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## Melding traditional and progressive andragogy in marketing education, using the hermeneutic competency development strategy<sup>☆</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Tertiary educators are concerned about the causes of dwindling class attendance, while employers and educators alike call for work-ready, entry-level graduates who can apply theories in the workplace and who are socially skilled, self-driven, interactive and independent learners. Various progressive adult teaching practices (andragogy) have been proposed to supplement traditional lecture-based methods, but studies have not yet investigated a combined strategy of methods within a particular marketing topic. The present study uses a single marketing topic, sensory marketing, to compare and test seven experiential delivery methods, designed to improve the engagement of business students through increased enjoyment, increased perceived understanding, and their own perceptions of improved ability to use higher order thinking skills to apply the complex concepts of consumer behavior to real-world scenarios. Additionally, strategically combining these individual methods, this research project, consisting of two empirical studies, proposes a new strategy to deliver knowledge skills and attributes. This strategy is carefully linked to prior understanding, scaffolded by peer support and practitioner advice, and ultimately aimed at applying the knowledge to real-world phenomena. In study 1 we found that students rated teacher-led discussions highest of the methodologies used to explain concepts and theories. Small group discussions were rated low across all domains; enjoyment, understanding and theory application. Integrating the individual methods, this research develops and proposes a new teaching strategy, named the hermeneutic competency development strategy (HCD). In study 2 we found that the proposed HCD strategy was successful in achieving the preset objectives of shaping students into work-ready graduates that have the ability to (1) apply (theoretical) knowledge, (2) are able to think independently and critically, (3) possess specialized knowledge, and (4) have the honed inter-personal skills and enhanced ability to communicate effectively in business English. The HCD strategy shifted attitudes, orientation and learner behavior. This empirical study thus contributes to a better understanding of the value of flipped classrooms and blended learning from the students' perspective, and improved clarity regarding the ability of various andragogies to deliver on both educators' and practitioners' demands for future-ready marketing students. Last, we outline an easy-to-follow route map for applying the proposed HCD teaching strategy.

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### Introduction

Employers and educators alike call for work-ready, entry-level graduates who can understand and apply theory, frameworks and models in the workplace and who emerge from the classroom as socially skilled (i.e. understand specialized knowledge, are able to

apply this knowledge), think critically for themselves, and are able to communicate marketing concepts effectively in business English. (Adler et al., 2004; De Villiers, 2013; De Villiers, 2010). At the same time, tertiary educators express concerns about dwindling class attendance, and question current teaching methods and how these are received by students (Dolnicar et al., 2009; Rodgers, 2001). The quality of the lecturer and/or the lecture content influence enjoyment of classes, class attendance, and learning outcomes (Dolnicar et al., 2009). Engaged students perform better and ultimately learn more; this engagement develops their technical and inter-personal skills, and enables them to perform better as employees (and employers). For example, Chylinski (2010, p.25)

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reports that using a small external incentive to increase in-class participation results in “a positive effect on students’ experience and perceived understanding of course material, as well as the social atmosphere during class discussions.” The big question is therefore “What really works in the classroom?” (Chall, 2000, p.1).

Several studies report from various perspectives (student, facilitator, and industry) on the perceived effectiveness of a variety of learning methodologies (Karns, 1993; Morrison et al., 2003; Dolnicar et al., 2009; Lilly and Tippins, 2002; Chylinski, 2010), with some clearly focused on application to real-world problems (Di Conti, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Schank, 1995; Weick, 1996). However, despite the significance of the topic, there is still disagreement on which teaching methods are most effective in improving student engagement and learning. Further, to our knowledge there is no empirical work comparing the suggested teaching methods in tertiary undergraduate marketing classes, as applied to one key topic covering several learning outcomes.

With this research we aimed to fill the gap identified above and thereby answer Karn’s (2015) calls for “Further comparison of these tools relative to the broad array of pedagogies”. This research also goes a step further. Instead of focusing solely on individual teaching methods, we also investigated the under-researched area of teaching strategies. Scholars lament the dearth of studies that distinguish and illuminate teaching strategies to be shared by educators in developing students’ cognitive competencies and attributes (Brecht and Ogilby, 2008; Cook, 1991; Hoban et al., 2004). “Many of the strategies used by academics to promote student learning in lectures, tutorials or assignments are not found in books” (Hoban et al., 2004, p.13) or journal articles. This may be due to the highly personalized, and often tacit nature of teaching strategies. Unfortunately, many publications merely discuss teaching methods, but fail to uncover the overarching teaching strategy - the combination of a select series of teaching interventions (also called episodes or modules) and the very specific sequence useful to educators, or the sequencing most effectively employed in andragogy, are left under-exposed. Student success (in terms of imparting the knowledge, skills and attributes students need) is not merely dependent on individual teaching methods; a well-planned syllabus that strategically combines individual teaching methods is crucial. This research aims to fill this gap. We developed, proposed and tested a unique teaching strategy, which we call the hermeneutic competency development (HCD) strategy. Specifically, we tested the success of the individual methods combined into progressive, scaffolded steps.

This research is unique in that different teaching methods were investigated for the same topic (sensory marketing), instructed by one lecturer over a short of period of time (a standard semester course at third year level), which enhanced the comparability of the different methods. The study used student surveys at the end of the teaching periods to investigate the teaching/learning approaches, and after participating students received individual feedback on their learning. A key aim of this study was to investigate practical methods that educators can implement effectively within the limitations of their full marketing curricula. This study assessed students’ perceptions of seven andragogical approaches in terms of likeability and perceived ability to foster understanding and application of sensory marketing concepts in real-world settings.

Additionally, using a field experiment (study 2) we compared – using the same topic and lecturer – traditional in-class teaching with the teaching strategy outlined above. We did this over a period of 4 semesters. For two full academic semesters the HCD strategy was applied to the entire class groups (varying between 75 and 96 students) and for two full academic semesters the teaching strategy was not applied, but the same content was covered using traditional in-class teaching supplemented by tutorial discussion only.

The contribution of this paper is two-fold. First, this research contributes to the literature on teaching methods (Gray et al., 2012) by focusing on a compulsory component of the marketing syllabus (Consumer Behavior), empirically investigating the perceived success of a combination of teaching methodologies on three aspects of learning outcomes for students: (i) likes and dislikes (preferences, ultimately affecting their motivation); (ii) understanding of complex concepts (perceived effectiveness); and (iii) perception of their ability to apply complex frameworks to real-world problems. This study demonstrate that students rated teacher-led discussions highest of the methodologies used to explain concepts and theories. Small group discussions were rated low across all domains; enjoyment, understanding and theory application. Further, self-study rated poorly in terms of enjoyment, but rated highly in terms of understanding of theory and its applications. Finally, guest speakers’ contributions did not seem to bridge the gap between theory and applications, receiving low ratings for understanding of theory as it relates to real-life applications.

Second, we contribute to the dialogue and expand the body of knowledge concerning andragogy in Marketing (Gray et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2011) by proposing and testing a new teaching strategy (HDC). This study delivered initial evidence (study 1) that the proposed HCD teaching strategy offers sufficient improvement in student performance to be regarded as successful. Those initial results were further confirmed in study 2, indicating that the proposed HCD teaching strategy leads to better student outcomes than traditional andragogy<sup>1</sup>.

## Background

In the considerable literature on effective teaching methods, little consensus exists about what actually improves the teaching process. Reports on the effectiveness (measured directly as well as indirectly) of using an inquiry approach through experiential and problem-based learning, and online scaffolding for students’ understanding and application of complex problems (Demetriadis et al., 2008; Demetriadis and Pombortsis, 1999; Jollands et al., 2012; Magonigle, 2011; Mazzolini et al., 2011; Prince, 2004; Zydney, 2010) guided this strategy’s instruction, lesson and assessment plans, and led to the use of problem-based learning, an inquiry approach and flipped classrooms. In all of these formats, students were required to do preparatory work in the form of self-study, in-class discussions, individual assignments and group assessments aimed at linking prior knowledge to new understanding, analysis, interpretation and synthesis.

Formal tertiary educational institutions offer a wide range of educational experiences aimed at different learning outcomes. The range often depends on these institutions’ educational and assessment philosophies (including those required by associations such as AACU, AACSB, EMBA and EQUIS); allocation of resources such as incentives and administrative support; and the likes, dislikes and experience/familiarity of the facilitators with the different methodologies (Bok, 2006; Fink, 2010; Karns, 2015; Lesht and Windes, 2011; Lloyd et al., 2012). One of the commonest teaching methods is teacher-centric lectures (Biggs, 1996). Not only are teacher-centric lectures often cited as cost- and time-efficient in delivering curriculum matter, but most facilitators have personal experience in traditional lecturer-centered teaching and are therefore likely to feel comfortable using it (Chinn, 2011; Doyle, 2009; McNeill and Krajcik, 2008). However, this widely applied traditional teaching method is – like most single teaching methods – inadequate for delivering learning goals and is reported to have many

<sup>1</sup> The art, science and study of adult learning and teaching.

disadvantages such as low accommodation of various learning styles, low levels of feedback to individual students, and low levels of student engagement, motivation and retention of content (Schwerdt and Wuppermann, 2011). Schwerdt and Wuppermann (2011, p. 16) report that “[l]ectures are potentially connected with many disadvantages and might therefore be an inferior teaching method. There exists, however, little consensus about what measures could improve the teaching process. Reducing the amount of traditional instruction based on lecture style teaching is typically a key candidate.” Lecturer-centered teaching is especially inadequate for learning goals and outcomes involving the experiential and action learning components often demanded by employers today, particularly inter-personal (“soft skills”) and team-based competencies (Garvey, 2011; Garvey et al., 2014; Kolari, and Savander-Ranne, 2003). However, in their empirical study of US middle schools, Schwerdt and Wuppermann (2011) posit that the traditional forms of teaching, such as teacher-led discussion of complex content, still have a place in improving student learning and performance.

One of the key determinants of what types of educational experiences are offered is how andragogs define educational goals and evaluate students' educational experiences (Fink, 2003; Lesht and Windes, 2011). According to Domask (2007, pp. 53-54), “Some educators emphasize emancipatory, democratic, and pluralistic goals while others emphasize the more practical goals of skill building, practical applications, integrating disciplines, and job placement.”

