchestra conductors' experiences to enhance management learning. More specifically, examples from Shakespeare's plays were used to illustrate leadership and motivation principles, and orchestral music conducting was discussed as an example of group management in action. Mockler also noted parallels between charismatic leaders and dramatic performers, highlighting the use of different techniques and styles used to inspire, motivate, and stimulate employee performance.

Another innovative application of media in the classroom is the use of motion pictures. For example, Bumpus (2005) discussed the use of motion pictures as an approach to teaching diversity issues, Champoux (2001) proposed the use of animated films to illustrate abstract concepts, and Huczynski and Buchanan (2004) discussed techniques for analyzing film narratives to reveal theoretical principles.

The specific use of music to enhance student learning is less frequently documented. Weinrauch (2005) outlined a process of teaching marketing strategy concepts through the interpretation and discussion of song lyrics, focusing primarily on the in-class process and the content of the songs. This study extends Weinrauch's (2005) efforts by empirically examining student reactions to the use of music in the classroom, and by using music in management education rather than in marketing education. More specifically, this study took place in a course focusing on HRD.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

HRD is defined as a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development (OD) and training and development (T&D) for the purpose of improving performance (Swanson, 1995). HRD is a large, well-established field of practice, with T&D occupying the largest realm of HRD activity, and it is also a relatively young academic discipline (Swanson & Holton, 2001). As an academic discipline, HRD has been informed by individuals with backgrounds in education, business, psychology, and communication (Swanson & Holton, 2001). In the United States, the majority of HRD programs exist in colleges of education, although several are located in colleges of business or management. HRD research is published in journals spanning various disciplines including education, management, psychology, and sociology.

Students pursuing a degree in HRD often combine it with a business or management minor, or vice versa, and many students seek positions in HR following completion of their degree. Specific positions sought might include training and development manager, HRD specialist, organization development (OD) specialist, chief learning officer, labor relations manager, or OD consultant.

By focusing on both individual and organizational learning and performance, HRD enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Noe, 2005; Swanson & Holton, 2001). Challenges addressed by HRD often relate to individual and organizational change and can involve improvements surrounding areas such as the use of technology, employee performance, implementation of system-wide initiatives, and developing intellectual capital (Cummings & Worley, 2005; McLean, 2006; Noe, 2005). The context for this study was an undergraduate HRD course offered at a top-ranked HRD program in a research oriented public university in the Midwestern United States. In addition to HRD concepts being taught in the course, these concepts were also employed in the design and delivery of the course.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that guided this study is centered on adult education as conceptualized by Knowles (1970). Knowles presented a model outlining core principles and assumptions of adult learning, which he called the andragogical model. Like pedagogy, andragogy refers to teaching; however, it differs in that it specifically refers to teaching adults rather than children. The six assumptions or principles of andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998) are that 1) adults need to know why they need to learn something before learning it, 2) the self-concept of adult is heavily dependent on a move toward self-direction, 3) prior experiences of the learner provide a rich resource for learning, 4) adults typically become ready to learn when they experience a need to cope with a life situation or perform a task, 5) adults' orientation to learning is life centered, and they see education as a process of developing increased competency levels to achieve their full potential, and 6) the motivation for adult learners is internal rather than external. These principles, in conjunction with the andragogical process design (outlined below), offer guidance in designing and implementing adult learning.

The andragogical process design is the second part of the andragogical model and consists of the following steps (Knowles, 1995), 1) Prepare learners for the program, 2) establish a climate conducive to learning, 3) involve learners in mutual planning, 4) involve participants in diagnosing their learning needs, 5) involve learners in forming their learning objectives, 6) involve learners in designing learning plans, 7) help learners carry out their learning plans, 8) involve learners in evaluating their learning outcomes.

The music related assignment examined in this study was designed with andragogical principles in mind. Self-direction was incorporated by allowing students to choose the topic and the song, and each student's personal experiences were incorporated through his/her interpretation of how the song related to class topics. In addition, this assignment gave students the chance to be actively involved in guiding the learning process.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENT

This section describes the student assignment, sample, and data analysis used in this study. The assignment consisted of five major steps (for full assignment, see Appendix B), 1) assignment explanation: in this step the instructor explained that students would be asked to select a song that related to one of the topics covered in class and write a summary explaining how and why the song related to that topic, 2) song selection: throughout the semester, each student selected a song that related to a topic that would be covered in class or in the assigned readings, 3) written reflection: after selecting a song, each student wrote an explanation of how the song related to the class topic, noting examples in the lyrics or aspects of the song or artist that supported their observation, 4) in class presentation of song: next, the instructor would play a short section of each song in class, which was followed by the student explaining to the class why that song was selected and how it related to the day's topic, and 5) discussion: after a short section of the song had been played and the student had explained it, the rest of the class was invited to respond with their thoughts on the selection.

