

Teaching Principles of Management through Experiential and Service Learning

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Abstract

Management faculties often use cases, simulations, and research projects to achieve learning objectives in the Principles of Management class. This class typically aims to introduce students to the topics of “planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, directing, budgeting, controlling, and evaluating functions of management; leadership roles and styles, and the human aspects of management” (Furutan, 2012). This paper describes a unique approach to teaching the above topics through an experiential and service learning project. Student teams select small local businesses with which to work during the semester and learn their weekly topics through interviews and observations of their selected businesses. This paper describes the class in detail and discusses some of the challenges with experiential and service learning projects.

Keywords: Experiential learning, service learning, principles of management, student teams, management faculties, cases, simulations.

Introduction

Most business schools prepare their students for the job market through traditional undergraduate business programs. They give very little attention leadership and management capacities outlined by AACSB. For many years the business communities have been criticizing business schools for not preparing students for leadership positions (Ready, Vicere, & White, 1993; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009). Competencies such as interpersonal, leadership and communications skills were the “least effective components of business curricula” (Management Education Task Force, 2002, p. 19). To respond to such criticisms business schools are attempting to shift from traditional cognitive-based learning to skill-based learning. (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2010). As such, in management education, experiential approaches to learning have become increasingly popular over the last few decades (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Dixon, 1994; Frontczak, & Kelly, 2000; Reynolds, 1999). Business schools are using experiential learning as an effective approach to shift from knowing to doing (Gardner, 1990; Kolb, 1984; Malick & Stumpf, 1998).

Experiential learning is described as “purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values” (Association for Experiential Education, 2010). In this pedagogical approach “the learner participates in an authentic activity to gain personal meaning” (Hoban, 1999, p. 104).

Despite of business schools attempts to develop and include experiential learning experiences for their students, there is very little relevant experiential learning in most undergraduate and graduate business programs (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). A number of researchers have found that faculty are resistant in developing an experiential learning component in their courses (Morton and Troppe, 1996). They view courses with experiential learning components harder and take more time to manage than do traditional courses.

An Application of Experiential Learning

The Principles of Management course introduces students “to planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, directing, budgeting, controlling, and evaluating functions of management; leadership roles and styles, and development of individual and group effectiveness; managing conflict and change; and the human aspects of management” (Furutan, 2012). Historically, instructors approach teaching these learning objectives through various pedagogical methods: lectures, in-class discussions, case studies, computer simulations, and class projects.

In 2009 I was encouraged by my Dean at the University of La Verne to expand our course offerings by creating an experientially based Principles of Management course. I was highly motivated to develop such course after having studied a number of published papers concluding that experiential learning appears to support achievement of management learning objectives more than traditional courses. My intentions were to develop a course that provides experience in preparing a strategic analysis for a community business or organization. My hope was to develop a course that would have the students be engaged in both experiential learning as well as service learning. I wanted to provide a dynamic, on-hands learning environment where groups of students visit businesses once a week for an entire semester. Teams of four students must find and select a small local business to survey and audit as they move through their weekly lecture

topics. At the end of the term teams present their audit of each business and provide recommendations to the owners of the businesses. This format would require students to conduct secondary and primary research to justify their recommendations.

Course Overview

A maximum of 24 students at the University of La Verne enroll in MGMT 300 course (Principles of Management). In the La Verne’s course catalog this course is described as “*Functions of organization and administration; how management selects objectives, plans, organizes essential activities, and influences employees*”. The course meets for two 90 minutes sessions per week over a 15-week semester covering 12 management topics. Table 1 presents a representative list of the management topics that is covered over the course of the semester.