Despite the wide-spread use of teacher-centric lectures, marketing educators use a vast array of other andragogical methods to impart knowledge, engage students and pursue desired learning outcomes. These include simulations and games, guest speakers, educational drama, video and film, role-playing, case analyses, live case projects, case competitions, text/readings, online teaching aids and panel discussions (De Villiers and Botes, 2014; De Villiers, 2013; Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth, 2009; Karns, 2015; Metrejean et al., 2002; Payne et al., 2007; Rockell, 2009; Walker, 2003), to involve students more in their own learning and provide them with opportunities to see the knowledge from different perspectives, thus improving their understanding and ability to apply the knowledge, at the same time as fostering social and inter-personal competencies.

One question that naturally follows the debates regarding positive teaching/learning outcomes of differentiated teaching methodologies is: “Which teaching method (or combination of methods) is the most effective one?”

The success of an overall learning experience should not be determined by one teaching method; instead we need to look at the overall teaching strategy. In line with the work of Vicari et al. (2010, p.300) this study defines teaching strategy as: “a set of actions planned and conducted by the teacher to promote the involvement and commitment of students with a broader set of activities”.

The next section first develops the HCD strategy. In doing so we first introduce the various elements of the teaching strategy before we present, compare and contrast the seven individual methods used in the strategy. We conclude the development of the HCD strategy, by strategically combining the seven methods into a planned sequence of iterative steps (as set out in Figs. 6 and 7). The development of the HCD strategy is followed by empirical testing of the individual methods, and the overall strategy.

## Method

### *Developing the hermeneutic competency development strategy*

We tested several shifts in andragogy to make a third-year course in Consumer Behavior more focused on *active learning* of

marketing by *observing* and *experiencing* marketing in real-world settings. In addition, the design of the curriculum and specific in-class activities aimed to include more collaborative learning and were based on prepared readings and pre-class reading of online journal articles and audio-visual materials, in line with the principles of flipped classrooms (Bishop and Verleger, 2013; Butt, 2014.)

“A flipped classroom is a pedagogical model that involves having students view online lectures, read current read current evidence-based articles, and complete text readings prior to class. Students then come to class ready to actively engage in collaborative learning through case scenarios, small group discussion, or other meaningful, interactive activities” (Critz and Knight, 2013, p.210)

Specific focus was placed on the application of concepts to real-world scenarios and the implications of frameworks and models for practitioner marketers.

Our strategy also incorporated some controversial teaching aids: recorded lectures (available to students anywhere, anytime after the lecture), assignment rubrics and practitioner-delivered online materials such as YouTube videos, uploaded journal articles, and social media and online learning aids such as links to contemporary practitioner advice and online columns (Kim and Bonk 2006; Stevens, and Levi 2013).

### *Experiential, active learning and problem-based learning*

Studies in diverse disciplines have shown that active and experiential learning strategies can lead to improved student performance and attitudes, relative to a standard lecture format (Karns, 2015; Krajcik et al., 2008; Marbach-Ad et al., 2001). Many scholars have contributed to the increasing popularity of the experiential teaching methodology (Cannon and Feinstein, 2014; Domask, 2007; Kolb, 1984; Cantor, 1995; Fenwick, 2000; Kolb and Kolb, 2012; Gosen and Washbush, 2004; Alvarez and Rogers, 2006). Numerous definitions of experiential learning are available, but by far the most cited is Kolb's (1984, p. 38): “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. Building on the foundational works of Kurt Lewin and John Dewey, experiential and active learning advocates such as Kolb, Cantor, Rogers and Weick have researched this non-traditional approach to higher education for almost forty years. Cantor (1995, p. 1) defines experiential education more simply as “learning activities that engage the learner directly in the phenomena being studied”.

One aspect of our problem-based learning (PBL) design was an increased focus on connecting theory and understanding to students' experiences in real-world contexts.

“Problem-based learning (PBL) is an instructional method where relevant problems are introduced at the beginning of the instruction cycle and used to provide the context and motivation for the learning that follows. It is always active and usually (but not necessarily) collaborative or cooperative using the above definitions. PBL typically involves significant amounts of self-directed learning on the part of the students.” (Prince, 2004, p. 223).

The classroom activities studied here embraced project-based learning (PJBL) in investigations of meaningful real-world problems and applied a PJBL (Blumenfeld and Krajcik, 2006) design to the use of sensory marketing to attract and retain customers in retail mall environments. For six weeks of the 12-week course, students worked in small groups of five, each with a specific focus on one of the five senses targeted by sensory marketing. Lesson plans followed the textbook content in a similar way to the previous iterations of the course, but in contrast, we placed focus on

sensory marketing-related concepts as a thread running through each lesson/presentation and assessment.

Helle et al. (2006, p. 308) state that “project-based learning can be used as a *method of guided discovery learning* with the intention of promoting self-regulated, deep-level learning. In this case, the project aspect is embedded in the course structure”. Though almost four decades old, the expanded definition for project-based learning, provided by Adderley et al. (1975, p. 1) is more practical and directive: “1) [projects] involve the solution of a problem; often, though not necessarily, set by the student himself [sic]; (2) they involve initiative by the student or group of students, and necessitate a variety of educational activities; (3) they commonly result in an end product (e.g., thesis, report, design plans, computer programme and model); (4) work often goes on for a considerable length of time; (5) teaching staff are involved in an advisory, rather than authoritarian, role at any or all of the stages – initiation, conduct and conclusion”. According to Blumenfeld et al. (1991) the essence of project-based learning is that a question or problem serves to organize and drive activities, which culminate in a final product that addresses the driving question. Morgan (1983), as cited in Helle et al. (2006, p. 289), describes the *project component* of a tertiary education course as: “[A type] of project work, where the aims are broader and the scope is larger; the project is more interdisciplinary in nature and often related to “real world” issues; the objectives include developing problem-solving abilities and a capacity for independent work. Often, traditionally taught courses are studied in parallel with the project course”. In our strategy, the project-based driving question was provided and discussed in the course guide; the assessment(s) outline was provided; and individual student inquiries were dealt with during part of a tutorial. The problem was framed as: “*Modern retailers and shopping malls face the constant challenges of attracting prospective customers and retaining clients in the face of fierce competition. Once on site (in the mall or retail shop) customers still need to be persuaded to buy and to return later to purchase again and again. This is a tough task. According to theorists, marketers could target the five senses to attract, create interest, raise desire and persuade customers to buy. This may be easier said than done! You are to write an in-depth report on how a shopping mall, as a collection of retail outlets, uses sensory stimuli to attract and retain customers and persuade them to buy.*” (Individual component – Assessment Ai). A second, group assignment followed a month later: “*Based on your assessment of the literature and conversations/debates with members of your group, report on the effective, ineffective or non-use of sensory stimulation in the selected mall. Discuss its current application and suggest how these might be improved in order to attract, retain and motivate consumers to higher purchase and re-purchase levels*” (Group component – five students to a group – Assessment Aii)

This strategy used experiential andragogies in the form of project-based, real-world observations in shopping malls, small group discussions and case-based discussions during tutorial sessions and in-class debates between students and the facilitator and/or guest speakers. Students were exposed to a variety of learning aids related to how sensory marketing by retailers in malls and by malls as public spaces can attract, create interest and engage customers. Krishna (2012) defines sensory marketing as “*marketing that engages the consumers’ senses and affects their perception, judgement and behavior*” (p.333). Learning objectives included students acquiring an understanding of theoretical concepts, frameworks and models related to sensory triggers relevant to marketers’ impacts on sensation and perception as they apply to consumer behavior; applying critical concepts related to sensory marketing; developing an appreciation for marketers’ roles in ethical business practices; acquiring a good working knowledge of the 5-stage buying and disposing behavior of consumers; and applying this knowledge to develop customer retention and CLTV plans for

real-world retailers and malls. Seven well-known and previously tested andragogies were used to cover the concepts from various perspectives and to accommodate different learning styles.

#### *Teacher-led discussions (in semi-flipped classroom activities)*

Noblitt et al. (2010) label teacher-centred, talking-at-students lectures, where students “passively absorb pre-processed information and then regurgitate it in response to ... exams” (McCarthy and Anderson, 2000; p.279) as “traditional teaching”. Many studies report on the ineffectiveness of this method, although not all scholars agree that there is no place for the traditional method of teaching (Guthrie, 1990). Gambrell (2004, p. 212) defines teacher-led discussions as “typically characterized by an interaction pattern of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation (IRE)”. Gambrell (2004) and McNeill and Krajcik (2008) concur with Mercer (1993) that teacher-led discussions can be used effectively, particularly when teachers offer feedback during these interactive engagements in class. Providing opportunities for students to ponder confusing aspects of text, or to challenge the text, improves reading comprehension and comprehension of complex concepts. In addition, prior research supports the finding that student engagement in interactive classroom discussions improves comprehension, produces higher-level thinking skills and leads to higher levels of motivation. Wiske (1998) and Gardner (1998) suggest melding traditional and progressive teaching methods. This strategy therefore implemented a modified semi-flipped classroom curriculum with a large proportion (>60%) of class time spent in student-centred, teacher-led interactive activities. (This ratio excludes tutorial sessions – 1 in 4 h per week – that were completely project-based, collaborative learning). Students were expected to read the text and online materials, watch videos, and come to class prepared for collaborative but teacher-led discussions. The other 40% of the Consumer Behavior course was presented as traditional knowledge-sharing lectures. Educators from various disciplines support the use of “traditional methods” in combination with more student-centred, experiential learning (McCarthy and Anderson, 2000; McKeachie and Svinicki, 2010; Sullivan et al., 2008).

#### *Self-study*

Contrary to some pedagogues’ interpretation, self-study is not an abdication by the lecturer, leaving students to “go it alone”. Lecturers need to carefully guide students about which concepts, frameworks, models and theories are relevant to and important for their understanding of the subject matter. Facilitators use their expertise to structure an iterative process from initial comprehension to mastery of difficult subject matter through a series of self-study assignments involving progressive steps (De Villiers, 2010; Schmidt et al., 2009).

