EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

by

STEPHEN GUETTERMANN

B. S., Kansas State University, 1975

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1979

Approved by:

Robert K. James

Major Professor

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank the Hawley Printing women's softball team for encouraging me with my work during the long summer season. I am especially grateful to Betty, who showed me kindness and trust when I needed support.

My adviser, Dr. Robert James, directed me throughout the writing of this report. I will always appreciate Dr. Richard Hause, for his sincere interest and my success.

PREFACE

The relationship between society and education is often overlooked when dealing with matters that concern both. Chapter I attempts to provide some links that bond these institutions together. It concentrates on the foundations of social and educational systems and their impact on people and people's impact on them. The family is seen as the unit with which to deal on matters of social and educational concerns.

Chapter II reviews some of the most recent literature substantiating a need for closer working relationships between education and community. These suggested modes of cooperation are explored by examples of educational operations. Sources of information primarily come from education journals and books that are open to community and education interaction. The consequences of this interaction, keying on a student-oriented learning approach, are documented by examples involving students in non-classroom environments.

This chapter explores some of the affective results claimed by non-traditional study methods of learning. Non-traditional is a change from lectures, tests or the same teacher expectations for everyone in a class. Students evaluate their learning environments and give insight to educators willing to learn from them. The chapter concludes with some problems inherent with change, specifically change in the academic community.

The process behind the program of experiential education is examined in Chapter III. It shows how recognized theories

of learning are applicable to environmental education. The findings of Chapter II are restated to determine what relationships can exist between students, teachers, and communities. Concluding remarks are drawn from that analysis.

Chapter I

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Introduction

For ten consecutive years, Gallup Polls have revealed a drop in the public's ratings of public schools.[1] Fewer passing marks and more failing grades are reported each year. Among the public's ten major concerns were: discipline, vandalism, use of drugs, difficulty of getting "good" teachers, and pupils lack of interest in school.

A growing group of educators, administrators, parents, students, and community people feel the root of the schools' and much of society's unrest is due to not acknowledging the diversity among people. Seismore states the education system of America is based on a European system. She questions how it can serve a modern, multi-dimensional population with a diversity that cannot be ignored.[2]

Society expects schools to educate people to meet social and personal needs. Formal education does not provide all the experiences necessary to meet the needs of a diverse populace.

Many of the people who feel a need to recognize this diversity advocate "experiential education". Nold suggests experiential education is action-learning, schools without walls, community work projects, apprenticeships, and service study.[3] The author believes this definition merely uses terms which also need defining. Altman describes it as a systematic

sequenced program of opportunities based on non-classroom learning.[4]

From the Dictionary of Education came a term which closely parallels experiential education. It is educative experience and defined as:

> "any interaction of the individual with his environment, resulting in modification of the individual's attitudes, knowledge, or values; as commonly used, implies desirable changes according to the values of his group."

Many other terms are used interchangeably: learning by doing, real living, adventure learning, non-traditional study, alternative education and field study. The author offers this definition of experiential education: The learning which takes place as a result of contact with a situation that allows a person to test the effectiveness and validity of his values or beliefs. It provides learning opportunities that develop mental, physical, and psychological skills which foster a feeling of self-worth, accomplishment, independence, cooperation, and adaptability to find a way of acting appropriately to present and future conditions.

The author's definition is based on what teachers claim experiential education does. It parallels closely Good's definition but stresses the relationship of developing skills and personal confidence in students.

There is a need to research how experiential education works and communicate the findings to educators. Educators should analyze its concepts critically to determine the validity of experiential education as a learning tool.

Rationale

Five major reports of the 1970's look at education's role in society. They say experience is necessary as part of a person's education to maximize learning. Too often schools isolate youth from opportunities and experiences needed for childhood and adulthood.[6]

In a report from the Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee entitled, Youth: Transition to Adulthood, the panel recommended more specialized schools and free choice in pursuit of appropriate alternatives to the comprehensive school. It suggested an introduction of roles other than the "student" role within the school. Assignments to tutor younger children, for example, would encourage responsibility and helping relationships. The panel also supported using work organizations that incorporate youth and provide structured learning experiences for youth at work.[7]

Martin's research on the Education of Adolescents found

> "the priorities of management have precluded adjustment to changing student characteristics and societal conditions..."

They even make human consideration of individuals difficult. The education of adolescents should not fall entirely upon schools. This isolates the student from the community when both could benefit from the community sharing education responsibilities. The report's panel advises the school and community to assist youth in the transition to maturity and competence via "experiential education".[8]

Brown's report on the Reform of Secondary Education mentions that,

> "...a decade of change in schools has had little or no lasting effect on the content of program or quality of teaching and learning."

Absence, tardiness, vandalism, and class-cutting are rampant. The report recommends career education with actual job experience, alternative paths to a diploma, and more flexible accreditation of learning.[9]

Specific recommendations from a report to the National Committee on Secondary Education all dealt with ways of publicizing and forwarding the action-learning concept. The recommendations included that action-learning is useful and desirable and should be integrated into the total educational program of a community. It should receive credit both in high school and college and should have the same status as academic learning.[10] Subsequent findings found a need to grant youth more responsibility and to honor the individuality of every young person.