METHOD

The following section describes the sample, data collection, measurement, and data analysis.

Sample

Students who participated in this study were enrolled in introduction to human resource development at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. The course HRD 3001 – Introduction to HRD, is a one-semester (16 week), 3-credit undergraduate level class that meets once a week. The data for this study was gathered during the Fall 2005 semester (58 students), the Spring 2006 semester (48 students), and the Fall 2006 semester (51 students). Of the 157 total students, there were 112 females and 45 males, and there were 110 total participants in the survey (41 in Fall 2005, 35 in Spring 2006, and 34 in Fall 2006), a 70% response rate. The response rate was influenced by the attendance rates when the questionnaire was administered, and the voluntary nature of the survey.

The students represented many different academic disciplines (as identified by declared major) including agriculture, biology, business, communications, economics, HRD, human resource management (HRM), marketing, and psychology. There was also a wide range of academic levels represented, including 6 freshmen, 49 sophomores, 58 juniors, 37 seniors, and 7 non-degree seeking students.

Data Collection, Measurement, and Data Analysis

A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather individual-level data on students' reactions to the use of songs to enhance learning. A short instrument (Appendix C) was created which included 6 items that used a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) and one open-ended response item. One example of an item is, "I feel that I was able to contribute to the class through this assignment," and the open ended item was, "in

your own words please describe your reaction to the music related assignment used in this class.” The items were selected based on the andragogical principles previously outlined.

The instrument was distributed to students in class, one week before the end of the semester. No information that could be used to identify the students was gathered, and students were informed that all responses would be anonymous. Students were not required to participate. Quantitative data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, and percentages) to provide basic information about student reactions.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Of the 110 study responses, there were 3 that were unusable due to missing data. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1, and frequencies and percentages of responses are presented in Table 2. The highest rated item was, “I found that this assignment made class each week more interesting.” This item had a mean of 3.78, and 70% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The second highest rated item was “I found this assignment caused me to think more about HRD concepts.” This item was close behind the highest rated with a 3.64 mean, and 65.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. On the other hand, the lowest rated item, with a mean of 2.66, was “I found this assignment made me more likely to do the reading each week,” with 46.3% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations ^a

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Interest	3.78	1.03
Easy to learn	3.15	1.03
Likely to read	2.66	1.06
Think more	3.64	1.05
Attend class	2.78	1.05
Contribute to class	3.54	0.99

^a n = 107

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of Responses ^a

	Strongly disagree	%	Disagree	%	Neither agree nor disagree	%	Agree	%	Strongly agree	%
Interest	3	2.8	13	12.1	14	13.1	52	48.6	25	23.4
Easy to learn	7	6.5	19	17.8	41	38.3	31	29.0	9	8.4
Likely to read	14	13.1	37	34.6	32	29.9	19	17.8	5	4.7
Think more	4	3.7	15	14.0	16	15.0	53	49.5	19	17.8
Attend class	15	14.0	24	22.4	42	39.3	22	20.6	4	3.7
Contribute to class	4	3.7	13	12.1	25	23.4	51	47.7	14	13.1

^a n = 107

Qualitative Results

The following section describes several student song selections as they relate to various management and HRD concepts. The concepts selected include OD and change, human expertise, T&D, and globalization. These were some of the major topics covered in this course. Each topic is briefly summarized, followed by a discussion of how students related particular songs to that topic. Table 3 presents some examples of lyrics as they relate to various topics.

Organization development and change

OD and change consistently prompt much student interest and discussion, and they were also well represented by student song submissions. Cummings and Worley (2005) defined OD as “a systemwide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organizational effectiveness” (p. 1). With change being such a universal phenomenon, it is not surprising that many musical artists address some manifestation of this in their song lyrics.

One song that multiple students selected in relation to OD and change was Bob Dylan’s “The Times They are A-Changin.” As one student noted, “Dylan’s lyrics describe change in society, but this has much in common with changes in organizational settings.” The same student specifically noted the lyrics “you better start swimmin’ or you’ll sink like a stone” and “he who gets hurt will be he who has stalled” as highly relevant to organizations in the 21st century. Following this presentation, the class discussion focused on concepts such as continuous change, innovation, and the impacts that societal change has on organizational change.