Some students leave assignments and assessments to the very last minute (Schmidt et al., 2009; Rotenstein et al., 2009; Hensley, 2013), not allowing sufficient study and reflection time to assimilate and internalize difficult new concepts. One of the main intentions of the PBL design of this study programme was to provide structure, time management, and time for conscious and unconscious deliberation. Poor self-management affects students’ performances. In this strategy, carefully honed questions and problem statements subtly assisted students to allocate their self-study time appropriately. The original aim of the assignment-events structure for this strategy was to promote effective use of self-study time, appropriate selection of problems to be understood and solved, and to provide another means to encourage students to work hard and continuously throughout the term, rather than in small bursts at assessment times. As suggested by Schmidt et al. (2009), small-group work plays a central role in this approach.

### *Guest lecturers and guest speakers*

The higher education literature proposes that guest speakers can enhance students' learning experience by bridging the gap between academia and industry and providing insights into real-life experiences (Glenwick and Chabot, 1991; Metrejean and Zarzeski, 2001). To this end, guest speakers from industry have become an integral part of many classrooms. Scholars confirm that qualified guest speakers, appropriately briefed in terms of the learning objectives of the course, can play an important role in experiential learning by reinforcing the significance of the key concepts to real-world applications and by exposing students to the dilemmas faced in practice (Kolb and Kolb 2003; Payne et al., 2007; Metrejean et al., 2002). Students report that they enjoy and benefit from guest speakers (Metrejean et al., 2002) and Braxton et al. (2000) concluded that the opportunity to have discussions in the classroom positively influenced the subsequent commitment of students.

This field study included well-briefed guest speakers from the local shopping mall in which students had to record observations; and the Marketing & Promotions Manager of a national radio station. The speaker from the mall focused on the use of sensory marketing to attract, retain and recall customers, and also entered into dialogue with the students. The guest speaker from the radio station focused primarily on market segmentation and the impact of the sense of sound through story-telling and the theater of the mind to attract attention, engage listeners and prompt actions. Their presentations were followed by question-and-answer periods of fifteen minutes. The facilitator ensured the questions from prior sessions that were not asked in the next interactions, were asked by herself, so that students over the several studies were ensured of similar exposure to new concepts and applied knowledge.

### *Social media and online learning aids*

There is an on-going debate about the effectiveness of different online and social media in the classroom (Ally, 2004; Clarke, 1983). Bonk and Reynolds (1997) report that it is a challenging and engaging teaching strategy and instruction method, not specific technology, that affects the quality of the learning. Cole et al. (2014) highlight the benefit of online learning materials, which allow anytime, anywhere access to learning aids. For this field study, all lectures and tutorials were recorded and were available online from day one and throughout the entire programme. Students could review the media at their own pace, playing challenging sections repeatedly or skipping past clearly understood parts. This approach is of particular benefit to students for whom English is not their first language, and those with learning disabilities. Usage can be monitored easily via virtual learning environments (VLEs) and a typical pattern emerged, showing an initial flurry of viewings in the immediate aftermath of the lecture, fading until the onset of assessment, with a frenzy of last minute activity. One frequently expressed concern that screencasts might detract from lecture attendance was not borne out either by the monitoring of attendance or through student comments.

In addition to the video-recorded lectures, learning aids such as newspaper clippings, journal articles, past assessments and feedback, marking rubrics and detailed assessment instructions were available to students to download and study in their own time and at their own pace. In every lecture students were motivated to prepare for the next class by spending time on the preparatory materials, and some small in-class quizzes (with a weighted grade of 5%) provided extrinsic motivation for students to comply and provided discussion points directly after completing the quiz and throughout the class.

Class videos consisted of two components: (i) audio-visual teaching support videos sourced from various contemporary

sources (YouTube, popular media sites, promotional videos and TV advertisements) and authoritative sources (other university support aids and well-known academic sites); and (ii) video recordings capturing or highlighting some of the topics covered by the lecturer during the in-class discussions.

### *Small-group discussions & tutorials*

Although not all authors agree (Dolmans and Schmidt, 2006), some scholars praise the motivational and cognitive benefits of small group discussions in problem-based curricula (Alvermann, 1996; Mifflin, 2004). Andragogues Lonka and Ahola (1995) reported that curricula emphasizing small-group instruction rather than lectures generally have higher graduation rates and improved engagement when compared to other curricula. In addition, Kucan and Beck (2003) reported that small-group discussion supports cognitive engagement with text. This finding was confirmed by Heikkila and Lonka (2006), who reported that metacognition may be enhanced through small group discussions. They concluded that in order for students to learn how to think at higher levels, they need to participate in conversations with others. The present research considered student activation and engagement as key success factors for perceived effectiveness as well as liking, and thus built several such interventions into the lesson plans.

The specific purposes of the one-hour tutorials, which were spread at weekly intervals throughout the course, included student-peer assisted learning; application of concepts covered in class to real world scenarios and cases; and familiarizing students with the discourse and concepts to improve their confidence in using appropriate subject material in their oral and written communication. An important objective was to prepare final year students for interviews and real-workplace projects. For this field study, students grappled with pre-set questions related to the topic of the week (e.g. shifting consumers' attitudes or consumer involvement) and were given time to consider the application of the topic concepts to the project (sensory marketing to attract, retain buyers and improve their buying experience). The small-group discussions (4 and 5 students per group) were meant to be a different kind of dialogic environment from class-room, teacher-led, open-forum discussions.

Facilitators/teachers, tutors and students regarded tutorials and small-group discussions as substantially different from teacher-led discussions in the two-hour formal class-room settings. It was considered important that the tutors and facilitators left student groups to work together, without direct intervention except when real difficulties arose. In tutorials, facilitators would debrief the collaborative efforts of the students, while in the small-group discussions, students led the discussions and mind-maps. Students shared their outputs online in Google docs or on student Facebook pages.

### *Scaffolding*

Guided by Van der Stuyf (2002), Raymond (2000), and Chang et al. (2002) we define and use the terms "scaffolding and scaffolded instruction" as referring to all elements and teaching aids educators employ to support learners' further development to the next level of knowledge, insight and understanding. A key aspect of scaffolded development is that support diminishes as learners develop and grow, and when using scaffolding teaching strategy, the goal is for the student to become independent and self-regulating, and rely less and less on others to support and guide their problem solving, decision making and interpretation actions (Hartman, 2002; Raymond, 2000). As learners' topic competency and learning insight increase, the support provided decreases, in proportion to students' growth and development.

**Table 1**  
Melding Traditional and Progressive Andragogy in Consumer Behaviour Education–Compulsory, third year, semester course at a tertiary university in New Zealand

Week	Individual or Group (# of people)	Description, Duration & Date/PBL opportunities	Andragogy
Wk1-Wk13 Wk1-Wk13 Wk 7	Large group (68) Large group (68)	This paper has three hours contact time per week. Two hours are considered lecture/class time and one hour is ear-marked for tutorials. Class time melds traditional learning and flipped classroom activities in the form of teacher-led discussions and other active learning activities. Tutorials are all interactive with quizzes, discussions, debates and collaborative completion of worksheets. Cases or concepts are first discussed in small groups and then debriefed and feedback provided by the facilitator.	<u>Teacher-led discussions/Flipped classes</u> Lecturer presentations, quizzes, Q&A and in-class teacher-led discussions Invited guest lecturers – Academic
Wk 9 Wk 5	Class group (68) Class group (68)	Guest speakers are judiciously selected to align with the topics and carefully briefed about their role in the application of the topic to real-world scenarios. The course convener is satisfied that guest speakers stayed on brief and delivered content of a high standard, well aligned with the class topic and the enhanced understanding of theoretical concepts.	<u>Guest speakers:</u> Westfield Mall Marketing & Promotional Managers – Practitioner, industry expert Radio Account Executive & Industry Expert – Segmentation Practitioner
Wk 4 Wk1-Wk9 Wk1-Wk13	Individual (1) Individual (1) Individual (1)	The first part of a two-part assessment is a literature review pertaining to one of the five senses. Each student studies provided literature, but also has to find at least five journal articles on their allocated sense. This assessment is due in week four; five weeks ahead of the group report where all five senses are reconsidered and the group makes recommendations to the Mall Marketing & Promotion managers in report form.	<u>Self-study</u> Individually generated literature review Recommended extra reading High demand library resources available to students throughout
Wk3-Wk13	Small groups (5) Small groups (15)	Throughout the course; topics are aligned with class content and project deadlines. These group discussions happen in several tutorial discussions (and are aligned with the text content of that week). A special focus in the two weeks before the group report (recommendations) is due. No guide or worksheets are provided for these discussions. Own learning is shared with no facilitation by the tutor	<u>Self-guided small-group discussions</u> Tutorials Sensory group discussions Groups upload their findings to a shared folder online.
Wk1-Wk13 Wk1- Wk 9	Individual (1) Individual (1)	All recordings and all materials are available to students from first day of term for the entire duration of the project. Teacher announces new topics and provides URLs and live links in class and through online e-mails and announcements	<u>Online materials</u> Slides (and video recordings of discussions & lectures) VLE Teacher recorded presentations & messages; pre-selected online videos & learning aids
Wk 4 Wk 5 Wk 9	Individual(1) Individual (1) Small groups (5)	Students are divided into groups of 5 on day 1 of class. All students receive instructions and marking rubrics upon enrolment (in class and online). They have four weeks to submit the individual literature review, focusing on their single sense for the project. Students are required to visit a pre-selected shopping mall near the university at two specific intervals and record their observations. Online guides and reading provide structure and scaffolding for the report. After the mid-semester teaching recess, students are required to produce a single group-report on all senses. The report is the culmination of their work and serves as a recommendation to Mall Management on how to improve the mall's sensory marketing efforts to impact purchases and client retention.	<u>Assessments:</u> Literature Review - Individual Report on Observations - Individual Business Report - Recommendations for the Mall Promotions team Group of 5 students to co-create the report.