Table 1. Sample weekly schedule

Week	Topic
1	Introduction to the course
2	Organizational Environment
3	Planning and Decision Making
4	Designing Adaptive Organizations
5	Control
6	Ethics and Social Responsibility
7	Organizational Culture
8	Managing Human Resource Systems
9	Motivation
10	Innovation and Change
11	Leadership
12	SWOT
13	Organizational Strategy
14	Presentations
15	Presentations

Teams consisting of four students are formed at the beginning of the semester. Kolb’s learning styles model is used to form the groups (Appendix A). At the beginning of the term students take Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory survey and are put into groups based on which four groups of learning style; Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and Accommodating, they fall under. The main challenge in forming the groups using this system is that a class of 24 is rarely divided equally in each of the four classifications. More often than not there will be more students in one of the learning styles than others. To solve this problem the Cycle of Learning score sheet (Appendix B) is used to identify the learning styles of the students. This will allow identifying students’ learning style and tendencies to other styles. So, if a student is converging with

tendencies toward assimilating, there is a choice of using this student as assimilating in case there are too many converging. Once the groups are formed they will sit at tables of four for the rest of the semester.

During the first week of the semester, once the teams are formed, the groups meet and brainstorm on possible small to medium size businesses in the Inland Empire, Southern California, where the University of La Verne is located. There are only three requirements for a business to qualify for the project.

1. The business must have more than four employees.
2. The owner/manager of the business must be able to meet with the students once a week and allow students to have access to the business and be able to talk to the employees.
3. The owner/manager agrees to attend the reception at the end of the term where students present their analysis and recommendations.

By the end of the first week of the semester a viable list of businesses is compiled and by the first session of week two a business is identified that meets the above mentioned three criteria. Starting from week two, the first session of each week is dedicated to class lectures on a specific management topic. During that same week, students meet with their businesses exploring the management topic of the week. The students are encouraged to not only speak to the owner/manager, but to explore the management issue by observing customers and speaking to employees. As such, the students are exposed to multiple perspectives in their chosen businesses while investigating the application of the management topic of the week. The students then prepare a presentation to be presented in the class on the second session of the following week. Thus the lectures always precede the presentations by a single week. At the time of the presentation the groups must also turn in a minimum of two pages report.

For example, during the fall semester of 2013 I taught this course on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 15 weeks. The management topic for week two was Organizational Environment. On Tuesday of week two I lectured on Organizational Environment. The student groups organized a meeting with their chosen organizations during week two to investigate the topic of Organizational Environment in their businesses from multiple perspectives. On Thursday of week three the groups present their findings to the class. As such, the lectures always preceded the presentations by nine days.

During the term, three dates are secured where all of the groups and I will visit all of the businesses. Ideally, this is done half way into the semester, when all of the groups have some familiarity with the other groups' businesses. Part of the class sessions following these visits are spent on groups giving feedback to each other. Although managing this activity is challenging, it is well worth the results.

Final presentations are organized during the 14th and the 15th week of the semester. I have worked with the Dean of our college to secure a small budget for the final presentations. One of

the small ball rooms at the university is reserved and refreshments are served. The Dean, the Associate Deans, and the faculty of the College of Business and Public Management are invited to attend the presentations. The owners/managers of the businesses are officially invited to the presentations. A maximum of two presentations are organized for each session. The groups are given a maximum of 45 minutes to present their projects. It is recommended that they limit their presentations to 35 minutes and leave 10 minutes for questions and comments. At the end of the presentations an official report is resented to the owner/manager of the business.

Evaluation Method

This project accounts for 70% of the students' total grade. This 70% is divided into four parts; the weekly group presentations, the final group presentation, the final group paper, and an individual reflection paper. The other 30% of their total grade account for open book weekly quizzes that are taken online.

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Weekly group presentations (13 @ 2% each)	26
Team Project Final Presentation	10
Team Project Final Paper	30
Self-Reflective Essay	4
TOTAL	70

Appendix C is the rubric that I use for grading the team project final paper and Appendix D is the rubric that I use for grading the team project final presentation.

The self-reflective essay is a brief paper where students describe experiences, throughout the semester, connected to their project and how it has changed them or helped them to grow. Their self-reflective essay has three parts, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Appendix E is my instructions and guidelines for each of the three sections.