Human expertise

As identified in the definition of HRD, development of expertise is one of the primary aims of HRD. Expertise is defined as “the optimal level at which a person is able and/or expected to perform within a specialized realm of human activity” (Swanson, 1994, p. 94). The concept of expertise is one that is best understood through examples, which is one reason that the use of songs was beneficial for teaching this topic.

One student selected the song “Space Oddity”, David Bowie’s hit single from 1969 about an astronaut who gets lost in space, to frame a discussion of expertise. The student provided a discussion of the high level of expertise an individual must attain in order to become an astronaut. An astronaut might be required to make split-second, life or death decisions, and many years of training are necessary in order to attain such levels of expertise. Although it is not made explicit in the lyrics of the song, the student speculated that perhaps the astronaut became stranded in space due to a lack of expertise on his part or on the part of a ground control operator. In class, this student’s explanation of why the song was selected and how it related to HRD led to an interesting discussion of the benefits of expertise and how it contributed to advancement. In addition, another student brought up the idea that expertise is more important in some situations than in others (this student gave the example of a mistake in a bakery versus a mistake on a space shuttle). Throughout the rest of this class meeting, the instructor and students

referred back to the song and the discussion to gain better understanding of how knowledge, experience, and problem solving play a role in human expertise.

Training and development

T&D makes up the majority of HRD activity (Swanson & Holton, 2001), and while training is often discussed in conjunction with development, several authors distinguish between the two. Davis and Davis (1998) offer the following definition of training, “training is the process through which skills are developed, information is provided, and attributes are nurtured, in order to help individuals who work in organizations to become more effective and efficient in their work” (p. 44). Development, on the other hand, can be defined as “the planned growth and expansion of knowledge and expertise of people beyond the present job requirements” (Swanson, 1996, p.6).

In Alan Jackson’s song “Drive”, as one student noted, an individual is learning to drive through informal learning – a technique often used to train employees. Although the example given in the song does not take place within a formal organization, the fundamental elements of the T&D learning process is the same in that skills are developed and information is provided to help the individual become more effective at driving. The lyrics portray a young boy in the driver’s seat, and the father gently instructing from the passenger’s seat. One line states “a little slower son, you’re doing just fine,” and in another line the father tells the son to “turn it left and steer it right.” After the student presented this song, the class discussion involved other students sharing personal anecdotes of memorable learning experiences as well as discussions of topics such as mentoring, coaching, and learning through trial and error.

Globalization

Globalization is resulting in both advances and challenges in the field of HRD. For example, advances include cross-cultural training and nation-specific training, and challenges include more complex ethical issues and the need for leadership expertise.

One student chose a song by the artist Kanye West entitled “Diamonds From Sierra Leone” as a catalyst for discussing globalization. This song discusses conflict diamonds and their relationship to war and crime, and how this is fueled by the global diamond market. The student noted that individuals are often not aware of the consequences of their actions, and that in a complex, global society there is a growing need to develop critical thinkers. In his presentation, the student went on to discuss the need for HRD professionals to make use of systems thinking to help ensure that practices are culturally sensitive and informed.

Table 3

Song Title	Artist	HRD Topic	Relevant Lyrics
Diamonds from Sierra Leone	Kanye West	Globalization	“People lose hands, legs, arms for real, little was known of Sierra Leone and how it connect to the diamonds we own” and “Though it's thousands of miles away Sierra Leone connect to what we go through today”
The Times They Are A-Changin’	Bob Dylan	Organization Development	“you better start swimmin’ or you’ll sink like a stone” and “he who gets hurt will be he who has stalled”
Drive	Alan Jackson	Training and Development	“a little slower son, you’re doing just fine” and “turn it left and steer it right.”
Square One	Coldplay	Performance	“You're in control, is there anywhere you wanna go?” and “You wonder if your chance will ever come, or if you're stuck in square one”
Independent Women	Destiny’s Child	Career Development	“All the women who are independent, Throw your hands up at me, All the honeys who makin' money Throw your hands up at me, All the mommas who profit dollas, Throw your hands up at me”
Analog Boy	RX Bandits	Technology	“analog boy in a digital world, don't be so digital, turn off your radio, we're so helpless to our technology, I don't want to be controlled by machines”
You Learn	Alanis Morissette	Learning theories	“You live you learn, you love you learn, you cry you learn, you lose you learn, you bleed you learn, you scream you learn”

DISCUSSION

This study examined student reactions to the use of music in the classroom. The quantitative results demonstrated that the assignment made class more interesting to students and that the assignment caused students to think more about class topics. Qualitative results and anecdotes from the classroom also demonstrated how students embraced the music related assignment as a means for understanding management and HRD concepts.