The critics of the 70's all agree on the need to devise new ways of assisting youth to adulthood. They are concerned with breaking down the isolation of schools and colleges from the communities in which they are. Whether they speak of learning by doing what is socially useful, personally satisfying and health supporting for the individual and community, or career education through job experience; they promote learning which is a combination of action and reflection. They see education as being more vital and appropriate to the needs of youth in their transition to adulthood through experience.

What emerges are proposals for a diversity of options; most of which would take youth into the community or action-learning situations.

The cause and effect of social relationships in America has been intensively studied. In the 60's youth sensed a discontentment in their parents. Adults were dedicated to making a living, raising a family, achieving success. Some adults recognized that traditional values and social policies had stimulated youth to look for alternative lifestyles. It is suggested that youths might have discarded middle class values because parents no longer had faith in their own belief. Though this was not true for all families, a significant number pressed for re-evaluating beliefs, social systems, and educational goals for the 70's.[11]

Problem Statement

The problem of this report is to present examples of experiential education with the intent of communicating the process to educators. It will offer a rationale for experiential education and how to develop it within school curricula.

Limitations

Research was limited to materials found in Farrell Library relative to experiential education. The author also received input from authorities of experiential education via personal communications. Some inferences regarding characteristics of experiential education were drawn from the author's experience in this field.

Methods

Much of the information in this report comes from workshops and presentations on experiential education. An ERIC search, journal articles, books, and conversations with people recognized as experts provided the author with ideas of synthesizing experiential education concepts and show how it can be applied as a learning tool. The coordination of this material resulted in an emphasis on learning, not teaching.

Definitions

Experiential Education -- The learning which takes place as a result of contact with a situation that allows a person to test the effectiveness and validity of his values or beliefs. It provides learning opportunities that develop mental, physical, and psychological skills which foster a feeling of self-worth, accomplishment, independence, cooperation, and adaptability to find a way of acting appropriately to present and future conditions.

Real Living -- An experience that entails risk and requires a person to acknowledge the risk before acting then accepting the consequences of those actions.

Traditional Education -- Education which emphasizes the student receiving information from the teacher's use of lectures, tests, and teacher-centered presentations.

Some terms will be used interchangeably with experiential education. They include: real living, non-traditional study,

field-based study, adventure learning, action-learning, non-classroom learning and alternative education.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Foxfire Experience

In 1966, a high school English teacher in Rabun Gap, Georgia faced his class of unruly students. Unlike other teachers, he took their behavior to mean he was failing them. He came to class one day armed with an idea and a challenge. "How would you like to start a magazine?" Slowly the idea took hold. What started as a class project snowballed into one of the most revolutionary movements in modern education - a movement known as Foxfire.

For over twelve years, Eliot Wigginton and students at Rabun Gap have put the high school curriculum into action. The basics of mathematics, communication and media skills, economics, geometry, physics, public relations and more are used to bridge the gap between incompetence and progress. While fulfilling school requirements, the students have published books and magazines. They have produced music and television shows, built cabins and marketed their products. Wigginton once said, "I have never found anything a high school student could not do." He adds that if the Foxfire organization is doing something not being done by a high school student, he asks why. If a good answer cannot be found, he finds a student to do the job instead.

It is interesting to note how the Foxfire program has operated in light of the major educational reports of the seventies.

The reports advocate community-related schools, action-learning, and student input in curriculum development. They support a diversity of teaching methods, including career education and non-classroom experience. The reports say youth need more responsibility to aid their transition to adulthood, and encourage age integration among students and students, and students and community.

To examine Foxfire closer, it can be seen these recommendations have been successfully put into action. Community involvement with the schools has increased not only in Rabun Gap but surrounding towns as Foxfire students graduate, stay in the area, and contribute to its development. Age integration is inherent to Foxfire ideals. Much of the early work consisted of young asking old to share with them their knowledge and skills. The integration has filtered from the high school to surrounding schools where Foxfire students help younger children with new projects like building playgrounds and writing and editing their own textbooks. Vandalism, a demon in schools nationwide, has been exorcised from Rabun Gap because students work to keep up the school, not as punishment but as reward.[1]

Students are trusted. Foxfire is their program. That is why when realtors were trying to sell land under the Foxfire name, it was students who decided upon the action. Foxfire was their name. They did not have to let someone capitalize on the quality trademark they developed. The students said change the

name or be sued. Wigginton claims they weren't bluffing. More than anything, Foxfire entrusts responsibility to young people to aid their transition to adulthood.[2]

Undercurrents of Educational Change

For over a decade, in response to pressure, colleges and universities across the country have explored non-traditional studies. Machiavelli said new structures should be created only when existing ones lack the capacity to produce the desired results. If potential exists, no new structure is necessary. Instead, present structures should be made to work to their potential. Either by coincidence or by design the most successful trials in alternative programs have tried to use what exists more fully.[3] Many educational changes that dealt with just structure and not direction were not on a foundation that could support them so they failed.[4]

The force behind alternative programs is the diversity among students. Students learn in different ways. A one-way educational street is not doing the job needed to develop these human resources. According to Martorana and Kuhns, there are six major undercurrents for academic change:

1) There is an increase in institutional concern for community affairs and relations. Increased competition for the education dollar has encouraged some schools to be more aware of community influence on their operation. Government grants are also available for human service proposals. This action

is supported by several studies including the Carnegie Report of 1971.