### Characteristics of the action learning study

The topic of sensory marketing (as part of the third-year Consumer Behavior course) offered the opportunity to develop a series of project-based learning opportunities as set out in Table 1. Eleven different project components and three compulsory assessment events comprised approximately 30% of the weight of internal (non-examined) assessment in this course.

#### Assessment

Assessments in the course took the form of three “projects”, based on three different learning/study methods. The first assessment was a literature review, based on self-study of available online sources and academic journals via standard channels such as Google Scholar and other university-supported databases. The second assessment asked students to observe the application of these theories in the real-world setting of a retail mall. Students had to report on their particular sense and how marketers used it to attract and retain consumers. The third assessment required group work, where five students had to combine their unique understanding of their particular consumer sense to recommend new tactics to the Westfield Mall promotional manager to improve the impact of the mall's marketing activities.

### The HCD strategy and S-curve of knowledge, skills and attribute (KSA) adoption

The HCD strategy combines the aforementioned teaching elements, methods and learning techniques into a seven-stage teaching strategy, founded in experience-based learning (Anderson et al., 2000; Kayes et al., 2005; Kolb, 2014; Sviniki and Dixon, 1987; Schank et al., 1999), peer-mentoring (Allen et al., 1997; Jewett and McPhee, 2012; Tremblay and Rodger, 2003), and iterative feedback (Amann et al., 1996; De Villiers, 2015; Honig, 2004; Jonsson, 2013; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Quinton and Smallbone 2010). The five stages use seven teaching methods (see Table 1 and Fig. 7) in a progressive manner, recognizing prior learning (see Fig. 6, RPL), and building on theories and models (see “Theory” blocks in Figs. 6 & 7) covered before embarking on the next stage of knowledge and competency development.

As indicated in Table 1 and reiterated in Fig. 6, theoretical concepts are covered by teachers ( $t_0$ ,  $t_5$  and  $t_6$ ) and enhanced by peers ( $t_3$ ,  $t_4$ ,  $t_5$  and  $t_7$ ). The timeline (on the right hand side of Fig. 7) indicates how knowledge is progressively built in five stages, using the seven teaching methods in a structured manner to ensure knowledge divergence (see the s-curve in Fig. 6 and the fan shape exposing more and more key concepts in Fig. 7).

The HCD teaching strategy includes several informational feedback loops (labeled Q in Figs. 6 and 7) to support the reflective learning practices of students (see  $t_3$ ,  $t_4$ ,  $t_6$  and  $t_8$  in Fig. 6). Reflective practices provide feed-forward insights for the next assessments and application to real-world problems, thus completing an effective learning cycle. These feedback loops simultaneously establish reflective habits, extract useful insights from peers and allow students to incorporate new knowledge, based on current information, in new situations and contexts. The HCD strategy delivers as an outcome the prior learning required to step up to a more advanced level of knowledge, linking the current topic to the next topic; in this case “experiential marketing strategies to build brands” (see  $KSA_2$  in Fig. 6).

The S-curve in Fig. 6 demonstrates the progression of KSAs from a prior level (earlier studies prior to the learner joining this course =  $KSA_1$ ) to the higher level of KSA (on completion of the course =  $KSA_2$ ). The S-curve indicates the level of knowledge adoption, after various exposure opportunities, scaffolded by learning aids (graphically illustrated using vertical blocks over time periods  $t_0$  to  $t_8$ ). Fig. 7 provides an illustration of the value of multiple parties' input into the learning process and the five phases of progression (see the building blocks on the right of Fig. 6). The prior learning of individual students needs to be acknowledged and incorporated into the process (Student  $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ , etc.). The model demonstrates how the contributions of the various parties (peers, guest speakers, facilitators and online learning aids) scaffold individuals' learning and fan out content quickly (divergent concepts; time illustrated with upward vertical arrow). Assessments run concurrently and are spread throughout the learning period. The diverse range of assessment types (see the vertical arrow to the left) allows for formative and summative feedback, and multiple opportunities for students to assess their progress using multiple windows (feedback from self, peers, guests and the lecturer).

## Study 1

The goal of Study 1 was to first compare the individual methods used in the proposed teaching strategy. Study 1 empirically investigated the perceived success of a combination of teaching methodologies on three aspects of learning outcomes for students: (i) likes and dislikes (preferences, ultimately affecting their motivation); (ii) understanding of complex concepts (perceived effectiveness); and (iii) perception of their ability to apply complex frameworks to real-world problems. Specifically, study 1 tested the impact of alternative adult learning methods applied to the same topic under the same instructor over a period of 13 weeks. The study assessed the relative effectiveness and likability of those methods by evaluating students' perceptions of those learning activities in terms of liking and effectiveness (in helping to learn theory and applications) after exposure to all the methods, and after having received feedback on the corresponding assessment. The goals included investigating how students rated the different learning experiences, compared with traditional classroom delivery, in terms of learning outcomes in a graduate-level marketing course. In particular, we were interested in investigating which teaching methods were best liked, and whether those most liked also resulted in better-perceived understanding of theory and/or complex real-world concepts. In contrast, we were interested in whether some methods were not liked but nonetheless generated improvements in understanding and/or application of complex concepts by students.

### Survey: students perception of various teaching methods

Using a survey, we investigated students' perceptions of the seven teaching methods they had been exposed to while learning

about sensory marketing. We examined students' liking of the various teaching methods, and measured indirect learning (see Young, 2014, 2016) by testing how well the described teaching method aided their perceived understanding of theories and perceived understanding of applications of the theories.

### Survey methodology

To measure perceived effectiveness and enjoyment of various teaching methods, we developed a survey using Qualtrics and administered it to students via e-mail, with a link to the survey. The population of interest was all students enrolled in the third-year course in Consumer Behavior in a business degree at Waikato University, who were exposed to various teaching methods on the same topic (Sensory Marketing). At the end of the course, once exposed to all seven teaching methods on the same topic and after having received feedback on all assessment parts, all eligible students ( $n = 136$ ) were invited to complete an online survey. Of the 136 students, 68 completed the questionnaire (50% response rate). Out of the 68 completed surveys, 63% were female and 37% were male. Additionally, 84% indicated English as their first language and 16% indicated another language as their first language. These ESOL (English Speakers, Other Language) learners included those whose first language was Chinese, Dutch, Hindi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Swedish, and German. The students who completed the survey indicated their perceptions of the multiple teaching methods in terms of liking, understanding of the theory and understanding of the applications. For each teaching method: (a) self-studies, (b) traditional teacher-led discussions, (c) tutorial discussions, (d) small group discussions, (e) guest speakers, (f) online lecture notes (slides), and (g) class videos, students answered the question “Please indicate how much you *liked* the following activities in relation to our studies of sensory marketing.” Students indicated their answers using a 5-point scale from 1 = dislike very much to 5 = like very much. After completing the first set of questions, we asked students the following question: “In terms of your *understanding* of sensory marketing *theories*, please indicate how effective you found the following activities”. Again, students could rate their perception of each teaching method on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = very ineffective to 5 = very effective. Similarly, using the same scale and items (i.e. teaching methods), we asked students “In terms of *understanding* the *application* of sensory marketing theories to the real world please indicate how effective you found the following activities”. We also tested overall liking, overall understanding of theories and overall understanding of theories applicable to the real world (measured using the same 5-point Likert scale). We concluded the questionnaire by asking for their assessment grade (related to the teaching methods), their gender, age, and whether English was their first or second language.

## Results of study 1

### Assessment grades

As required by ethical restrictions, all surveys were anonymous. It was thus not possible to link students' perceptions of effective methods to their real performance in assignments (other than those grades the respondents alleged they had achieved). To overcome this limitation and to ensure that the presented data did not reflect the opinion of either only the most or least pleased students (respondent bias) or those who most liked a particular methodology, we compared actual overall grades of the entire population to the respondents' reported grades (as recorded on the anonymous survey). Further, to ensure that the participants represented all students in terms of ability, we compared the actual grades received for the assessment with the grades students

**Table 2**  
Representativeness of student sample in terms of assessment grades.

	Actual grades for assessment (%)	Sample grades for assessment (%)
A+/A	23.5	23.7
A–	22	20.6
B+	22.8	29.4
B and lower	31.6	26.5

Note: B– was the lowest achieved Assessment Grade related to the Sensory Marketing Assignment.

**Table 3**  
Correlation between assessment grade and overall liking, understanding of theory and understanding of applications.

		Overall Liking	Overall understanding of theories	Overall understanding of applications
Assessment grades	r	.116	.287*	.202
	p	.345	.018	.099

\*:  $p < .05$

indicated they had received in the survey. Table 2 shows that the sample fairly represented the students in terms of the received grades. Importantly, neither top students (A– and better) nor underperforming students were overrepresented in the survey.

#### Perceived learning versus actual learning

Since this study measured learning by asking students to report on their perceptions, we investigated whether students had the ability to rate the effectiveness of several methods. To do so, we tested whether students' perceptions aligned with their actual performance. We investigated the extent to which grades correlated well or poorly with overall liking, overall understanding of theory and overall understanding of applications.

Importantly, assessment grades did not correlate with overall liking; however, as expected, overall understanding of the theory did correlate with overall grades of assessments related to the theory, indicating students had the ability to differentiate between liking and performance. In contrast, the reported overall understanding of application did not correlate with students' assessment grades. To investigate further we compared the mean ratings of understanding of applications across the different assessment grades. Our findings indicated that: the top students reported the highest overall understanding ( $MA+A=4.13$ ,  $SD=.719$ ) followed by the good students ( $MA-=3.5$ ,  $SD.65$ ) and the average students ( $MB+=3.4$ ). However, students with the lowest grades indicated a higher understanding than students with grades B+ and students receiving A-grades for the relevant assignments ( $MB\_and\_below=3.67=.97$ ). The results indicate that lower-performing students (in comparison to higher-performing students) are less accurate in assessing their performance in terms of whether they are able to apply the theory to real-life situations. This finding aligns well with the work of Dunning and Kruger (1999, 2003), which indicates that learners at lower levels of competence are unconsciously incompetent and rate their own competence higher than learners with high levels of competence, who are able to judge their skills more accurately. For the remainder of this paper we based our analysis on the whole sample, but also verified our results by excluding the lower-performing students in relation to measurements of the application of theories. Corresponding notes are included in relevant sections of the paper.