Summary and Conclusion

The Principles of Management is an important course that aims to introduce students to the topics of “planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, directing, budgeting, controlling, and evaluating functions of management; leadership roles and styles, and the human aspects of management”. Management instructors typically use lecture, readings, case analysis, and simulations to achieve these goals. This paper describes an experiential and service learning format that engages the students in direct experience and focused reflection. Student, in groups, audit a single business throughout the semester in twelve management topics.

Student comments indicate that this format is a very effective form of learning. Not only they learn directly from their chosen businesses, but they also learn from each other as they investigate the same management topic together through a common experience. One student wrote at the end of the class: “I was finally able to learn through an actual experience rather than through a book. Though this course

required more out of the class work, I can honestly say I truly learned.” Conversely, it is sometimes hard for students to dedicate enough outside of the classroom time to truly benefit from the experience. Very rarely I have groups that try to short cut by sending only one group member to the weekly business meetings and rotate throughout the semester. I highly discourage this practice since it robs the other members from truly experiencing the learning process on many of the management topics.

This format creates an exciting environment for the instructor because the projects are always new. It is very rewarding and satisfying to be a learning facilitator and coach to the groups. While it is challenging to find organizations that are willing to participate, these contacts can lead to speaking and consulting engagements or future collaborative research, both for the students as well as the instructor. The teaching evaluations for this class range from 4.6 to 4.8 on a 5 point scale, even from the first running, and many students wrote unsolicited emails about the class value. This is gratifying for any instructor. From one student: “Your class was by far the most beneficial class so far in my college career. Don’t get me wrong it was a lot of work, but all well worth it.”

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Appendix A

LEARNING-STYLE INVENTORY

The Learning-Style Inventory describes the way you learn and how you deal with ideas and day-to-day situations in your life. Below are 12 sentences with a choice of endings. Rank the endings for each sentence according to how well you think each one fits with how you would go about learning something. Try to recall some recent situations where you had to learn something new, perhaps in your job or at school. Then, using the spaces provided, rank a "4" for the sentence ending that describes how you learn best, down to a "1" for the sentence ending that seems least like the way you learn. Be sure to rank all the endings for each sentence unit. Please do not make ties.

Example of completed sentence set:

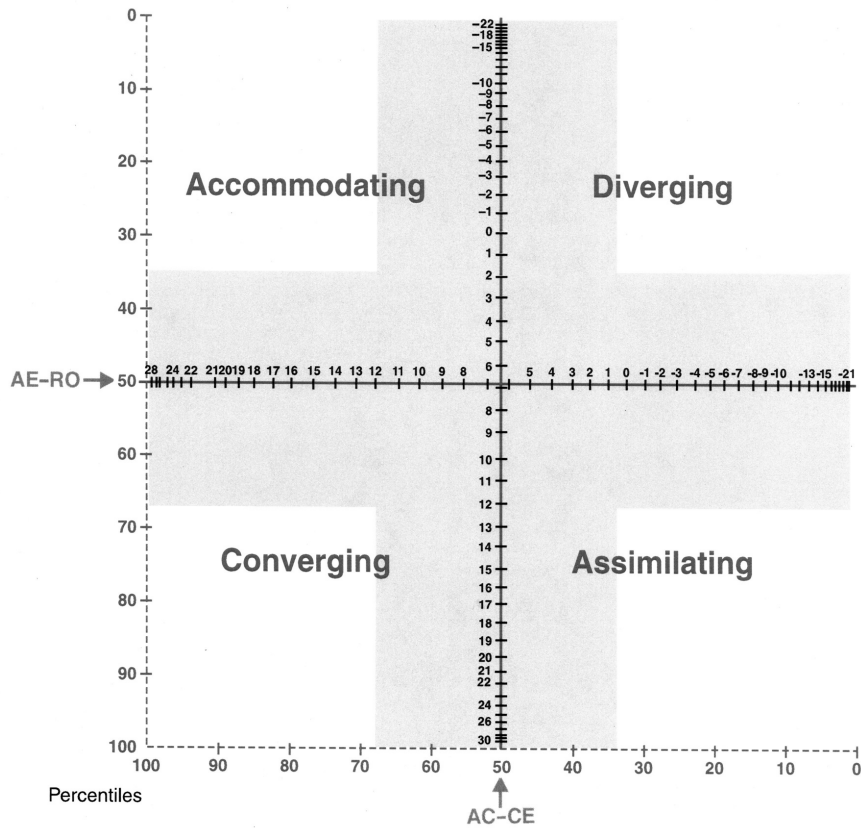
1. When I learn: 2 I am happy. 1 I am fast. 3 I am logical. 4 I am careful.