2) There is a focus on learning rather than teaching.[6] With the possibility of declining enrollments education has become a "buyer's market". To appeal to students, schools need to deliver what students want.[7] Also, a surplus of teachers in recent years has made it easier for some colleges to find the type of faculty it wants to carry out its programs.

3) With help from a faculty adviser, students often draw up contracts for their educational responsibility. Adherence to the contract lessens the chance of students abusing alternatives by students signing up for courses and experiences which do not contribute to attaining their goals. Faculty guide student learning selections then help them be responsible for carrying out the decisions.

4) Structural flexibility recognizes that students learn in different ways and the job of the school is to serve the student. Experiential learning is becoming more accepted as a way to earn credits.[8] Schools and governments are recognizing experience not associated with institutions as education.

5) To avoid duplication of effort and conserve resources, colleges in close proximity to one another offer services to each other's students. Such cooperative ventures work only if the institutions are more student-oriented than self-serving.

6) Many programs require internships by students in working situations. This provides feedback to the school. It helps

determine if the school's academic program adequately prepares the student for the chosen career. It aids the student in determining if that career is what he wants. Student involvement with the community often provides services people would otherwise do without.

The emphasis on reaching beyond the classroom stems from at least three sources:

1) It reflects the impact of a decade in which social problems and social change were the major part of news. It occupied the attention of professionals from many fields to deal with those problems.

2) The emphasis reflects a response to related forces within colleges to serve the community in which they own property, and pressures from the students for relevant learning.

3) It reflects that if one of the functions of education is to prepare students for the future, then learning must take into account the demands of rapidly changing informational, ideological, and value bases.[9]

A person needs experiences that teaches him to accept the consequences of his actions. Taft states:

> "Things are different when people subjected to drastic change find only meager opportunities for action or when they cannot or are not allowed to attain self-confidence and self-esteem by individual pursuits. In this case, the hunger for confidence, for worth and for balance directs itself towards the attainment of substitutes. The substitute for self-esteem is pride: and the substitute for individual balance is fusion with others into a compact group. It needs no underlining that this reaching out for substitutes means trouble."[10]

If American youth do face the challenges set forth in the preceding pages; to develop values, self-confidence, a clear view of the world, and develop a self-identity to serve them through their youth and adult years, then they need experience. Since John Dewey, learning by doing has been regarded by some as the near magic solution to effective teaching.[11]

Values and Experiential Education

Values are an integral part of acting with consistency, reliability, and purpose. They are also part of the definition of experiential education. Raths, et al., in Values and Teaching, outlines the following process of how values develop. These ideas grow from the assumption that whatever values one obtains they should work as effectively as possible to relate one to his world in a satisfying and intelligent way.

1. Choosing freely - Values must be freely selected to guide one's life to be really valued by the individual.
2. Choosing from among alternatives - To value a result, a choice must be possible. When there is more than one alternative from which to choose, a value can result.
3. Choosing after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative - Each possibility has to be analyzed to understand the outcome of the choices.

4) Prizing and cherishing - A person needs to be happy with what they choose.

5) Affirming - A person must be proud and satisfied with the choice and publicly proclaim it.

6) Acting upon choices - The choice has to give direction in order to be a value.

7) Repeating - Values are persistent; they tend to make a pattern in life.[12]

Values are based upon action and commitment. According to the definition of experiential education, it is also based upon action, "...to test the effectiveness and validity of his values or belief..." and a commitment that "...his actions will reflect behavior consistent with those values or beliefs..." The instructor needs to be aware of the possible relationship between values and experiential education when considering where a student is and where he would like to help him go.

Support for Experiential Education

There is some evidence that continues to support the findings of Baker and Behrens, and Dubin and Taveggia that there are no significant differences between teaching methods when student learning is assessed through final exams.[13] McGee also suggests that teaching methods are irrelevant to learning.[14] He makes this implication:

> "...it is quite possible that teachers do not really teach students as conventionally understood at all... in essence students teach themselves...they (teachers) are different from conventional and implicit under-

> stood models and that if we really wish to improve the quality of college teaching, we need different and more realistic paradigms of the learning process."

Students may teach themselves by pursuing opportunities which are consistent with their nature, values and interests. For teachers to be a significant factor in learning, the teachers are to be sensitive to the students. They must provide timely opportunities and materials that promote student learning.

Clifton tested the hypothesis that: "The learning dimensions emphasized in traditional education, i.e. lectures and tests, are considered by students to be less helpful than learning dimensions in a more participatory learning environment."[15]

Clifton gave a questionnaire to about two hundred college students in an Introduction to Sociology course. It dealt with evaluating some gross learning dimensions: textbooks, group learning and independent learning projects. Fifty-seven percent found texts either necessary or helpful, twenty-five percent were not sure and eighteen percent said they were a hindrance. But, nearly three fourths thought both group and independent projects important; about twenty-five percent were not sure and five percent thought they hindered learning.

When questioned on specific learning environments nearly two-thirds of the students were either not sure or believed that teachers who tell them what to learn hindered their learning. One-third believed this necessary or helpful. The reverse is

found when teachers ask students what they want to learn. The role of the teacher as an intellectual guide was found desirable by ninety percent of the students. Sixty-four percent thought the chance to go out and use what was learned was necessary and twenty-five percent said it helped. Only one percent felt experiential learning hindered their education.[16]

These results support the hypothesis. But they are from an introductory course by students who may be short on non-classroom learning. It is necessary to question students active in non-class or experiential learning to further investigate the hypothesis.

