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ABSTRACT

The prominence of experiential learning or service learning continues to grow in higher education. A 1999-2000 survey found that of 324 universities and colleges across the United States, 82% offer over 7,000 undergraduate level courses and over 700 graduate level courses in experiential or service learning. This paper considers the role of student motivation in service learning through a case study method. The author of the paper worked with several different classes designed as experiential learning experiences--the classes were designed using D.A. Kolb's learning style elements feel (concrete experience), watch (reflective observation), think (abstract conceptualization), and do (active experimentation) and the service learning principles of community, reflection, and academics. According to the paper, the first class contained 10 students who, in teams of two, interviewed city residents and took photographs of their property involved in the 1997 "Flood of the Century" in North Dakota; the second class consisted of 17 students who, in teams of two, designed a brochure for a name brand company with local representation and, as another assignment, designed a web site; the last class consisted of 18 students who conducted an interpersonal communication research project and prepared their findings for an academic conference panel presentation. The paper finds that observation from these four case studies suggests student motivation in experiential situations is complex and cannot be considered in isolation. Includes 2 tables. Contains 14 references. (NKA)

From River Rambles to Museum Meanderings: Student Motivation and Service Learning.

by Denise Elmer

National Communication Association, November 24, 2002, New Orleans
Communication in Action—Students in Action: Experiments in Experiential Learning (Panel)

"From River Rambles to Museum Meanderings: Student Motivation and Service Learning"

By Denise Elmer, Angelo State University

Tell me, and I will forget;
Show me, and I may remember;
Involve me and I will understand... —AEE

As the motto of the Association for Experiential Education (2002) suggests, experiential education, or service learning, is (1) "a process (2) through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences," includes (3) "reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis," as well as, (4) initiative, decision making, and accountability.

The prominence of experiential learning continues to grow in higher education. According to a 1999-2000 survey found in the *Higher Education Service Learning Source Book* (Crews, 2002) of 324 major universities and colleges across the United States, 82% offer over 7,000 undergraduate level courses and over 700 graduate level courses in experiential or service learning. However, Wutzdorff & Giles (1997) remind us that such learning is a philosophy, as well as, a method for teaching and that there is no normative model.

The purpose of today's discussion is to consider the role of student motivation in service learning through a case study method.

Case Study

I have had the opportunity to work with four different classes designed as experiential learning experiences (Table 1, Col. C). The classes were designed using Kolb's learning style elements feel (concrete experience), watch (reflective observation), think (abstract conceptualization), & do (active experimentation; Table 1, Col. D) and the service learning

principles of community, reflection, and academics (Table 1, Col. B; Moorman & Arello-Unruh, 2002).

In one class, I was a graduate student administrator and the other three the instructor. The first class was small; 10 students who, in teams of two, were asked to interview city residents and take photographs of their property that had been involved in the 1997 "Flood of the Century" in North Dakota. The second class consisted of 17[1] students who, in teams of two, designed a brochure for a name brand company with local representation. Their other assignment, again in teams of two, was to design a web site for a local county history museum. The last class consisted of 18 students who conducted an interpersonal communication (image) research project and prepared their findings for an academic conference panel presentation.

Of the 10 students, 1 participated fully and completed project steps in a timely manner; another 2 participated and completed required assignments, albeit late. This is about 30% of the total. Of the 17 students, 7 or 41% met "A" grade criteria for the brochure and 4 or 24% met "A" grade criteria for completing the web page design. Of the 18 students, 9 or 50% met "A" grade criteria for participating in the research project (Table 2).

These findings are similar to what Shecklye & Keeton (1997) describe as the "conduit/accordion effect" in a service-learning project. Shecklye & Keeton maintain that about 60% of adult learners confirm their prior knowledge when participating in an experiential learning project and little learning takes place, however, 40% of adult learners disconfirm their prior learning and begin to rethink or transform their views or learn additional knowledge. This latter view is consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. That is education occurs as the learner transforms—in any order—symbols, concepts, intuition, and active testing into

[1] Student count excludes students who dropped or withdrew from the class.

knowledge. Burns & Gentry (1998) describe this as the "a-ha phenomenon." That is the learner sees the connection between the act and the idea.

Motivation

However, even though these percentages fall close to theoretical explainable ranges, I was troubled that despite a class being designed to accommodate students demand 'to do' instead of 'just sit,' i.e. lecture or the traditional learning mode, there was, by my standards, modest motivation displayed 'to do.' Thus, my quest to understand what might motivate a student to take advantage of the experiential process.

McKeachie (2002; Table 1, Col. A) describes extrinsic motivators as those related to the grade and the ability to control the criteria that results in that grade. He records the ability to choose, curiosity, flexible schedules, future-career related tasks, and socialization with peers as intrinsic motivators. McKeachie's descriptions corroborate Chickering's (1976; Table 1, Col. F) reasoning that motivation for learning is attributable to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators as he explores how "motives for learning, learning styles, and orientations toward knowledge are linked to levels of ego development, and intellectual development" (p. 89). Thus, these four projects provided a high level of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: choices on tasks, flexible schedules, socialization with peers, social acceptance, and competition. When I asked the students who were most actively involved in the projects what they "liked" about the assignment, they added the career related aspect and curiosity.

