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A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TRADITIONAL LECTURE CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of an experiential learning exercise used in an undergraduate accounting class, and compares the results to those attained when the traditional lecture method is used in another class. The results, as measured by tests administered to both classes, were analyzed to compare the short-term and long-term effects of the two types of learning situations. Inquiry was also made as to any differences between the two classes and within each class in memory retention of specifics vs., general concepts. Although students taught by the lecture method scored significantly higher ($F = 3.90$, $p > 0.055$) than students taught by the experiential method in memory retention of specific concepts (but not general concepts) over the short term, they experienced a significant loss of memory over the long term ($F = 5.79$, $p \sim 0.021$). Ultimately there was no significant difference in the two groups retention of specific concepts ($F = 0.31$, $p \geq 0.581$) or general concepts ($F = 2.93$, $p > 0.096$) in the long term. The experiential learning class, however, differed from the lecture class with respect to student enjoyment and cooperation among students who otherwise might not have worked together. The somewhat mixed findings seem to indicate that a combination of teaching strategies may be optimal in enhancing student learning in the accounting area.