David Washburn, a professor of Educational Studies at Bloomsburg State College in Bloomsburg, PA states:

> "Witness the many comments from people who underwent teacher education and say that student-teaching was the only meaningful experience they had in college. Obviously much meaningful material was presented to them during their college careers. It just didn't reach them at the affective (value) level."[17]

Washburn took a group of students to Appalachia one summer as part of the development of field-base courses. Their goals were "to affect conceptual growth in students, to hone inquiry strategies and to increase sensitivity to and understanding of their fellows in all their diversity."[18]

Appalachia is a diverse land with economic, social, physical and cultural paradoxes. For weeks, students interacted with that diversity. One summed up the group's experiences this way,

> "I feel a little cheated by my education up to this point, for in three weeks I have learned more and produced more of lasting value than in three previous years of college. Not only have I shared deeply the experience of another culture, but I have learned more about myself as a person...who I am...than any other time of my life. I've changed in these three weeks. I've grown."[19]

Colleges are developing programs to increase student involvement in education. Student internships are required and recommended in more curricula than ever before. Internships have these advantages: 1) gets student active with the field to see the relevance of classroom learning, 2) gives the student a chance to experience a real work situation to determine if it interests him, 3) develops rapport between the school and community benefitting from student service, 4) aids the student in being placed in a job after college and 5) helps faculty and students determine if classroom learning adequately prepares the student for the occupation.[20,21]

Schools, media, and affluence have directed many people to be information rich but experience poor. Class material is often less varied, more stale and dull than that a person gets at home. Taft offers the view that it is,

> "Time for education to reconsider its role of providing knowledge in classrooms...It's time for schools to concentrate on training children how to learn, how to <u>use</u> the flood of knowledge they receive in their lives. And it's time for education to start providing some of the experience which is missing from most young lives."[22]

As most of the world is outdoors, maybe our education would provide better perspective to people, if some of it were outdoors too.[23]

One of the best known proponents and implementers of experiential education is Outward Bound, Inc. (OB). Outward Bound has a three fold mission to serve the educational, personal, and social needs of participants in its programs of wilderness survival. To do this, it teaches them technical skills needed to stay alive in the wilderness, a chance for personal development with those skills, and relates those skills to the social environments of participants. OB stresses the importance of cooperation to achieve goals. Through experiential learning, OB teaches skills students need to respond effectively to an environment. Tangible skills such as rock climbing, rappelling, and skiing are balanced with the mental skills of decision making, cooperation, and compromise. To force a conscious encounter between man and environment is an attempt to see man as an entity conditioned by and determined of the world around him. These responses are the experiences by which man becomes a more adaptive product of his environment. Outward Bound tests the adaptive nature of man to permit a wider range of experiences that challenge his resources of mind, body and spirit.[24]

Outward Bound has served as a model and guide for many college wilderness experiences. The outdoors is being used more as an educational tool. Opponents of outdoor education say it is too simple an environment to bring about the extreme changes in student behavior claimed by proponents. The environment is simple but the action is not. Students interact

with one another in an unfamiliar and threatening environment to satisfy their needs. They become aware of how their acts relate to their condition.

Coleman mentions the need for an appropriate mix in education between experiential learning and information assimilation. He states that what goes on inside the school cannot be determined without knowing what students face outside the school. Different kinds of experiences are suited for different purposes. But Coleman says one function is, ..."the creation of a solid experience base..." that has to do with a person's relation to himself or herself.[25]

Reference to the education commission reports in Chapter I indicated experiential learning programs should be a part of secondary and college education. But until this most recent report by the Evaluation of Learning Project, funded by the Rockefeller Family and the Spencer and General Mills Foundations, no one has systematically investigated the assumptions underlying the claims of what was learned and how experiential education affected behavior. The following results are from the Project's 1978 survey of four thousand students in public, private and parochial school systems enrolled in experiential programs across the country. They were asked what they had directly experienced, seen and heard.

Among the observed effects were twenty-four which appeared regularly. The list shows formidable outcomes schools everywhere hope to achieve or even dare to claim. Project leaders

Diane Hedin and Dan Conrad say it is encouraging to see such confidence about the effects which experiential education seems to be having with the pessimistic outlook the public has of American schools.[26]

Table I presents the results of the Project's findings. There is substantial agreement between students and teachers about what is learned through experiential programs. Student supervisors, who range from counselors, to industrial executives, to wilderness survival instructors and service agency directors reported they too, observed student progress toward Table I's twenty-four outcomes.

