

Experiential Learning Reflection

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Reflection

The concept of experiential learning encompasses many forms of learning techniques and strategies, including case studies, games and simulations. We wanted our colleagues to have an in-depth understanding of a couple of techniques compared to a broad overview discussion of several experiential learning methods. Therefore, we used problem-based learning and service learning as the focal point of our session on experiential learning. These two methods seemed to be the most appropriate for the online learning environment. All of our activities were guided by the following learning objectives: 1) to define and give examples of experiential learning strategies 2) to create experiential learning activities for a variety of settings 3) to explain the benefits of using experiential learning based activities and 4) to identify the challenges associated with implementing service learning programs. In order to achieve our learning objectives, we incorporated the use of technology, collaborative group work and an article related to the current issues in online learning. The two learning activities highlighted both problem-based learning and service-learning and were designed to achieve the four learning objectives. Next, I reflect on our intentions for each activity and its outcomes.

The problem-based learning assignment featured four YouTube video clips pertaining to the influence of this instructional strategy at Republic Polytechnic, a Singaporean higher education institution. Problem-based learning was infused into both the academic and social culture of the institution. Students in the video demonstrated a strong sense of engagement as they completed their assignments. Also, there was a commitment among the faculty to connect students' academic training with real-world applications. Initially, I considered the use of four videos as being excessive. However, I

am glad my group members did not change the lesson plan based on my objection because our classmates thoroughly enjoyed the material. Overall, using the video clips accomplished our goal of presenting examples of experiential learning strategies and the learning benefits associated with the concept.

Furthermore, the videos created a platform for a lively dialogue about current educational policies and the probable implementation of problem-based learning in the United States. The majority of our colleagues stated that while there is value in the method, the likelihood of its implementation in the United States is minimal. It was somewhat disheartening to learn of my classmates' thoughts on employing problem-based learning in the American educational system. American education at every level could benefit from new innovation and using more instructional methods aimed at increasing student participation. Students in the video displayed a love of learning that I would like to see more in higher and public K-12 education.

As a result of this experience, I will become more familiar with international perspectives on education and techniques used by educators in other countries. The fact that these videos were from a Singaporean institution reiterated to me the importance of learning from other cultures. At times, my thinking is limited by my former knowledge and immediate environment. However, this assignment enhanced my view of education to include insight from international practitioners and educators.

Hopefully as facilitators, we presented new insight on service learning as well. The article, "Constructing Experiential Learning for Online Courses: The Birth of E-Service" (Strait & Sauer, 2004) brought forth a host of topics to the class discussion regarding the development of service learning programs to complement online

curriculum. Prior to reading this article, I would have described online courses as a barrier to service learning. The e-service model is one attempt to increase understanding regarding the opportunities and challenges of service learning in the virtual environment.

Developing the service-learning assignment and facilitating the service learning message board were my primary contributions to the group. The service-learning activity was critical to our classmates understanding the difficulties in using this concept in the online environment. I intended for this assignment to have real world applicability by stating that each group were instructors for an online version of EAD 315 Student Leadership or a section of EAD 866 Teaching in Postsecondary education. Using actual courses at Michigan State University in the instructions served as a point of commonality among the groups. Each group presented very comprehensive lesson plans that exceeded the assignment's requirements.

Facilitating the experiential learning section was an opportunity for me to really understand instructing in a postsecondary context. Drafting specific learning objectives was a personal challenge, because the nature of experiential learning is very broad. It required a lot of work to identify what information was useful for students to know after the session. Organizing the structure of the course and determining the flow of the content were also skills that become increasingly important as we designed the lesson.

Honestly, the opportunity to lead a section of the course was one of the most effective developmental experiences I have had this semester. As a second semester student in the HALE Program, most of my time has been spent studying the administrative occurrences of higher education institutions. While the administrative aspect of higher education is important, I am also interested in effective teaching

strategies for educating college students. Facilitating was an opportunity to practice some of the educational philosophies that we have covered this semester. Before returning to graduate school, I considered myself a good facilitator and trainer, because of my ability to lead discussions. Now, I am realizing the differences between facilitators and educators. Educators develop the conceptual framework of a lesson plan, create exercises to achieve the objectives and execute the plan. Upon my return to the workforce, I am excited about the opportunity to both educate and facilitate.

References

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