**Table 4**  
Liking of teaching methods.

	N	M	SD	t
Self-study (i.e. own literature review)	68	3.56	.998	4.616***
Teacher-led discussions	68	4.19	.718	13.686***
Tutorial discussions	68	4.07	.869	10.183***
Guest speaker	68	3.96	1.014	7.775***
Small group discussions	68	3.63	1.006	5.183***
Lecturer notes (slides)	68	3.81	.950	7.018***
Class videos	68	4.16	.840	11.412***
<b>df</b>	<b>67</b>			

\*\*\*:  $p < .001$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; \*:  $p < .05$

**Table 5**  
Effectiveness of teaching methods in terms of understanding of marketing theories.

	N	M	SD	t
Self-study (i.e. own literature review)	68	3.9	.964	7.673***
Teacher-led discussions	68	4.09	.768	11.692***
Tutorial discussions	68	3.90	.964	7.673***
Guest speaker	68	3.43	1.012	3.475**
Small group discussions	68	3.65	1.004	5.315***
Lecturer notes (slides)	68	3.82	.961	7.066***
Class videos	68	3.88	.873	8.335***
<b>df</b>	<b>67</b>			

\*\*\*:  $p < .001$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; \*:  $p < .05$

#### Liking of the teaching methods

In order to examine students' liking of the various teaching methods we found the means for each, relative to the midpoint value of 3. Table 4 displays the means for each teaching method and the corresponding  $t$ -test results. The results show that students liked all of the teaching methods ( $p < .001$ ). However, they liked some methods more than others. Fig. 1 orders the means of each teaching method. Teacher-led discussion and class videos clearly received the highest ratings, followed by tutorial discussions, guest speakers and lecture notes. Small group discussions and self-studies received the lowest rating.

The results of paired sample  $t$ -tests revealed that students liked the teacher-led discussion and class videos significantly more than lecture notes, small group discussions and self-study ( $p < .01$ ). Students also liked tutorial discussions and guest speakers significantly more than small group discussions and self-study ( $p < .05$ ).

#### Understanding of marketing theories

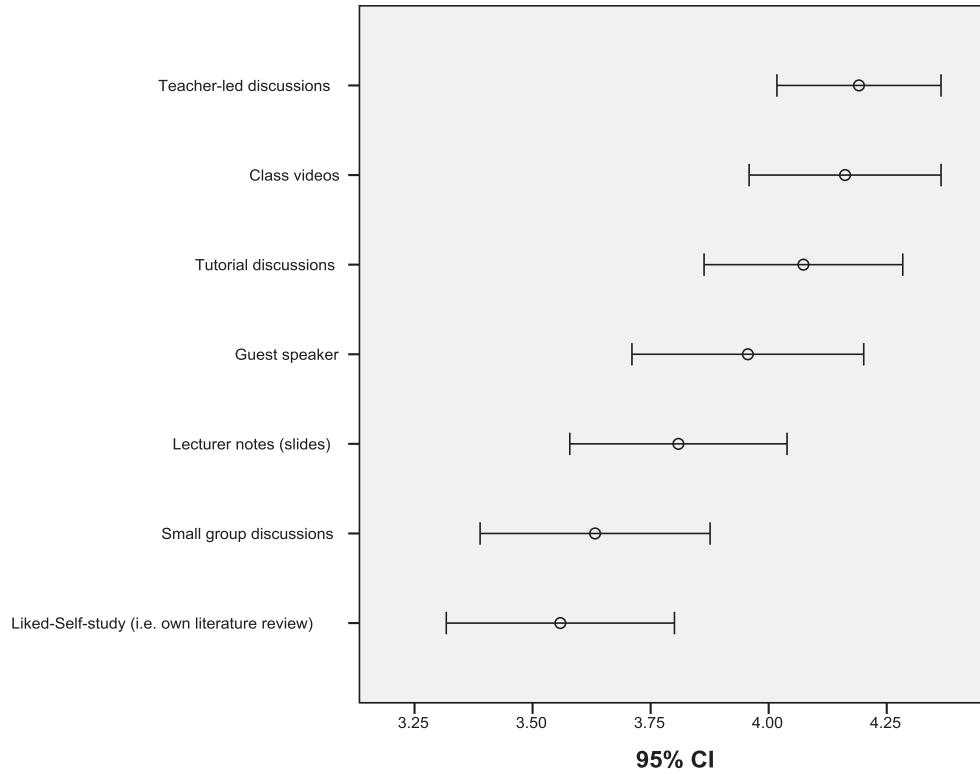
In terms of understanding of marketing theories, students indicated that they found all teaching methods effective ( $p > .05$ ; compared to the mid-point of 3; see Table 5).

Comparing the different methods with each other, the results indicated that students found teacher-led discussion more effective than lecture notes, small group discussions or guest speakers ( $p < .05$ ). They also found tutorial discussion, self-studies, class videos and lecture notes more effective than guest speakers ( $p < .05$ ). Overall, teacher-led discussion clearly received the highest rating, followed by tutorial discussion, self-study, class videos, lecture notes and group discussion (which did not differ significantly from each other). The guest speaker approach received the lowest rating, with significant differences from most of the other teaching ratings (see Fig. 2 for the order of the means for the effectiveness of teaching methods in terms of understanding marketing theories).

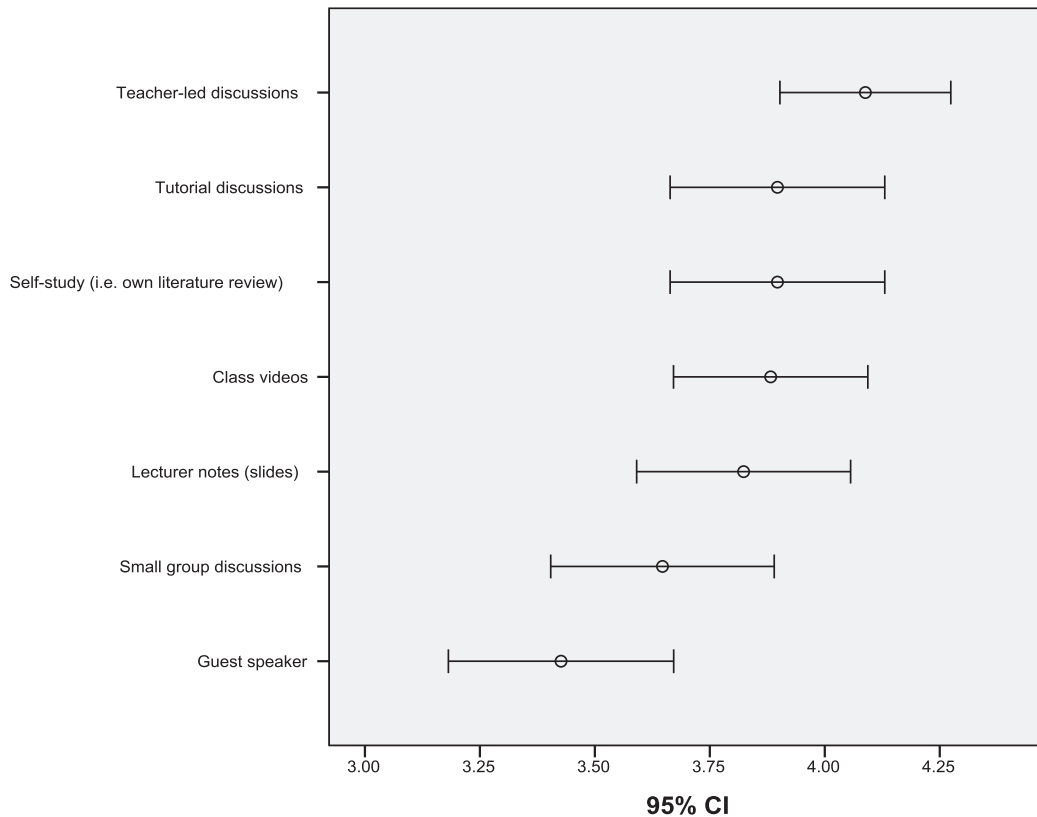
#### Understanding of marketing theory applications

Students found all teaching methods effective in helping them understand marketing theory applications when comparing the means to the midpoint of 3 ( $p > .05$ ) (See Table 6 for details).

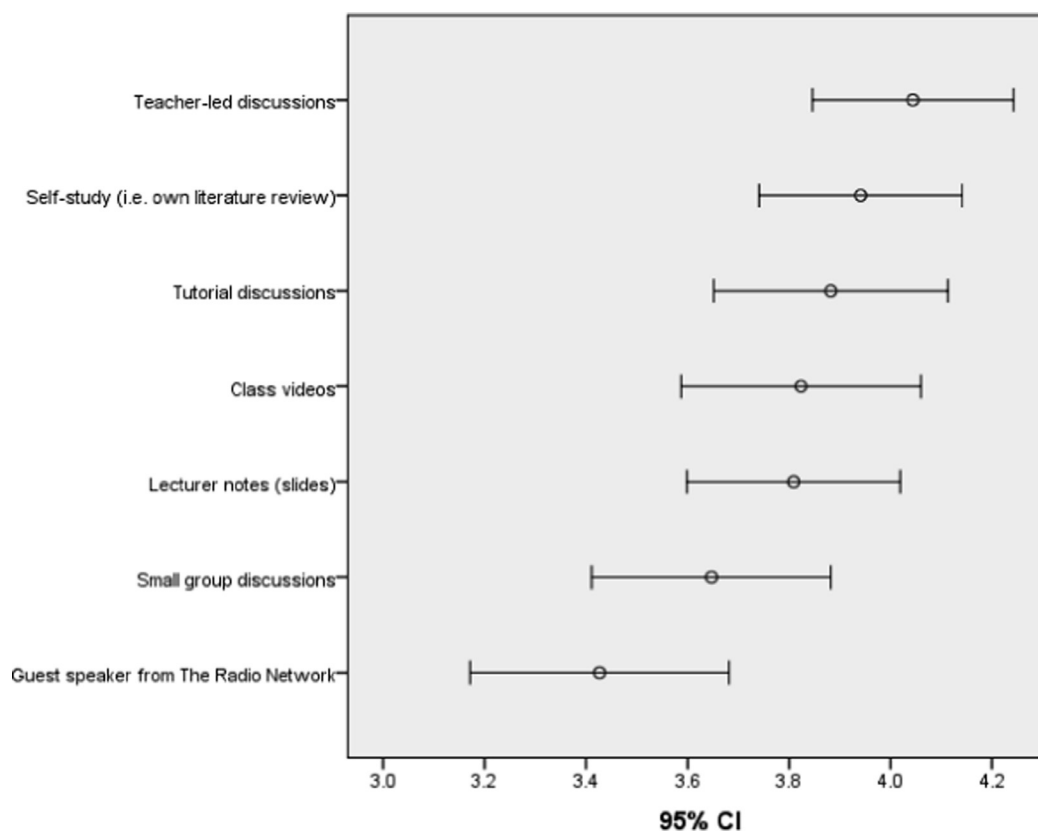




**Fig. 1.** Order of liking of teaching methods  
 Note: Error bar; the upper and lower bounds represent a 95% confidence interval.