Table I

What Students Learn in Experiential Learning

Item	Percent of Responses		
	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
1. Concern for fellow human beings	93%	4%	3%
2. Ability to get things done; to work with others	93	4	3
3. Realistic attitudes toward other people such as the elderly, handicapped or officials	88	4	8
4. Self-motivation to learn, participate, achieve	88	7	5
5. Self-concept (sense of confidence, competence, self-awareness)	88	7	5
6. Responsibility to the group or class	86	3	11
7. Risk-taking - openness to now experiences	86	7	8
8. Sense of usefulness to the community	86	8	6
9. Problem solving	86	9	5
10. Risk taking - being assertive and independent	86	9	5
11. Accept consequences of own actions	85	9	6
12. Gathering and analyzing information, observation, reflecting on experience	84	8	7
13. Knowledge of community organizations	82	7	11

Table I (continued)

Item		Percent of Responses Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
14.	Responsibility for own life	80	10	9
15.	Awareness of community problems	78	13	9
16.	Assume new, important tasks in community and in school	78	14	8
17.	Communication skills (listening, speaking, presenting ideas through use of media)	77	11	7
18.	Awareness of community resources	71	13	16
19.	Realistic ideas about the world of work	71	18	11
20.	Learning about a variety of careers	70	22	8
21.	Use of leisure time	60	26	14
22.	Narrowing career choices	54	34	12
23.	To become an effective parent	52	29	19
24.	To become an effective consumer	46	32	22

(Adapted from the Evaluation of Experiential Learning Project Report on experiential education.)[27]

Problems in Experiential Education

Experiential education has problems that prevent implementation or cause its demise in institutions. There are barriers raised by people who feel threatened by the outcomes and expectations of such programs. Another recurring obstacle to innovation is that the high energy needed for implementation surges forward then peaks. Often, initial successes are seen as the ultimate ends and a reluctance to improve or change sets in among the innovators.[28] Quality levels off or declines. Progress retreats. Enthusiasm for innovation may not wear off, though, if dynamic interaction of social forces is monitored by institutions so they can anticipate new challenges for education.

Receptive and capable faculty are a necessity for non-classroom study. New programs and new types of programs are sometimes viewed as a threat to faculty, either because new faculty need to be hired or present faculty need to be retrained to handle the innovation.[29] Even if faculty are interested in instigating change they often find themselves too involved to embark on a new project voluntarily.[30]

Students should be involved with what paths their education takes. Faculty, too, need a voice in the affairs of the curriculum, while keeping in mind student needs and interests. Taylor echoes the view of many students in the introduction to his book, How to Change Colleges:

> "If educators do not wish to be serious about making the university into a place where students can live a rich, rewarding and lively intellectual life; an engaged life that commits them to the cause of mankind; then they should move over and give the students a chance to invent their own university."[31]

These are ideals of experiential education which Taylor feels should be an integral part of not just alternative programs but the whole university.

Demands on faculty are strenuous in experiential programs. Students and administrators need to keep in mind the intense involvement needed on the part of faculty to counsel students with experiential programs that aid in student growth and development, and possible entry into the job market. Even faculty who are willing and able to do the task find they cannot every semester as the demands are too great to maintain a quality program.[32]

Experiential education provides for intense interaction among participants. (See Table I.) For a successful encounter, instructors need to have clear values, understand group dynamics, and guide students to success in an unfamiliar or threatening environment. They must be able to do the things and have the qualities the experience is supposed to give the students.[33]

Experiential education is not for people wanting only traditional education. It is not for the traditional scholar. Experiential education is for those with a self-perception of being person- or self-directed; for a person concerned with linking knowledge to action and social change.[34] Faculty advis-

ers should consider this when helping students outline an academic plan.

Student fears, concerns, and experiences affect the way students perceive new experiences. To be aware of these perceptions is also a job of the adviser. The adviser needs to know how the community relates to students. The adviser and community need to know the primary goals of students. They must decide if field study priorities will emphasize community service or student learning. Together, all participants should decide if the priorities are compatible.[35,36]

The following quote by a physical education teacher epitomizes a good part of the philosophy and awareness needed from experiential education instructors in general and adventure education instructors in particular:

> "You know, rock climbing teaches the kind of thing we've always claimed for physical education -- the ability to operate under stress. We create situations here where stress is compounded by time. Running creates stress, but you can always stop if it gets too bad. But during a rescue practice climb, when you have to tie a knot very quickly to take the pressure of a rope off your body, coolness and efficiency are absolutely required. And when you're tied to other people, teamwork and responsibility can mean life or death. In this sport, boys and girls and instructors work together to really <u>become</u> a team.
>
> "The main thing we're trying to do here is to help every student develop a good self-image. Body language is very important, and I think in phyisical education one's personality is realized more than in any other area of the curriculum. Ideally, we'd like every student to have success in some area of physical education, and to <u>keep</u> having it. When enough successes have been deposited in a young person's bank account, then he or she can afford to take some risks in order to gain further success."[37]

At the very least, experiential education forces an encounter between a person and an environment. The encounter guarantees nothing. The environment, not an instructor, tests the person. This may help a student to realize he can be judged on his performance, that his actions do matter, and that he can control his life.

Chapter III

HOW EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION WORKS

Views differ as to whether people should serve society or if society should serve people. Experiential education offers a process by which a working relationship between people and society can be established by placing priority on individual growth. It also offers a way these priorities can work in harmony for the mutual benefit of people and society. Experiential education takes a synergistic stance. People who develop to their fullest, can achieve much more together than if they deal individually with social or personal issues, with no cooperation between them.