By using music in the classroom, instructors can add variety and provide students with a creative exercise for increasing understanding of concepts. Such assignments also encourage students to view topics from different perspectives by employing critical thinking and by actively engaging in shaping classroom discussions. According to Knowles (1995), the principles of andragogy help shape the learning environment to suit adult learners, and the song related assignment accomplished this by involving learners in the planning of classroom activities, drawing on students experiences, and by tapping students’ internal interests and motivations. By involving learners using andragogical principles, there is a greater likelihood that they will have meaningful learning experiences and carry these with them into the workplace.

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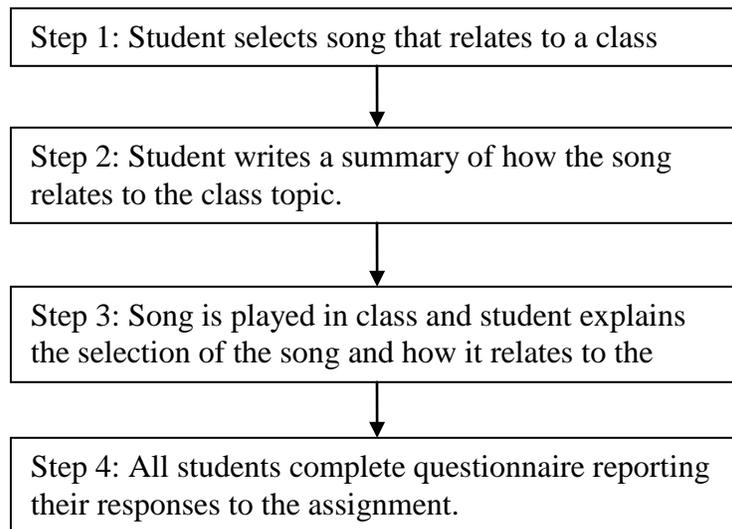
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APPENDIX A

Summary Diagram of Music Assignment



APPENDIX B

Introduction to HRD: Music Assignment

Assignment: Identify a song that relates to an HRD topic covered in the weekly readings for this course and write a summary of how it relates. You will be asked to discuss your selection in class.

Details: Some time before the end of the semester, find a song that relates to an HRD topic covered in your assigned readings. This should be part of your preparation for a particular class meeting – for example, if you want to find a song for week #11, find a song that relates to Globalization and HRD before class on Nov. 22.

The connection between the song and the HRD topic for your chosen week could be related to the song's title, lyrics, or any other relationship you identify and support. Once you have found the song, write up a brief explanation of why and how you think the song relates to HRD. Please include the name of the artist and the song title as well. After you have done this, submit both your write-up and the song before the class in which your HRD song topic will be covered.

Assignment Summary:

1. Choose which week/topic you want to find a song for.
2. Select song (before the class meeting that will cover your selected HRD topic).
3. Write about a half page explaining why you selected this song for this HRD topic, as well as the name of the artist and the song title.
4. Submit both the write-up and the song via email before class.
5. Selected songs (or portions of) will be played in class and you will be asked to explain how the song relates to the readings.

APPENDIX C

Introduction to HRD: Music Assignment Feedback Questionnaire

1. In your own words please describe your reaction to the “name that tune” assignment used in this class in the space below:

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For each question below, please circle your choice:

1. I found that this assignment made class each week more interesting				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
2. I found that the assignment made it easier to learn about HRD				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
3. I found this assignment made me more likely to do the reading each week				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
4. I found this assignment caused me to think more about HRD concepts				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
5. I found this assignment made me more likely to attend class each week				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
6. I feel that I was able to contribute to the class through this assignment				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
7. Other comments:				

APPENDIX D

Selected Songs Submitted by Students

Song Title	Artist	HRD Topic
Badlands	Bruce Springsteen	Future of HRD
Square One	Coldplay	Performance
Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For	U2	Performance
The Times They Are A-Changin'	Bob Dylan	Organizational Change
Independent Women	Destiny's Child	Career Development
Requiem	Beethoven	Strategic HRD
Rock This World	Hillary Duff	Globalization
Revolution	The Beatles	Organizational Change
Analog Boy	RX Bandits	Technology
Space Oddity	David Bowie	Expertise
Allentown	Billy Joel	Workforce Development
Satellite	Dave Matthews Band	Technology
Heal the World	Michael Jackson	Globalization
Breakaway	Kelly Clarkson	Organizational Change
Drive	Alan Jackson	Training and Development
Colored People	DC Talk	Diversity
Teach Your Children	Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young	Training and Development
Higher Ground	Stevie Wonder	Expertise
You Learn	Alanis Morissette	Learning theories