**Fig. 2.** Order of effectiveness of teaching methods in terms of understanding of marketing theories  
 Note: Error bar; the upper and lower bounds represent a 95% confidence interval.



**Fig. 3.** Order of effectiveness of teaching methods in terms of understanding of marketing theories applications

Note: Error bar; the upper and lower bounds represent a 95% confidence interval.

Note: When participants with a lower grade (below B-) were removed the order was similar, except the means for Class Videos were slightly lower ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) than Lecture notes (which remained the same)

**Table 6**

Effectiveness of teaching methods in terms of understanding applications of marketing theories.

	N	M	SD	t
Self-study (i.e. own literature review)	68	3.94	.826	9.391***
Teacher-led discussions	68	4.04	.818	10.521***
Tutorial discussions	68	3.88	.955	7.622***
Guest speaker	68	3.43	1.055	3.332**
Small group discussions	68	3.65	.974	5.480***
Lecturer notes (slides)	68	3.81	.868	7.681***
Class videos	68	3.82	.976	6.955***
<b>df</b>	<b>67</b>			

\*\*\*.  $p < .001$ ; \*\*.  $p < .01$ ; \*.  $p < .05$

Note: since students with lower grades showed lower ability to estimate their understanding of applications of marketing theories, we ran the same  $t$ -test excluding students with lower grades. We obtained very similar results. The guest speaker is rated significantly higher (than the mid-point of 3) at the .06 level (with a mean of 3.28) while the other methods are significantly higher (at the .05 level).

However, there were some differences between the techniques with respect to perceived effectiveness in helping students to understand the application of marketing theories. Specifically, students found teacher-led discussion more effective than lecture notes, small group discussion and guest speakers ( $p < .05$ ). They found self-study more effective than small group discussions and guest speakers ( $p < .05$ ). Overall, teacher-led discussion was rated highest, followed by self-study, tutorial discussion, class videos and lecture notes. Students rated small group discussions and guest speakers the lowest in terms of understanding of applications (see Fig. 3 for the order of the means).

#### Comparison of liking, understanding of theories, and applications

In the next step we investigated how the different teaching methods compared in terms of liking, perceived understanding of theory, and perceived understanding of the application of theory (see Fig. 4).

Across all evaluation criteria the *teacher-led discussions* were rated the highest. Also, we could not find a significant difference between the different evaluation criteria ( $p > .05$ ).

In terms of liking, the teaching method *self-study* was rated significantly lower than in the understanding of theories ( $t(67) = -3.018$ ,  $p < .05$ ) or understanding of applications ( $t(67) = -3.330$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, there was no significant difference between 'understanding of theory' and 'understanding of applications' ( $t(67) = -.388$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

*Tutorial discussions* were rated quite similar in terms of understanding the theories and the applications ( $t(67) = .155$ ,  $p > .05$ ). However, this approach was rated significantly higher in terms of liking in comparison to understanding of the theories ( $t(67) = 2.110$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and was rated marginally significantly higher in comparison to the understanding of the applications ( $t(67) = 2.110$ ,  $p = .052$ ).

Interestingly, students rated *guest speakers* significantly higher in terms of liking than in terms of understanding of theories ( $t(67) = 5.216$ ,  $p < .05$ ) or understanding of applications ( $t(67) = 5.330$ ,  $p < .05$ ). They rated the guest speaker similar in terms of understanding the theories and understanding the applications ( $t(67) = 0.000$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Students rated the *small group discussions* very similarly in terms of liking, understanding of the theories and understanding

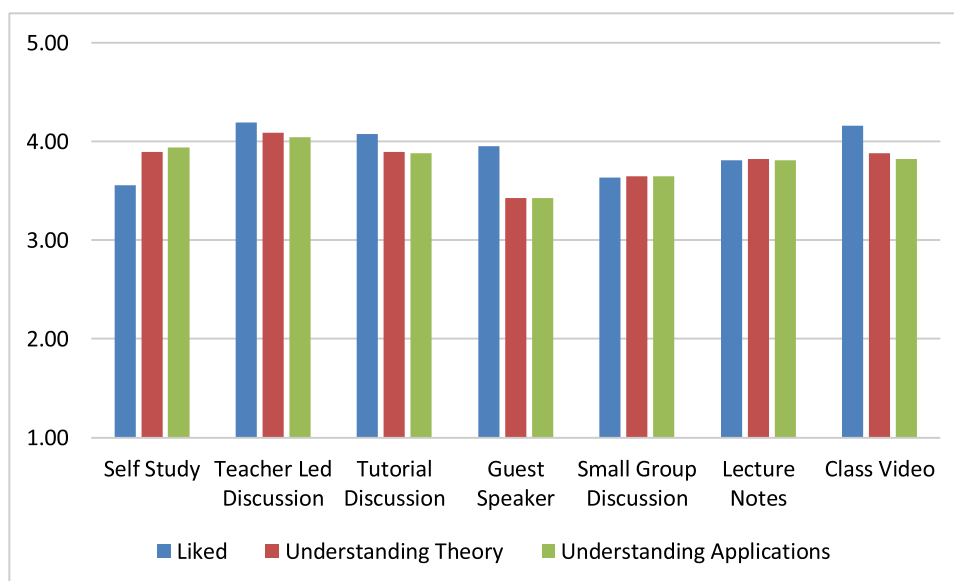


Fig. 4. Mean rating of Liking, Understanding of Theories and Understanding of Applications across teaching methods.

of the applications, with no significant differences between the evaluation criteria ( $p > .1$ )

Further, students did not rate the *lecture notes* differently between the three evaluation criteria, with very similar ratings ( $p > .1$ ).

Students evaluated *class videos* significantly higher in terms of liking compared to understanding of theories ( $t(67)=3.584$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and understanding of applications ( $t(67)=3.556$ ,  $p < .05$ ). There was no significant difference between understanding of theories and applications ( $t(67) = .728$ ,  $p > .1$ ).

*Evaluation of overall teaching strategy: overall liking, understanding of theories and applications*

Lastly, in order to investigate whether the overall teaching strategy was successful, we tested students' overall liking of their learning experience, their overall understanding of the theories, and their overall understanding of how the theory can be applied to the real world. Students scored the class experience above the mid-point of 3 on all three aspects (Mliking = 4.22,  $SD = .67$ ,  $t(67)=15.120$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Mtheory = 3.47,  $SD = .872$ ,  $t(67)=4.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Mapplication = 3.66,  $SD = .822$ ,  $t(67)=6.642$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that the teaching strategy as whole contributed to students liking, understanding of theory and applications.

#### Summary of results

The survey results confirmed that all teaching methods were liked and were rated as effective in terms of understanding the theory and the applications. However, looking more closely at the results, we found some interesting patterns. One interesting observation is that *teacher-led discussion* rated highest across all aspects. Students liked the lecturer and found her valuable in terms of theory and even more importantly, in terms of applications. Further, students did not necessarily like *self-study* (in fact they liked it the least); however, they found it very valuable in terms of understanding theories and applications. *Tutorial discussions* rated relatively high on all three evaluation criteria. However, despite the overall positive evaluation, they were more liked than found effective in terms of understanding marketing theories and applications. Students rated *guest speakers* quite positively in terms of liking; however, they rated guest speakers low in terms

of understanding of marketing theories and applications when comparing guest speakers to other teaching methods and when compared to the liking rating. Interestingly, *small group discussions* seem to be overrated as teaching methods, with relatively low ratings across all the evaluation criteria. Students rated *lecture notes* quite similarly in terms of the three evaluation criteria. *Class videos* were rated relatively high in terms of all evaluation criteria. However, they were rated much higher in terms of liking in comparison to perceived understanding of the marketing theories and applications. In terms of the overall HCD strategy, students rated the overall learning experience positive on all three tested aspects (overall liking, understanding of theory and applications).

#### Study 2

In Study 1 we demonstrated how individual methods in the overall teaching strategy performed. Also, we found initial evidence that the overall developed and proposed strategy was successful (positively rated by students). The goal of Study 2 was to further establish the success of the proposed HCD strategy. In Study 2 we used an objective measure and compared the proposed HCD teaching strategy with traditional teaching as a control.

#### Field experiment

Using a field experiment we compared the proposed teaching strategy with traditional teaching (i.e. a control group). We tested the success of the teaching strategy by adapting an objective measurement. Notably, we compared Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB<sup>2</sup>) scores of the different treatment conditions.

#### Field experiment methodology

Over a course of 4 waves (i.e. 4 academic teaching semesters), the entire cohort of Consumer Behavior students were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. Over the course of two waves, two groups of students received the experimental

<sup>2</sup> ) AACSB is a global accreditor of business programmes (<http://www.aacsb.edu>, 2017)

treatment (i.e., the proposed teaching strategy). The other two groups of students served as a control group (i.e., were taught the traditional way). Across the four waves we kept topics, assessments and lectures constant. Hence, all students learned the same topic from the same lecturer and were assessed using exactly the same assignments. However, two groups we exposed to the proposed HCD teaching strategy, while the other two groups learned the topic using traditional teaching methods (i.e. in-class presentation of concepts, models and frameworks as they appear in the text book in a one-directional, teacher-centred approach, supplemented with question and answer sessions).

