DO STUDENTS NOT CARE ABOUT EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES?
INVESTIGATING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EXTRA CREDIT VALUE VS. EFFORT

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Abstract

Giving “extra credit” work to students has been a controversial and hotly debated pedagogical issue for the last 20 years (Blood et al. 1993; Groves 2000; Muztaba Fuad and Jones 2012; Norcross et al. 1989; Weimer 2011). Previous work has focused on the faculty perspective discussing benefits and drawbacks associated with extra credit work (e.g. Hill et al. 1993; Norcross et al. 1989). Other scholars have investigated the use and effects of pop quizzes and other extra credit assignments on students’ final grades (Thorne 2000; Oley 1993). Some authors have criticized that the empirical exploration of understanding students’ motivational and performance efforts remains scarce and “rarely appears in the literature” (Mays and Bower 2005, p. 1). Besides a gap of empirical work it further appears that most existing studies stem from Psychology or Information Science. Yet it is surprising that, even though the topic of extra credit is considered a common practice in marketing education (Ackerman and Kiesler 2007), there is a wide gap within the marketing education literature. For example, a quick search in the Journal of Marketing Education for the keyword “extra credit” shows only 25 search results; yet none of those papers address motivational or performance effects of extra credit. A further search in Marketing Education Review yielded no results at all. To the authors’ knowledge, the topic has only been addressed once by Ackerman and Kiesler in the 2007 MEA Proceedings who conclude that for “such a common part of the marketing education curriculum, we know surprisingly little about its impact on students” (p. 123).

The lead author became more interested in this topic during the fall semester after realizing that only a fraction of students made use of several extra credit opportunities. In this particular case, extra credit was offered each time a guest speaker came to class. After each talk students had to submit a 2-page, double-spaced paper summarizing and reflecting on a guest speaker presentation in class. While each extra credit homework assignment accounted only for 2% of the final grade it also equaled a full letter grade of an exam. As the average of the exams in each of the different courses was between 70 and 75, the instructor was expecting that a majority of students would try to make up lost points of the exams. Previous findings by Ackerman and Kiesler (2007) or Muztaba Fuad and Jones (2012) suggest that extra credit can motivate students to work harder. Yet, the observed lack of student motivation and behavior contradicts the scarce findings in the literature.

Based on the current research gaps, the authors plan to conduct a survey among students to investigate their motivations and perceptions of extra credit assignments. In particular, the authors are interested to find out if written out-of-class assignments are perceived as a larger “hurdle” than an in-class pop quiz. The panel discussion will focus on sharing the study results and discussing the topic of extra credit for the marketing curriculum in general.

References