Burns & Gentry (1998) hypothesize in their tension-to-learn theory that curiosity is the primary intrinsic factor that motivates students to learn in experimental situations. In their opinion, curiosity is a powerful motivator because the student "values" the result of curiosity, i.e. "new learning." Furthermore, they maintain that curiosity is related to a student's view of their

self-worth. However, they do not discount extrinsic motivators such as voluntary participation for grades. Instead, they classify extrinsic motivators as a weaker type of motivation because they are less related to self-determination. This theory reinforces Chickering's (1976; Table 1, Col. F) position that motivation is related to the level of moral, ethical, intellectual and interpersonal style of the student's personality, or in other words maturity and immaturity.

Using Hershey & Blanchrd's 1972 Immaturity-Maturity Continuum, Chickering (1976) describes immaturity as: dependence, behave in few ways, erratic shallow interests, short time perspective, and lack of self-awareness. Maturity is described as the opposite: independence, capable of behaving in many ways, deeper interests, past & future perspective, and control over self (p. 82). Chickering further maintains that experiential learning influences "interpersonal competence" through the mechanisms of "observation, reading, discussion, reflection, and self-observation" (p. 83). As a result learning transformation permits students to "unlearn old behaviors and devise...new ones" (p. 83).

Grow (1991/1996; Table 1, Col. E)[2] too believes that learners can be educated to become more self-sufficient. His on-line article *Teaching Learners to Be Self-Directed* describes each type of student learner (Dependent, Interested, Involved, and Self-directed) that can appear as the student moves through the experiential learning process. However, I think all of us have experienced the dependent learners questions of 'how do I do this' even as the assignment is entering a reflective stage that clearly indicates an understanding of and the ability to "mange one's own destiny." Grow cautions that being self-directed is situational, that is a student may be a dependent learner in one situation but not the next.

[2] Many thanks to Dr. Grow for his permission to use his cartoons in this presentation.

Results

While the level of confirmation/disconfirmation varied between the individual service learning projects, the types of motivation and learner were consistent (Table 2). Students who seemed to acquire less new knowledge during these projects were more motivated by extrinsic then intrinsic motivators. Their learning types varied between needing explicit directions on what, when and how (Dependent learner) to beginning levels of critical thinking (Involved learners). Their primary motivators appeared to be competition between dyads and socialization with their dyad partner. Based on in class observations these students were less mature then the disconfirmed group. This immaturity was observed through the following behaviors: assignments lacked depth and clear understanding of topic principles, assignments were often late or not handed in at all, minimal class participation, and a general lack of awareness that these behaviors would result in grade disappointment. Confirmed learners tended to place moderate concentration on the service learning principles of academic and minimal concentration on community and reflection.

Students who seemed to acquire the most new knowledge were more motivated by intrinsic then extrinsic motivators, but both were present. Their learning types began at Dependent and progressed to Self-directed, that is by the time they reached the next-to-last-step of the projects requirements (transcribe tapes, slide show design, brochure design, web page design, panel presentation) they were beginning to set their own goals without help from the instructor. Their primary extrinsic motivators were competence in standards and recognition; primary intrinsic motivators were control and curiosity. Based on in class observations these students were more mature then the confirmed group. This maturity was observed through the following behaviors: assignments meeting or exceeding topic principles, assignments completed

by due dates, moderate class participation, and an awareness of what behaviors were needed to meet class objectives. Disconfirmed learners tended to balance their application of the service learning principles of academic, community, and reflection, using the principles in combination to further their completion goals on the project.

Discussion

An observation from these four case studies suggests student motivation in experiential situations is complex and cannot be considered in isolation. Further observations:

1. Classes designed with Kolb's experiential learning theory and the service learning parameters of academics, community, and reflection encouraged students to transform their prior learning into new knowledge.
2. Students motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were more likely to be inspired to transform experiences.
3. Student level of maturity influenced both motivation and transformation of knowledge.
4. Students appeared to be particularly motivated by competition, recognition, and socialization.

Excitingly, these results suggest there are communication principles within the context of experiential learning and student motivation that warrant future exploration. There seems to be both *intra-* and *inter*-personal communication implications found in motivation, with a higher degree of *intra*personal associated with intrinsic motivation and *inter*personal associated with extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation includes the ability to develop a deeper understanding of the self and ability to manage one's own destiny (Chickering, 1976), as well as the needs of belonging, choice, and control (McKeachie, 2002). This characterization is similar to Roberts, Edwards, &

Barkers' (1987) explanation of *intra*personal communication, which is: [*intra*personal communication is] a cognitive control process that involves the ability to think into the future, to place value on a choice, to like or dislike a choice, to comprehend the relationship(s) between cause and effect, and to control the choice made. *Intra*personal communication centers around self-concept or the positive and negative views one has of one's physical, psychological, and social self or to put it simply, self-esteem.