Gould, in the preface of the report for the Commission on Non-Traditional Study said,

> "...non-traditional study (experiential education) is more an attitude than a system and thus can never be defined except tangentially. This attitude puts the student first and the institution second, concentrates more on the former's need than the latter's convenience, encourages diversity of individual opportunity rather than uniform prescription, and deemphasizes time, space, and even course requirements in favor of competence and where applicable, performance. It has concern for the learner of any age and circumstance, for the degree aspirant as well as the person who finds sufficient reward enriching life through constant, periodic, or occasional study. This attitude is not new; it is simply more prevalent than it used to be."[1]

Consider some of the results from research done on how students like to learn. The questionnaire Clifton gave to the Introduction to Sociology students, cited in Chapter II, discovered that sixty-four percent of them thought the chance to

go out and use what was learned is necessary and twenty-six percent said it helped.

What students learn has to be in relation to others or their education will have little meaning. Consider again the results of Table I (page 21). The two top categories are "Concern for fellow human beings" and "The ability to get things done; to work with others".

Experiential education is: "The learning which takes place as a result of contact with a situation that allows a person to test the effectiveness and validity of his values or beliefs. It provides learning opportunities that help develop mental, physical, and psychological skills that foster a feeling of self-worth, accomplishment, independence, cooperation, and adaptability to find a way of acting appropriate to present and future conditions". The dichotomy between satisfying human needs or social needs is unnecessary.

How Experiential Education Works

Bloom and others have mentioned the importance of student and faculty establishing educational objectives within learning areas. Experiential education should be based upon all three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor to exploit learning opportunities to their fullest.

Cognitive abilities emphasize remembering or reproducing something previously learned; solving intellectual tasks; thinking. At best, cognitive abilities analyze situations to

determine how to approach them. A method is applied to solve a problem or deal with the situation. The learner should determine his degree of success.

Evidence of the affective domain of learning is when the student volunteers for an experience. Usually the student is trying to participate as either his instructor, supervisor, or peers expect. The student has an opportunity to test a way of acting to see if his action are consistent with beliefs or values he now holds. He can explore alternative ways of feeling or acting. A student must have a choice and evaluate the consequence of and reasons for his feelings and behavior.

The affective domain is perhaps the most difficult to pursue in classroom learning because it deals with immeasurables: feelings, emotions, commitments, values. Evaluations of experiential programs constantly refer to these abstracts as reported by student comments and critiques of experiences cited earlier.

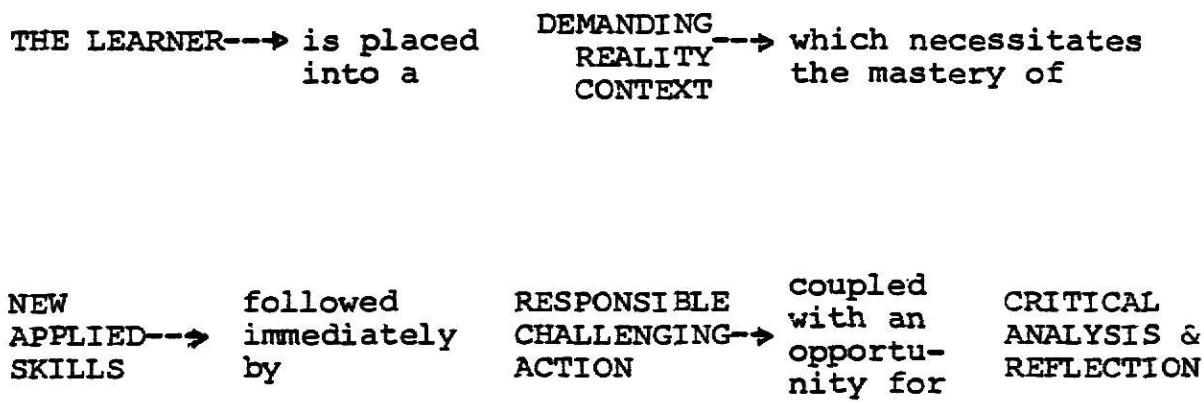
Psychomotor skills are obviously needed in adventure pursuits. In the wilds, students learn quickly that if they do not do what is needed then it does not get done. This is not limited to the wilds. Students understand the relevance of factual information when know-how is needed to know how to do "it" accurately, quickly, and automatically. Instructors must convey this point when group safety depends upon everyone.

The impact of experiential education is reinforced through the senses.[2] A fundamental of teaching is to involve as many

senses as possible to maximize cognizant intake. Experiential education offers the chance to blend mind, body, and spirit into a holistic being, vibrant and alive, and aware of the possibilities that exist to explore the meaning of being human.

A model of how the experiential education approach works is offered by Gager.

Figure I Experiential Learning Process Flow



From: Experiential Education - Strengthening the Learning Process, Gager, 1977[3]

The "demanding reality context" is not a contrived or hypothetical situation. It is not a case study. It is the learner totally focused in the present because the need to respond is immediate and apparent. He applies skills to reduce stress and increase the chances of survival: professional, physical, or otherwise. This requires in-depth involvement.

It is an understanding of the situation to achieve mastery over it by using correctly the right techniques for the circumstance.

It does the student little good to do the right thing at the wrong time. If his methods do not work, he tries again (if he has time). In a challenging situation, feedback is almost immediate and an important part of maximizing learning. If it does work, the learner can generalize from the experience.[4] The generalization is available as new learning for future experience. The mix Coleman spoke of between experiential learning and information assimilation should be apparent. A student cannot face successfully the kind of challenges he will encounter in a "demanding reality context" without an informational background adaptable to the experience beyond the school walls.

