

At the present time, in the period of intensive parallel development of integration and disintegration world processes, the study of the diplomatic course of influential superpowers is an important theoretical and practical task.

Keywords: France, foreign policy, N. Sarkozy, F. Hollande, new world order, European Union

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Model United Nations & Classroom Simulations: What have we learned?

Abstract. Model United Nations (MUN) and classroom simulations are common active learning approaches that have been recently discussed in the international relations literature. However, evaluations and critical reflections of these approaches are less common. How do the three traditional liberal arts education (Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Improving Communication Skills) are promoted by the MUN techniques? This paper addresses a more reflexive mood to assess what students and professors have learned. This work is based on the author's experience with the Model United Nations Program (as the faculty advisor and program founder) in addition to knowing the relevant literature of active learning in international relations.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Model U.N. Program, Simulation; Active Learning, Three Educational Goals

Introduction. This paper is based on my experience with the Model United Nations (MUN) as a classroom simulation technique. This work is my first attempt to report the experience of my student in relations to what the literature indicates about the impact of the MUN in student learning process.

Traditional Teaching Shortcoming

Traditional teaching aims to increase factual knowledge and emphasizing memorization. Problem solving skills and critical thinking skills for students are encouraged as long as they follow the teacher's example. This style has been particularly adept at generating good test scores, but it is yet to be determined how to accurately assess independent critical thinking [1, pp.143-144]. In instructor-centered classroom settings, there is a large burden on the teacher to be the information source and foster one-way communication [2, pp. 392-402]. This necessitates a heavy amount of faculty training and incentives for students to actually learn the material they are presented in class. This old-fashioned way of teaching does not accommodate students anymore.

Recent Generations of Students

Students today are more technologically savvy than any other generation. They are also visual learners, who learn things better after witnessing something firsthand. Heavy participation in online social networking has influenced modern students to heavily rely on participation, collaboration, and communication [3, pp. 32]. Widespread access to the internet has made the world a much smaller place and gives frequent opportunities for cross-cultural communication and interaction. It has also given rise to a shorter attention span amongst students. Therefore, if students are not challenged by material or are forced to have a passive role in class, they frequently lose their attention.

To cater to the differences of the global community, different modes of teaching should be looked at. In Thailand, for example, the incorporation of simulations in conjunction with traditional lectures was found to be effective [4 pp. 13-14]. Students in Thailand, however, were allowed access to their cell phones to look up information during their simulation. This contributed positively to active learning and promoted engagement and discussion amongst participants [4, pp.14-15]. These communication challenges have rendered the traditional way of biased one-way teaching as ineffective. To adapt to the recent generations of students, new ways of teaching must be looked at.

New Techniques

Time spent on information-providing during class in traditional settings could be time spent on class discussions and more abstract thinking. It is unsatisfactory to merely read about some topics, and many can only be properly learned outside of a textbook. This deficiency leaves way for different learning techniques to enter [5, pp. 412-413]. In support of this, Shah & Jain's study on medical students not only found that 95 percent of their students felt that they had a better understanding of a subject after an integrated lecture, but they scored markedly better on exams too [6, pp.1431-1432]. Making the students responsible for knowing the necessary information prior to class, and thereby making the classroom student-centered in a method called flipped learning, gives educators a way to get students more involved [7, pp. 27]. New techniques like flipped learning are necessary to accommodate the needs of the new students of today in creating a community of learners who are hungry for participation and discussion in lieu of one-way notetaking.

SIMULATION AS A NEW TEACHING TECHNIQUE

Games & Simulation in Teaching

Games and simulations are a boon in adapting teaching towards the modern classroom and the modern student. They grasp students' attention much more easily than a lecture does. Students feel engaged when they are actively involved in the process of something rather than passively listening. MUN simulations are often based on real-world political events, allowing students to gain a greater understanding of global politics in addition to developing their conceptual

and theoretical understandings [8, pp. 413-416]. Simulations require students to both learn the material beforehand outside of the classroom while also giving them opportunities to apply their knowledge and better their performance with each successive simulation [9, p. 81].

Participation in games and simulations has shown an increased overall course grade and a better retention of material. Even when a student is initially averse to flipped learning, they still benefit from the experience the same as students who were excited about it [10, pp. 292-293]. This also ensures that students will not be able to easily get away with “surface learning.” Being involved with a simulation not only makes learning exciting, it makes it necessary [11, p. 276]. However, if a student is ignorant on a more detailed subject, they can take a different approach to the discussion and still meaningfully participate [12, pp. 279-280].

Additionally, students display a tighter grasp on the complexities of international politics when placed in a realistic simulation and are forced to think at a higher level [13, p. 182]. This was made evident in interview with Kellie Parker, an active MUN participant and international studies major. She said that she had never had to think so complexly about the concepts that she had learned in class. For her, MUN was the first opportunity she had to think deeply about politics and cause and effect. Moreover, she said that classroom lectures never delved into the material as deeply as MUN forced her to.