Mariani (1999) has designed an *intra*personal survey for in class use that considers to what a student attributes their motivation. The survey measures to what degree a student attributes her/his learning success based on her/his aptitude to control effort, ability, fate, and context (internal or external cause, internal or external control). Mariani describes how this attribution takes place in an online article entitled *Reshaping the Curriculum: The Role of Motivation*:

> ...We can say that how people perceive the cause of their performance is more important than the actual cause as described by an external observer. In other words, I may well tell you that I am sure your good results are due to your efforts and skill, but if you believe the opposite, that is, that you have done well because you were lucky, or because the task was very easy, then no matter what I say, you will continue to think, and, most importantly, to behave according to your belief.

This self-fulfilling prophecy invites exploration of experiential learning and student motivation through the *inter*personal lens of identity management. People often manage impressions of themselves "to accomplish personal goals" such as "affiliation, control, respect, and immediacy" (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Procter, 2001, p. 85).

Conclusion

The motto of the Association for Experiential Education implies action results in knowledge. Yet, it is clear from these case study observations that motivation and level of maturity are influential as well. Perhaps a more fitting motto would be:

The capacity to learn is a gift;
The ability to learn is a skill;
The willingness to learn is a choice.
—*Dune* (Herbert & Anderson, 2000)

Table 1.

Col A Motivation (McKeachie, 2002)	Col B Service Learning Principles (Moorman & Arellano-Unrnh, 2002)	Col C River Research Business Brochure Museum Web Page Image Research	Col D Kolb Learning Style (Kolb, 1984)	Col E Self-Directed Learners (Grow, 1991/1996)	Col F Motivation (Chickering, 1976)
Extrinsic - Control/criterion based grade *Intrinsic* -Curiosity	Academics (Topic knowledge)	Defined assignments	Watch/Think	Stage 1 Dependent	*Intrinsic* Satisfy immediate needs
Intrinsic -Choices/topic, tasks -Control/criterion grade -Curiosity	Academics	Mini-lectures Defined expectations Lectures/Rubrics	Watch/Think	Stage 1 Dependent Stage 2 Interested	*Intrinsic* Satisfy immediate needs; *Extrinsic* Impress others, social acceptance, credentials, recognition
Intrinsic -Choices/topic, tasks -Curiosity	Academics	Readings -Clippings -Text book -Journal articles	Watch/Think/Feel	Stage 1 Dependent Stage 2 Interested	*Extrinsic* Impress others, etc.
Intrinsic -Belong -Control/flex schedule -Curiosity	Community (Learn to serve)	Interviews (Required & optional)	Watch/Think/Feel/Do	Stage 1 Dependent Stage 2 Interested Stage 3 Involved	*Extrinsic* Achieve competence in competitive or normative standards
Intrinsic -Belong	Reflection (Serve to learn)	Dyads Small group	Watch/Think/Feel/Do	Stage 3 Involved	*Extrinsic* Achieve competence etc.
Intrinsic -Belong	Reflection	Discussion: dyad, small group, & class	Watch/Think/Feel/Do	Stage 3 Involved	*Extrinsic* Achieve competence etc.
Intrinsic -Control/career related	Academics	Photography Digital/Clip art Digital photography	Watch/Think/Feel/Do	Stage 3 Involved Stage 4 Self-directed	*Extrinsic* Achieve competence etc.
Intrinsic -Control/career related -Choices/topic, tasks -Control/criterion grade -Control/flex schedule	Academics & Community	Transcribe tapes Slide show design Brochure design Web Page design Panel presentation	Watch/Think/Feel/Do	Stage 3 Involved Stage 4 Self-directed	*Extrinsic* Achieve competence etc.; *Intrinsic* Deeper understanding of self & ability to manage own destiny
Extrinsic & *Intrinsic* -Control/criterion grade	Reflection	Journal Exam Reflection essay	Watch/Think/Feel/Do	Stage 3 Involved Stage 4 Self-directed	*Extrinsic* credentials & recognition *Intrinsic* Deeper understanding etc.

The intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, service-learning principles, learning style and stage associated with each step of the experiential learning class design.

Table 2.

Experiential Class Size	Confirmed (Std = 60%)	Motivation Learner type	Disconfirmed (Std = 40%)	Motivation Learner type
River research N = 10	70%	**Extrinsic** -Achieve competence in competitive standards -Impress others, social acceptance, recognition	30%	**Extrinsic** -Achieve competence in competitive or normative standards -Credentials, recognition
Brochure N = 17	59%		41%	
Web page N = 17	76%	**Intrinsic** -Belong	24%	**Intrinsic** -Belong -Choices/topic, tasks -Control/criterion grade -Control/career related -Curiosity -Deeper understanding of self & ability to manage own destiny
Image research N = 18	50%		50%	
		Stage 1 Dependent Stage 2 Interested Stage 3 Involved		Stage 1 Dependent Stage 2 Interested Stage 3 Involved Stage 4 Self-directed

Motivation and learner type associated with each classes' disconfirmed and confirmed group.

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