How to get Experiential Education to Work

For a moment, consider two basic American philosophies: 1) future-orientation; work now for reward later and 2) present-orientation; immediate gratification. Experiential study can provide for both. Instead of the two being a source for confusion, experiential education provides for a chance to learn and immediately put the learning into action. It provides for a rallying point of self-confidence to continue forward backed by past success.

It is much easier to teach and involve the motivated

learner than the unmotivated. What do experiential programs appeal to in students to get them involved and interested in accepting responsibility, awareness of community problems and accepting responsibility, awareness of community problems and concern for their fellow man? The composite profile of Table I lists that 88% of students in experiential programs agreed they were "self-motivated to learn, participate, achieve."

Ausubel's Meaningful Reception Theory of Learning says motivation is the cause and effect of learning. It is necessary for the teacher to give a lot of meaningful material so students can use it. To do this, the teacher has to know his students, their needs and interests. Ausubel recommends that educators find out first what a student knows because that will determine how and what he learns. This is exactly what faculty advisers and students enrolled in experiential education programs should do according to references previously cited.

To develop motivated learners, teachers must make learning as close to the situation students learn in by themselves, according to Ausubel. This is usually the students preferred way of learning. As research by Clifton shows a student bias to go out and use what they learned as necessary or helpful to their learning. Faculty need to reinforce learning through experience.

Klausmeier also offers suggestions for student motivation with his Purposeful Learning Theory. He states a teacher:

gets students involved in the activity

clarifies objectives of the activity

guides initial student tries

provides a model as how activity can be done

shows an activity's usefulness

sequences material so future activities are based on success

manages student practice

provides for individual differences

evaluates, gives feedback and guides the student through subsequent choices

manages recall so student can keep what is learned for later use

helps apply the information to non-class, non-formal learning

provides reality situations in which a student finds himself

The most successful alternative programs show the validity of these theories through the accomplishments of students and evaluation by instructors. Experiential education programs closely parallel the needs identified in the education reports of the 70's. This is partly because instructors understand where the students came from developmentally and where they are.

Coleman says, "We have a poverty of experience in life."[5] Some of this is relieved by vicarious living through sensationalism and television.[6] When experiential learning is used to "...make learning as close to the situation students learn in on their own..." they can relate to climbing, skiing, exploring

a community or exploring a job because, though perhaps they have not directly experienced it, they may have seen it and wanted to give it a try.

Owens reinterates some of the concepts of motivating students.[7] The best time to learn in when that learning can be useful. The student's feelings toward the teacher is a very significant factor in motivation and achievement. Those feelings do much to guide initial effort and success.

In response to the challenges of youth outlined in Chapter I, it has been demonstrated that adventure learning and field study programs can reach a wide cross-section of student populations in a personal way. These types of experiences provide an opportunity for developing greater confidence, a greater sense of potentiality and self-worth, a greater sense of control over their lives, and a sense of owning their education. As J. J. Nold, past president of the Colorado Outward Bound School wrote these programs address themselves to:

> "what is drab, oppressive and alienating in our society and institutions. It can spark enthusiasm, inspire vision and bring to the level of consciousness the deep and underlying questions of life and meaning and what is truly educational."[8]

Wise teachers know the power of telling a student what he will be able to do when a particular learning session or topic is completed. It is apparent that the key to achievement motivation is how the learner conceives the action. He must want to be able to do something.[9] This is congruous with the statements of Taft about people needing real living, the need

to be rich in experience. Experiential learning can get people out of the deepening rut of being passively stimulated instead of actively involved.

The more active the student participant, the more effective the learning. Each student has his own learning style, his own set of difficulties, needs, wishes, and perspectives. The educative process must be made relative to and inclusive of that.[10] The format to appreciate these difficulties is inherent in experiential education. But excessive guidance by the instructor is likely to result in apathetic learner conformity, defiance, scape goating, or escape from the whole affair.[11]

The need to clarify intended outcomes and to do so in assessable form, becomes especially important in experiential learning programs. These programs are involved with affective learning. They are committed to skills and an integrated capacity to perform. Such outcomes are also less likely to be measurable by written tests than are outcomes involving application of theory and the testing of theory against the realities of experience. Keeton emphasizes that,

> "...because experiential learning programs may have different intended outcomes from other programs, because they may be added value to some prospective students, and because those outcomes may require a different kind of assessment, the intended outcomes should be clarified at the outset and appropriate provision made to assure that they are being met."

Instructors need to be cognizant that they will be dealing intensively with many abstract growth and terms. What may be the ends to the student such as climbing a mountain, or helping

an invalid child, are actually the means for the instructor to facilitate the development of those qualities.

Experiential education is not an automatic success for everyone who attempts it. It will not provide all the education a person needs. It is a difficult process for those involved with it. For maximum effectiveness, experiential education needs to be an integral part of a student's education - something to be worked toward and built upon. When a student engages in action-learning, it should be an important part of a process. The process should be designed to fit the student's needs and abilities with a clear rationale as to its place in formal education.

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Appendix

Often a more intimate teacher-student relationship develops in experiential education programs than in traditional or classroom situations. This is due, in part, to faculty and student taking a risk together in a real life situation where acts and beliefs are immediately tested. As such, communication develops, then trust if the student is successful in handling an obstacle. The depth of the relationship depends a lot on how much faculty involvement the student wants in his scholastic and personal life.