In order to measure the effectiveness of the strategy we used the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) learning outcomes, converted to graded rubrics by the curriculum team scores (those relevant to the course's objectives: understanding complex concepts in marketing; ability to apply knowledge in real world situations in the commercial context; use a range of frameworks, critical thinking and analytical; demonstrate specialist knowledge in marketing with the ability to apply theories from the text and provided cases/scenarios) to compare the strategy condition against the control condition. The AACSB scores were more appropriate in measuring the student's abilities, compared to awarded grades, since in alignment with university policies, student grades are moderated and carefully quality controlled. This means that in each individual course offering, grades follow a fairly normal distribution of "A", "B", and "C". In contrast AACSB scores do not follow this distribution, and are more likely to measure student's 'unmoderated' abilities. Since, our study was conducted across four waves (separate courses with separate groups of students), the AACSB scores seemed highly appropriate as measurements. Also, the AACSB ratings are quality controlled, making this an appropriate measurement. For this field experiment, the lecturer scored each student at the end of the course (after being exposed to the experimental condition) on the following four attributes using a 4-point scale (4 = Distinction, 3 = Merit, 2 = Achieved, 1 = Not Achieved): "Commercial Context: Ability to apply knowledge in real world situation"; "Critical thinking: Range of analytical tools and frameworks"; "Communication: Convey information's effectively in written English"; and "Consumer Behavior knowledge and ability to apply in professional communication context". The scores for the four attributes served as measurements for the effectiveness of the teaching strategy.

### Results of study 2

Since two of the student waves were exposed to the treatment condition and two served as control groups, we pooled the two groups within the same condition (there was no significant difference between the two waves for each condition,  $p > .05$ ). To investigate whether the proposed teaching strategy was indeed more successful than the traditional methods of Study 1, we compared the AACSB scores across the two conditions. As expected, students exposed to the experimental condition (teaching strategy) received significantly higher ratings for critical thinking ( $M_{strategy} = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ,  $M_{control} = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ,  $t(174.355) = -3.551$ ,  $p < .05$ ), communication ( $M_{strategy} = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ,  $M_{control} = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ,  $t(159.214) = -2.182$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and commercial context ( $M_{strategy} = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ,  $M_{control} = 3.25$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ,  $t(179.997) = -4.105$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and a marginally significantly higher rating for consumer behaviour knowledge ( $M_{strategy} = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ,  $M_{control} = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ,  $t(165.295) = -1.916$ ,  $p < .06$ ) compared to students who were not exposed to the teaching strategy (see Fig. 5).

Together, the results of this field experiment provide evidence that students exposed to the scaffolded HCD strategy gained

stronger knowledge, requisite critical thinking skills, and an improved ability to communicate their gained KSA, compared to students not exposed to the HCD strategy.

### Key results and conclusion

Lecturers in higher education have always used different teaching methods with the aim of providing the best possible learning platform for their students. In this study we used some of the most commonly applied methods in a real classroom for one topic, allowing us to compare those methods and making this study very relevant to the debate on optimizing teaching processes.

At the end of the teaching task students were asked to evaluate all teaching methods in terms of liking, perceived effectiveness in terms of understanding the theories and perceived effectiveness in terms of understanding the applications. What we found was quite intriguing. Firstly, our results emphasise the importance of the lecturer/professor in the classroom. Not only did students like teacher-lead discussions, they further rated the lecture input as effective in terms of understanding of theories and application of theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios and real-world application of learned theories and models. The results show that a 'theory'-based expert is able to make applications to the real world understandable to students. This is an important observation, since educators and students often consider marketing an applied subject. Second, this study emphasised the importance of self-study, a method not particularly liked by many students. However, as our results confirmed, students still find self-study crucial in terms of understanding theory as well as applications, highlighting the importance of assignments where facilitated self-study is included in the learning programme. Further, despite the call by some scholars to facilitate small group discussions, in line with the work of Tiberius (2013), our results clearly indicated that students did not value this method very highly, with relatively low ratings across all aspects. A final interesting observation is that industry guest speakers did not add as much to the perceived learning of applications as one might expect. Perhaps this was due to the inability of guest speakers to relate the applications back to the taught concepts and theories. We conclude that facilitators who are able to provide learners (either from personal experience or because of their strong links to industry, e.g. as a consultant) with practical examples, and steer dialogue beyond a scripted delivery of information towards interactive, collective dialogues, scaffolded by interactive learning activities, will improve student engagement. This is not only because students enjoy the activities more, but also because these activities aid in understanding complex concepts through discourse, and will improve students' competency in applying the concepts and theoretical models to real-world scenarios.

Further, the results of study 1 and study 2 clearly indicate that the proposed HCD teaching strategy, which uses several combined methods in a carefully considered sequence, achieves a better outcome for students shaping them into work-ready graduates who possess: (i) the ability to understand and apply specialised discipline knowledge, critical thinking competencies, well-honed inter-personal skills to communicate complex ideas effectively in business English, than traditional teaching methods or un-scaffolded learning procedures.

Our final conclusion is that no single method will suffice. Pedagogues and andragogues have to meld traditional and progressive teaching perspectives – as suggested almost two decades ago by expert educational theorists, Mansilla et al. (1997) – in order to achieve the complex learning outcomes demanded by society and to accommodate the various learning styles and levels of prior knowledge of students. Large international classes demand competency development strategies that allow diverse students