The benefits gained from MUN reach far outside the scope of political science as well. Any young professional, regardless of their field, can utilize the written and oral communication skills acquired from MUN [14, pp. 2-6]. Phillips pointed out the value MUN has for business students, as it helps them develop negotiation and other skills that are essential for global business [15, p. 142]. Students pursuing humanities degrees are taught how to write but not how to “do.” Simulations such as MUN lead to growth in both discipline-specific and professional competency [16, pp.10-11].

EDUCATIONAL GOALS & THE MUN

Typical Educational Goals

Non- methods have been traditional proven to address the goals of critical thinking, problem solving, and improving communication. MUN is able to address the traditional educational goals of critical thinking, problem solving, and improving communication skills in an efficient, fun, and more practical way. In particular, simulations like MUN have gone above and beyond these goals. Simulations not only provide students with an enhanced understanding of subject material but also increase their analytical thinking skills [17, pp.26-28]. The benefits are far-reaching and are applicable across disciplines and professional situations. Specifically, MUN enhances students’ abilities in critical thinking, problem solving, and communication dramatically. Students themselves report improvements in these three areas as a direct result of participating in MUN.

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, & Communication Skills

Critical thinking is necessary for students to be successful in MUN. Simulations are a great framework to develop critical thinking skills in through the development of mutual solutions [18, pp. 121-122]. Using methods of simulation and gameplay, Cozine has found that it has been effective in establishing “concrete learning, understanding of concepts, models, theories; development of practical skills; increasing motivation, engagement, and overall satisfaction” [19]. Allison Lee, an international studies student, stated that her critical thinking skills rose exponentially over the period she was involved with MUN. Before becoming involve in MUN, she struggled to see the big picture involved in political decisions. After participating in MUN, she said that simulation forced her to think about the scope of her actions and think critically about the implications of policy decisions for the first time (Author’s Interview with a MUN Student).

Problem solving is a crucial life skill that is at the core of MUN activities. MUN facilitates the development of and ability in problem solving by forcing students to think on their feet while working in a pressured environment [20, p.180]. Applying and analyzing information in a challenging context while being flexible is a crucial component of the MUN experience [19,

p.370]. Alex Ganan, a political science student that the author interviewed, said that MUN was the first experience he had directly applying the theories that he learned in class to a situation. The application and problem solving allowed him to develop a deeper understanding for his studies and inspired him to study harder in class so he could improve his debating skills in MUN conferences (Author's Interview with a MUN Student).

Improved communication skills, both oral and written, are directly derived from MUN involvement. Students that participated in MUN reported that their confidence in public speaking increased. One of the most important communicative lesson students learned in MUN was the importance and difficulty of clearly articulating concepts and coming to a clear conclusion [20, pp. 179-180].

Written skills are gained through the drafting of resolutions and revisions and oral communication skills are also gained while students learn how to collaborate with each other in situations of negotiation and mediation [19]. A business major, Hannah Kiperstock stated that her involvement in MUN allowed her to become more confident in defending her arguments and negotiating with other students, which she said would likely be beneficial in the future. In addition to her verbal communication skills, she stated that her writing skills dramatically increased as a result of writing resolutions and similar documents in MUN (Author's Interview with a MUN Student).

Old & New Methods

While addressing typical educational goals, MUN introduces students to new methods of learning. Students in MUN become part of a learning community where they are more responsible for the information than in a traditional setting. It forces the students to develop research skills and motivates them to abstractly connect the information to their actor's position. MUN places the learner in a "joint-responsibility" relationship via role-playing where the burden of providing introductory information is shifted from the instructor to the student [21, pp. 351-356].

No matter its form—whether loosely put together in a classroom or at a formal conference—MUN provides students with valuable knowledge and experience. Students learn material in-depth through their own research and apply it in real-time [22, pp.2013]. MUN gives an added responsibility to the student and increases their enthusiasm to participate in discussion and therefore develop a deeper understanding for the material [23, p. 207]. This "learning by doing" helps students think more "actively" and "deeply". It involves being able to piece together abstract information and connect it to a greater context [24, pp. 395-396]. Most importantly, non-traditional methods allow students to be creative with their information synthesis to engage in more active learning than the traditional classroom [25, p. 163].

The context of a simulation also gives students a great number of opportunities to try applying theories that they have learned and immediately witnessing a failure or success, creating an excellent learning environment that is not available in strictly traditional teaching methods [26, p.148]. In relation to this, aspects of theories that once may have been confusing to students can become much clearer and less abstract when presented in a scenario [27, p.195]. Examples of this are state sovereignty, nonstate actors, and hegemonic powers. Ultimately, MUN provides a place for students to learn how to think independently and creatively.

MODEL UN PROGRAM

What is MUN? Model UN, abbreviated as MUN, is essentially a simulation of the operations of the UN Before conferences, students are expected to carry out individual research about their assigned countries' positions on predetermined topics. At the conferences, students take the role as diplomats of their assigned country and debate global and domestic issues. Students are divided into committees to focus on a more specific agenda and work to create a joint resolution to address the concerns of each country [28, p. 14]. Through MUN, students develop their communication, research, problem-solving, and negotiation skills. Other than learning about their assigned country, students learn how the international community operates concerning issues and negotiation tactics.

How is the Model UN Organized?