Remember: 4 = most like you 3 = second most like you 2 = third most like you 1 = least like you

	A	B	C	D
1. When I learn:	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to deal with my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to think about ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to be doing things.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to watch and listen.
2. I learn best when:	<input type="checkbox"/> I listen and watch carefully.	<input type="checkbox"/> I rely on logical thinking.	<input type="checkbox"/> I trust my hunches and feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/> I work hard to get things done.
3. When I am learning:	<input type="checkbox"/> I tend to reason things out.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am responsible about things.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am quiet and reserved.	<input type="checkbox"/> I have strong feelings and reactions.
4. I learn by:	<input type="checkbox"/> feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/> doing.	<input type="checkbox"/> watching.	<input type="checkbox"/> thinking.
5. When I learn:	<input type="checkbox"/> I am open to new experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/> I look at all sides of issues.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to analyze things, break them down into their parts.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to try things out.
6. When I am learning:	<input type="checkbox"/> I am an observing person.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am an active person.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am an intuitive person.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am a logical person.
7. I learn best from:	<input type="checkbox"/> observation.	<input type="checkbox"/> personal relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/> rational theories.	<input type="checkbox"/> a chance to try out and practice.
8. When I learn:	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to see results from my work.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like ideas and theories.	<input type="checkbox"/> I take my time before acting.	<input type="checkbox"/> I feel personally involved in things.
9. I learn best when:	<input type="checkbox"/> I rely on my observations.	<input type="checkbox"/> I rely on my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/> I can try things out for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/> I rely on my ideas.
10. When I am learning:	<input type="checkbox"/> I am a reserved person.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am an accepting person.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am a responsible person.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am a rational person.
11. When I learn:	<input type="checkbox"/> I get involved.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to observe.	<input type="checkbox"/> I evaluate things.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like to be active.
12. I learn best when:	<input type="checkbox"/> I analyze ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am receptive and open-minded.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am careful.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am practical.

Appendix B

LEARNING-STYLE TYPE GRID (version 3.1)



Appendix C

Evaluation Rubric: Team Project Paper

Content	Description	Possible Points	Actual Points
Organizational Context	Include the history, organizational image, size, locations of operation, type of products, and/or services offered.	8	
Environment in which the Organization Operates	Task Environment: customers, suppliers, competitors, regulatory group General Environment: economic, social/cultural, political, legal, technological environment.	8	
Organizational Design (Form)	Identify organizational form (mechanistic or organic), and thoroughly analyzes its appropriateness for the environment of the organization.	8	
Organization's Mission/Vision/Goals	Its appropriateness and relevance to organizational history and environment.	8	
Organization's Strategy	Its relationship with organizational goals and mission/vision, and its relationship with the environment in which organization exists.	8	
Organizational Structure	Appropriateness of structure to the environment, objectives, and strategy.	8	
Control Features	Identify pre-control, con-current control, & feedback control and discusses where each is used, or should be used, in the organization, with examples.	8	
Organizational Culture	Important rituals, symbols and artifacts, relationship with employees, its appropriateness and relevance to organizational history and the culture.	8	
Leadership	Style and its appropriateness.	8	
SWOT Analysis	Provide a table, and identify between 3 to 5 points for each of the sections. A sentence should be provided for each point explaining their inclusion.	8	
Recommendations	How to improve the organization.	8	
Organization	Follow the format given with all of the sections.	6	
Language and Grammar		6	

Comments:

Total (100 pts) _____

Appendix D

Evaluation Rubric: Team Project Presentation

	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 1
Presentation Content (30 Points)	<p>Provided a very clear overview of the selected Topic.</p> <p>Clearly linked the topic to current management practices. Described the management practices and how those were related to the content in the book and article.</p>	<p>Provided a clear overview of the selected Topic.</p> <p>Successfully made some linked the topic to current management practices. Made some linkage to management practices and content in the book and article.</p>	<p>Provided a limited overview of the selected Topic.</p> <p>Limited linking of the topic to current management practices. Made limited linkage to management practices and content in the book and article.</p>	<p>Provided a very weak overview of the selected Topic.</p> <p>Very limited linking of the topic to current management practices. Made very little to no linkage to management practices and content in the book and article.</p>
Visuals (20 Points)	<p>Visuals augmented and extended comprehension of the issues in unique ways</p>	<p>Use of visuals related to the material</p>	<p>Limited use of visuals loosely related to the material</p>	<p>No use of visuals.</p>
Delivery and Enthusiasm (20 Points)	<p>Very clear and concise flow of ideas.</p> <p>Demonstrates passionate interest in the topic and engagement with the class.</p>	<p>Clear flow of ideas</p> <p>Demonstrates interest in topic and engagement with the class.</p>	<p>Most ideas flow but focus is lost at times</p> <p>Limited evidence of interest in and engagement with the topic</p>	<p>Hard to follow the flow of ideas.</p> <p>Lack of enthusiasm and interest.</p>
Involvement of the class: -Questions -Generating discussion -Activities (20 Points)	<p>Excellent and salient discussion points that elucidated material to develop deep understanding</p> <p>Appropriate and imaginative activities used to extend understanding in a creative manner</p>	<p>Questions and discussion addressed important information that developed understanding</p> <p>Appropriate activities used to clarify understanding</p>	<p>Questions and discussion addressed surface features of the topic</p> <p>Limited use of activities to clarify understanding</p>	<p>Little or no attempt to engage the class in learning</p>
Response to Class Queries (10 Points)	<p>Excellent response to student comments and discussion with appropriate content supported by theory/research</p>	<p>Good response to class questions and discussion with some connection made to theory/research</p>	<p>Satisfactory response to class questions and discussion with limited reference to theory and research</p>	<p>Limited response to questions and discussion with no reference to theory/research</p>

Presentation Content: _____
Visuals: _____
Delivery and Enthusiasm: _____
Involvement of the Class: _____
Response to Class Queries: _____

Total: _____

Appendix E

MGMT-300 Self-Reflective Essay

A self-reflective essay is a brief paper where you describe an experience and how it has changed you or helped you to grow. For this assignment, reflect on your personal and academic growth from your MGMT 300 project. Describe your overall experience and how you have grown and changed. Your self-reflective essay should have three parts, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Please use the following as a guide for each section.

Introduction

Introductions to reflective essays do not need to be longer than one paragraph in length. When writing an introduction, present the purpose of your reflection without giving your reader too much detail about the body of your paper. In the introduction, it is also helpful to tell your reader if you met your goals or the goals of the class/project. Later, in the body of the reflection, you can explain how these goals were or were not met in greater detail. Think of the introduction as a brief preview to the rest of your reflection.

Body

The body should discuss in detail your development as a student. For instance, if writing a reflective essay at the end of the quarter for a certain class/project, how did you grow over the course of the class/project? What have you learned? Can you apply what you have learned to your future academic or life pursuits? How did you or did you not meet your goals or the goals of the class/project you were involved in? This is slightly different from what you should discuss in your introduction. Do not just tell the reader whether or not you met these goals. Rather, show the reader by using illustrations from the class/project or other relevant experiences. Are there any skills you can improve on? If so, how do you plan on doing so in the future?

Conclusion

In the conclusion of a reflective essay, you should remind the reader of the ways in which you have developed as a student. This may seem redundant since you already discussed these things in detail in your essay's body, but remember that the conclusion is the last thing your audience will read. As a result, leave no doubt in the reader's mind that your essay clearly demonstrates how you have grown.

Source: http://condor.depaul.edu/writing/writers/Types_of_Writing/reflectiveessay.html