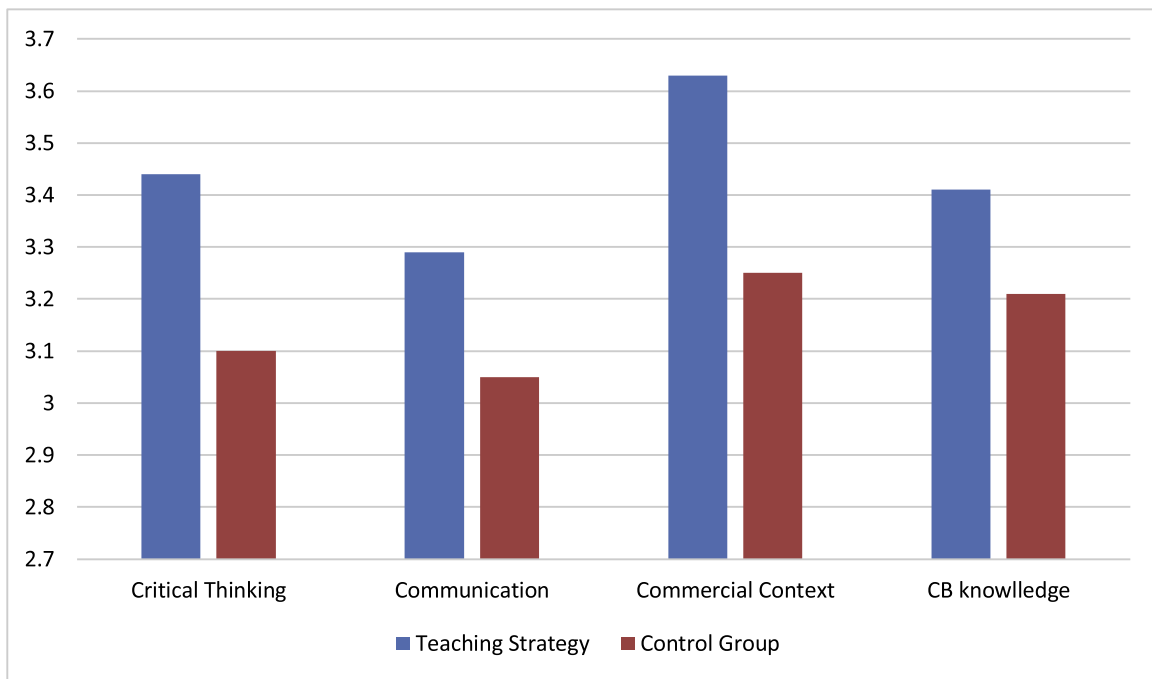


Fig. 5. Mean rating of Critical Thinking, Communication, and Commercial Context

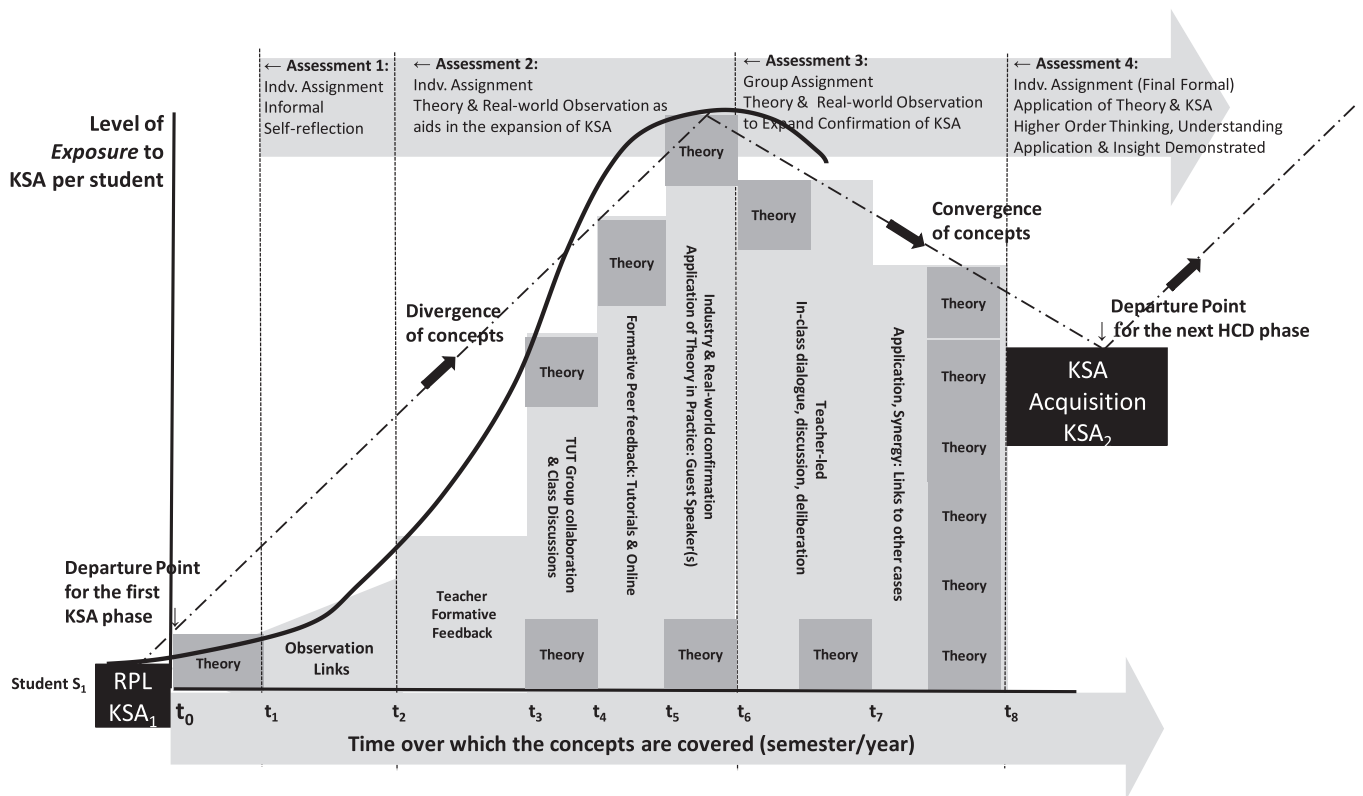


Fig. 6. The S-curve of Competency Adoption  
The Hermeneutic Competency Development (HCD) Strategy

to depart from different levels of prior knowledge; be supported by various types of scaffolding (online, in-person, one-on-one and one-on-many interactions); and exposure to different assessment types to ensure fairness and to allow for various feedback sources. We believe that the various sources provide credibility for the

information (theories, frameworks and models), and importantly demonstrate the value of the KSA in the real workplace, thus motivating students to engage more and invest in competency acquisition.

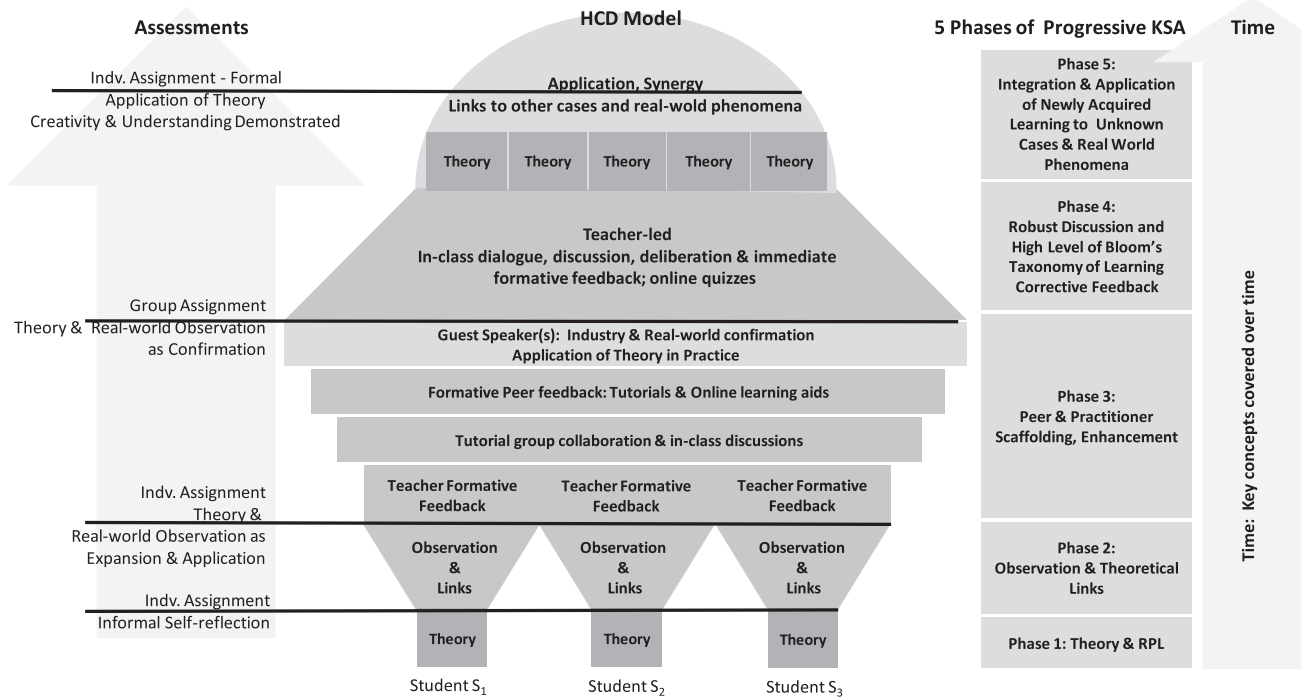


Fig. 7. The Scaffolded Hermeneutic Competency Development Strategy involving Multiple Sources & Teaching Aids

### Future research

This study represents an initial evaluation of student perceptions of various interactive and passive teaching methodologies covering a specific, rather complex marketing concept. However, certain limitations should be recognized. The primary limitation concerns the sample. As stated in the study, the sample was drawn from one small- to mid-sized New Zealand university. Thus, the study's deductions may have limited predictive validity for other types and locations of universities and are limited in the degree to which they may be generalized. To address these limitations, future studies could be expanded to include other types of institutions and other topics within marketing. For example, studies in other universities in dissimilar geographic regions may differ in sub-cultural make-up and attitudes towards self-study, online learning and the involvement of guest speakers.

Although self-report surveys such as those used in Study 1 have become widely used social indicators, this study is based on students' perceptions (self-reported learning/indirect learning outcomes) after having received feedback on their assessment; yet it did not measure direct learning outcomes (for example exam scores, improved group performance or internship achievements) (Bacon, 2011, 2016, Young, 2014, 2016). Hence, future research might measure actual learning outcomes after exposure to different learning methods. Further, student perceptions were measured after exposure to one instructor in the teacher-led discussions (facilitators varied in tutorials and obviously may differ when guest speakers are employed to cover specialist areas). Variations in the way different facilitators use learning activities might limit the generalizability of the results. Future research could expose students to the same teaching methods but use different instructors and guest speakers. Additionally, this study was based on

one specific marketing topic (sensory marketing). The perception of liking and effectiveness of the same teaching methods may differ between topics. Hence, future research could investigate how different teaching methods are received across different marketing topics. Last, the overall goal was to help students to be shaped into work-ready graduates. Part of this objective is to teach them specific inter-personal skills such as oral communication and idea-sharing. This study did not explicitly test for those skill, thus further research might want to explicitly investigate progression or improvement of this vital business competency. Nevertheless, regardless of the limitations, this study provides information that may be valuable to academics and administrators alike as they attempt to assess their future actions regarding student engagement and the merging of different methodologies. Finally, this study tested a specific teaching strategy. Although the proposed HCD strategy is proven to have merit, there may be other teaching strategies that can provide a greater understanding and accommodate more diverse students. Additional strategies should be considered, especially for vastly different learner types (e.g., juniors vs mature senior students; international foreign-culture learners vs national prevalent-culture learners) in future studies.

We refrain from suggesting holistic or indeed any policy conclusions that call for either more or less lecture-style teaching, but we emphasise that regardless of whether teacher-led discussions, guest speakers, or small group discussions are used in the classroom, or whether the classroom is rich in a combination of knowledge-transfer and co-creation learning modes, the teacher will continue to play (at least for the foreseeable future) a significant role in creating a classroom that provides a safe, nurturing environment where students can grapple with complex issues and develop their thinking and communication competencies.

**Appendix A: AACSB Assessment Criteria – Applied to Sensory Marketing in Consumer**

Behavior (2nd and 3rd year course)

Consumer Behavior

Assessment Ai and Aii

1. Commercial Context: 1.2 Ability to apply knowledge in real world situations.

5.1 Convey information effectively in written English

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Application of knowledge	Little evidence of ability to apply knowledge		Some evidence of ability to apply knowledge		Thorough demonstration of ability to apply knowledge
Awareness of the requirements of a real world situation	Does not demonstrate sufficient awareness		Awareness of some of the requirements but needs further development		Clear awareness of the requirements of the real world situation.

4. Critical Thinking: 4.2 Range of analytical tools and frameworks

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Application of logic and thinking tools	Arguments illogical, difficult to follow and/or unsupported		Arguments logical but mere opinion, unsupported and/or difficult to follow		Thorough demonstration of ability to apply logical thinking and support arguments with authoritative sources and/or theories.
Frameworks identified	Does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of the relevant tools and frameworks		Awareness of some of the requirements but needs further development		Clear awareness of the requirements of the real world situation.

5. Communication 5.1 Convey information effectively in written English

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Context & purpose	Does not focus the writing on the context or purpose		Awareness of context, audience, purpose & task		Thorough demonstration of context, audience, purpose & task
Content	Content not relevant		Content relevant to audience		Appropriate, relevant and compelling content to illustrate ability
Language	Poor use of language; mechanical errors		Straightforward use of language that generally conveys meaning		Uses professional language skillfully and communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency

7.1 Specialist knowledge in Marketing

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Theories, models and frameworks from the text	Little evidence of ability to apply theories and concepts from the text to the provided case/scenario		Some evidence of the ability to apply theories and concepts from the text to the provided case/scenario		Thorough demonstration of ability to apply theories and concepts from the text to the provided case/scenario
Alternative, Authoritative sources – not the text book	Little or no evidence of willingness to find alternative sources to support assertions, arguments and ideas.		Some evidence of willingness to find alternative sources to support assertions, arguments and ideas OR sources not credible.		Thorough demonstration of willingness to find a range of authoritative alternative sources to support assertions, arguments and ideas.

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