Both MUN's activities and organizational structure have remained largely unchanged over the past several decades. The Model United Nations Program began in the 1940s as a loose network of independent clubs in American universities. MUN has grown over the years into a worldwide phenomenon with conferences ranging from a few dozen participants to a several thousand. Therefore, MUN is not a creation of the UN and is not officially owned by any individual organization. Today, it is true to its roots and is still a decentralized program that is predominately driven by the students that participate in it.

Why is MUN Valuable?

Participants in MUN not only organize the events themselves, but they also gain a myriad of life skills as a result of their involvement in it. In MUN, students are required to not only do their own research but must also learn about diplomacy and compromise if they wish to succeed. Students must make speeches and declarations on behalf of their agency, placing them in a position of independence and power that is rarely experienced in student life. Participation therefore provides students practice, skill, and confidence in public speaking [29, p. 13]. Bernstein has found that having students participate in a political simulation increases their ability to manage political information and working with others to persuade them or to develop compromises all while increasing their overall self-confidence [30, pp. 8-13]. For females, MUN also gives them the opportunity to participate in a formally equal stage, one that may not necessarily be reflected in the real world [31, p. 332].

The immersive nature of MUN requires students to be fully engaged and responsible for their own agency in a scenario. Through involvement, students come to realize the complexities of negotiation amongst state actors and the hidden intricacies involved in global politics [32, p. 21]. This creates an easy opportunity to promote international education on campus. Since students and their mentors are on the frontlines of organizing and attending conferences, it is easy for schools and communities to build mutually beneficial partnerships with each other effectively and inexpensively. Additionally, while MUN committees are formal affairs, they are not boring or stiff. Oftentimes, students' humor and jokes while formulating global strategies is what makes MUN even more enjoyable to the student [33, pp. 510-511].

According to Alea Ortiguerra, a student who participated in MUN for several years, MUN was one of the most defining aspects of her college experience. Initially entering the club as soft-spoken and shy, by her senior year she became one of the most valuable debaters in her club. She had learned how to form cohesive arguments and speak her opinion more freely. Not only did MUN provide her a place to grow as a person, but she also gained a close circle of friends through participating in club activities. Alea also noted that she noticed similar personal growth in her friends who entered the club at the same time as her (Author's Interview with a MUN Student). MUN's benefits are far-reaching and extend from an individual student to an entire community.

Conclusion. Addressing students' growing desire for involvement and active learning, MUN is an essential activity that jointly teaches course material while fostering a student's personal growth. These added benefits that students gain from participating in a simulation, from stronger communication skills to developing a higher level of critical thinking, give MUN even further legitimacy. The modern world demands global literacy and has a wealth of new opportunities available for those who can demonstrate it.

A new generation of students can embrace these opportunities by further developing their MUN offers a way to invigorate students and get them excited for politics [34, p. 276]. Students walk away from MUN with a greater sense of political efficacy and a set of bolstered life skills that are applicable across disciplines and professions [35, p.25].

They develop a sense of global competency through their direct participation in MUN. Students often take their research for MUN and apply it to other undergraduate research endeavors, such as

BA dissertations [36, p.10]. Thus, I argue that participation in MUN prepares students for a global society.

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Методы активного обучения в преподавании международных отношений (на примере модели ООН)

Аннотация. Модель Организации Объединенных Наций (МООН) и моделирование в классе – это широко используемые подходы к активному обучению, которые часто обсуждаются в литературе по международным отношениям. Однако оценки и критические замечания по этим подходам менее распространены. Каким образом три цели традиционного гуманитарного образования (критическое мышление, решение проблем и улучшение навыков коммуникаций) продвигаются методами МООН? В данной статье рассматривается оценка того, чему научились студенты и преподаватели. Эта работа основана на опыте автора в Программе Модели Организации Объединенных Наций (в качестве советника факультета и основателя программы) в дополнение к знанию соответствующей литературы по активному обучению в международных отношениях.

Ключевые слова: преподавание, обучение, программа модели ООН, моделирование; активное обучение, три образовательные цели

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Аннотация. Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымы Моделі (БҰҰМ) мен сыныптағы модельдеу - Халықаралық қатынастар бойынша әдебиеттерде жиі талқыланатын, белсенді оқыту барысында кеңінен қолданылатын тәсілдер. Алайда, бұл тәсілдер бойынша бағалау және сыни пікір жазу онша таралмаған. Дәстүрлі гуманитарлық білім берудің үш мақсатын (критикалық ойлау, мәселелерді шешу, коммуникациялық дағдыларды дамыту) БҰҰМ әдістемелері арқылы қалай ілгерілетеді? Бұл мақалада студенттер мен оқытушылардың үйрену деңгейі бағаланады. Бұл жұмыс автордың Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымы Моделі Бағдарламасы аясындағы (факультет кеңесшісі мен бағдарлама құрылтайшысы ретінде) тәжірибесіне және халықаралық қатынастардағы белсенді оқытуға қатысты әдебиеттерден алынған мәліметтерге негізделген.

Түйін сөздер: оқыту, оқу, БҰҰ моделі бағдарламасы, модельдеу; белсенді оқыту, білім берудің үш мақсаты

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