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Abstract:

I propose to develop a assignment for my Business Math 130 students that will encourage them to think about the topic of waste generation, both in terms of waste generated by business activities, and from a personal perspective as well The Big Idea I am focusing on is “Considering Waste”. Related Big Ideas\* include “Cradle to Cradle Design, “Consumption and Consumerism”, and “True Cost Accounting”.

\*Sustainability “Big Ideas” co-created by Jean MacGregor and Victor Nolet.

Introduction and Overview:

Going forward, businesses and individuals alike will need to become keenly aware of what kind, and what quantity of garbage/waste is produced as a result of business activities. Once awareness has been gained, an analysis of the process that generates waste can be undertaken to begin reducing and/or mitigating the garbage produced.

As a course exercise, students could research a business, or business industry to determine what kind of waste, and how much waste is generated. Other questions to consider include: What is the ultimate destination for waste generated by business activities? Can the waste amount be reduced, and how?

From a personal perspective, students can consider their own purchasing, consumption, and disposal habits, and research ways to reduce the quantity and type of waste by changing those habits.

Learning activity:

My Business Math 130 online course is broken into units (4). I propose to use one unit’s discussion assignments to consider the “Big Idea” of waste generation. I propose a two-part exercise, as follows:

Unit 1-1: Choose a business type with which you (the student) are familiar, such as your local espresso stand, and break down the business activities to see where waste/garbage are generated. Waste does not have to be in terms of what goes into a garbage can only, but could also include waste of resources, such as wasting water.

Next, consider what changes could be made to reduce the waste/garbage generated, and what benefits, or cost savings from such reductions could be realized.

Unit 1-2: Consider your personal habits (such as purchasing and consumption habits), and how they may be having a negative impact on the environment. Can you see how your behavior might be promoting unsustainable business practices? What changes can you make to reduce the amount of garbage and/or waste that you produce?

These activities would be based on research and discussion within the course discussion forums. The discussion criteria could be to research and post an analysis of the student’s chosen business type, (if from Unit 1-1), and to respond thoughtfully to at least one classmate’s post. Having already used a similar activity in an online course, I feel confident that the discussion will be substantial and spirited.

Assessment:

Assessment of this exercise would be based on participation and substantive and engaged participation, with an emphasis on analysis and self-assessment.