There are three major types of Faculty-Student interactions. The first is the Gathering and Evaluating relationship. This is where the student gathers material from the instructor and evaluates it according to its usefulness and acceptance to her. The instructor is concerned primarily with information dissemination. Many instructors, though, are enthused with innovations that can make this dissemination more tangible to the student.

The second relationship develops from Faculty-Student committee work. There is a chance to share ideas and philosophies, and test values according to the work being done.

A possible outgrowth of the committee work or sharing out of the classroom experiences are Personal Relationships. Frequently there is faculty, and probably student, ambivalence to them. It is often hard to interact with someone outside the

class when the relationship started in a formal setting. A student may never see her faculty other than as faculty. Faculty may never appreciate the impact a student's personal life can have on learning.

Instructors need a different commitment for experiential programs than that required for classroom teaching. Beside the teacher role, there is a chance to be a laison between student and community, an administrator, a counselor, facilitator, or coordinator. Instead of being these things, though, if one can see him or herself as a person doing a variety of things - thinking, feeling, knowing, serving, sharing, caring, relating, always stressing the ongoing process, then he or she has a better opportunity to survive and be healthily helpful while working with students.[1]

In his book, Person-Centered Graduate Education, Fairfield develops some questions that may be helpful to faculty deciding where they stand in relation to non-traditional programs.

> Am I willing or not to be open and/or transparent about the major details of my life and/or beliefs?
>
> Do I or do I not say one thing when in fact I believe something else?
>
> Am I willing or not to face myself when I am criticized or do I "close ranks" in some way that reflects a characteristic defensiveness?
>
> Do I need some kind of routinized schedule to give order to my life? What is the extent of this need, or lack of it?
>
> Can I serve multiple roles or even no role at all in a kind of phenomenological sense without being anxious?

How do I feel when abused or lashed while knowing that such abuse is unjustified?

How long can I be patient?

Can I identify with the frontier of another person's learning objectives and/or personal perspectives for achieving goals?

What is my ability to tolerate ambiguity?

Do I have some kind of method for ascertaining what cues I throw off and what I do about it if there is incongruency between my actions at different times and/or my behavior and my verbalizing?

How many faces do I present to the world?

Faculty moving from traditional programs to experiential ones where the student is expected to be self-directed should:

be self-directed himself or be accused of the Jekyll-Hyde syndrome.

anticipate pressure toward lifestyle changes and/or attraction toward such changes.

enjoy the prospects of personal growth, for it is next to impossible to enjoy another's growing self-awareness without finding it contagious.

weigh opportunity cost of such involvement against any neutral or negative prospects, whether spelled in dollars, inconvenience, awkward periods of adjustment, pain, disorientation in space-time psyche.

recognize that a vast number of competing ideologies and consequent methodologies, as well as world views which co-exist, must be mastered to be criticized.

realize that one cannot attract self-directed persons into such programs without finding every brand of psychological quirk, social fanatic, rugged individualist, in short, a variety of personality types who must at least be heard if they are admitted to the program, whether one wishes to work with them or not.

look seriously at one's views on humor, irony, and paradox because such attitudes may be part of both the psychology and the politics of survival.[2]

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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

by

STEPHEN GUETTERMANN

B. S., Kansas State University, 1975

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1979

The relationship between education and society is often overlooked when dealing with matters that concern both. This warrants an understanding between each institution's responsibilities for effective problem solving.

America had a child-oriented society in the 1950's. Youth were protected from some of the hardships their parents faced. Consequently, what motivated parents did not necessarily move their children. Some looked beyond established offerings for adventure and purpose.

Much of the unrest of the 1960's stemmed from adults adhering to values that youth questioned. Schools, colleges, and universities were drawn into the battle. Youth demanded relevant education. Society clamored for graduates capable of contributing to its needs. A decade of pressure achieved little significant change in the academic community.

A growing number of educators, administrators, students, and community people are looking for ways to relieve the stress among students, society, and education. Innovations are leading to a person-oriented approach to living. Evidence of this is seen in both academic and social institutions. Cooperation and a working relationship is developing between them by communication and acknowledging the concerns and needs of those involved.

Experiential education, a learning by doing in non-classroom situations, is seen as a way to bring the needs of students and society to terms. Schools are instrumental in this approach.

They direct students into situations that provide for a student's personal growth based on analysis of needs and interests.

Society is the medium through which education takes form. In non-classroom learning situations, community people are instrumental in planning experiences that maximize learning. Faculty and students receive feedback from student supervisors. They evaluate their performances as to how well goals were met through the experience. The evaluation also gives participants, faculty, students, and supervisors, an idea of how well classroom learning prepares students for what lies beyond an institution's walls.

Experiential education is not for people wanting only traditional education. It is for those with a self-perception of being person- or self-directed.

Student fears, concerns, and experiences affect the way a student perceives new experiences. The adviser must know if the goals between the student and other participants are compatible.

Effective experiential education is a synthesis of the three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The more active the participation, the more effective is student learning.

Experiential education is nct an automatic success for everyone who attempts it. It does not provide all the education a person needs. For maximum effectiveness, experiential education needs to be an integral part of a student's education. If a student engages in action learning, it should be an impor-

tant part of a developmental process. It should be designed to the student's needs and abilities, with a rationale as to its place in the whole realm of formal education.