

Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 10, 1983

INSTITUTIONAL USERS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PACKAGES: A PRELIMINARY VIEW FROM PUBLISHERS' ADOPTION LISTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports upon data drawn from publishers' adoption lists for experiential learning packages. United States educational institution users were identified and data are presented for user characteristics such as type of user, institutional support, and institutional average number of students for each of the experiential learning packages. Analysis of the data reveals that adopters tend to be 4-year rather than 2-year institutions and public rather than private. Some limitations of the study are presented along with suggestions for further research.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years business educators have become increasingly interested in having students 'experience' what they are learning. Such interest is readily apparent by the activities and proceedings of groups such as the Association for Business Simulation and Experiential Learning (ABSEL), the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society (OBTS), and the North American Simulation and GAMING Association (NASAGA). The interest is also apparent through journals, such as Journal of Experiential Learning/Simulation (JELS), Exchange, and Simulation and Games, which are geared to publish experiential learning articles as well as other broader journals, such as the Academy of Management Journal and Academy of Management Review, which have recently published articles dealing with experiential learning. The increased interest is also reflected by the increased availability of experiential learning textbook or packages (6)

Despite the increased interest and materials available there has been no research undertaken to identify who is using such packages. The purpose of this paper is to shed some light onto the question of who is using experiential learning packages by examining publishers' adoption lists for a selected set of packages.

METHODOLOGY

During the summer of 1980, 18 publishers who collectively were known to publish 27 business oriented experiential learning packages were requested by letter to provide their adoption lists to the senior author. All of the packages for which data was requested were management oriented packages designed to be used in courses in principles of management, organizational behavior, personnel/human resources administration, or organization theory.

Information was received from 8 publishers for 13 of the packages. The packages for which the adoption lists were requested and those for which information was received are indicated in the Appendix. The adoption lists generally did not indicate the names of specific individuals but rather the institutions at which there were adopters.

For each of the experiential learning packages the total number of 4-year and 2-year educational institutions in the United States using the package was determined. For each of the packages characteristics of the institutional adopters, such as type (2-year or 4-year educational institution), institutional support (private or public), and number of students was determined. These items were determined through subprograms CROSSTABS and BREAKDOWN of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (8). These subprograms were used to generate frequencies and means where appropriate.

RESULTS

Summary data for each of the experiential learning packages are presented in Table 1. The packages are identified by a letter and not by name because some of the publishers requested that the information be kept 'somewhat confidential.' While information was received concerning 13 packages only 10 are reported in Table 1 for three reasons. First, one package was out of print, and, therefore, no adoption list was available. Second, one package was new and had no adopters. Third, one package was inadvertently not tabulated when the results were compiled for this study and there was not time to go back and include the data. The omitted package had approximately 80 adopters on the list.

A review of Table 1 reveals some interesting information. Merely counting the number of adopters of each experiential learning package and summing reveals a total of 661 United States 4-year and 2-year institutional adoptions. When institutions which appear on more than one list are taken into account, there are still 485 different institutional adopters represented. Thus, it is apparent that there are many institutions in the United States using these packages.

For type of user Table I reveals that the majority of the 485 Institutions on the lists are 4-year (84.1%), rather than 2-year (15.9%) institutions. In fact for each package there are more 4-year than 2-year institutions. One could hypothesize that the vast majority of users should be 4-year rather than 2-year institutions based upon the nature of the experiential learning packages covered and the courses for which they are designed. As noted previously the packages included in our survey are basically designed for courses in principles of management (C, E, F), personnel/human resources administration (A, D, H), organization behavior (B, J), and organization theory (G, I). Of these courses principles of management is the one most frequently offered at 2-year institutions with personnel/human resources administration second. Courses in organization behavior and organization theory are not generally offered at 2-year institutions. In addition, the experiential learning packages frequently are designed for advanced courses and take a more theoretical orientation and assume a broader

¹ We are indebted to Gayle Assetto for assistance with this study.

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TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF USERS BY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PACKAGE
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PACKAGE

Letter Designation	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	j	Row Totals	Row Total Excluding Overlaps
Functional Emphasis ^a	PERS	OB	HOT	PERS	MGI	MGT	OT	PERS	OT	OB		
User Characteristics^b												
Total No. of Users	239	109	87	80	48	41	36	13	7	1	661	485
Type of User												
4-year Institution	215	101	65	71	36	35	35	12	7	1	581	408
2-year Institution	24	8	22	9	12	3	1	1	0	0	80	77
Institutional Support												
Public	154	64	63	59	28	24	26	6	4	0	428	296
Private	85	45	24	21	20	17	10	7	3	1	233	189
Number of Students^c												
Mean for all users	11175	9041	8878	12422	8527	11981	16096	9259	16707	1802	10804	
Mean for 4-year Institutions	11768	9357	8397	12717	9049	12630	16535	9215	16707	1802	11232	---
Mean for 2-year Institutions	5921	5087	10300	10121	6963	3762	740	9785	---	---	7573	---
Mean for Public Institutions	14148	11863	10981	15240	12470	17061	19542	16466	20016	---	13939	---
Mean for Private Institutions	5660	5089	3358	4105	3006	4809	7137	3080	12295	1802	4937	---

^a PERS = personnel/human resources; OB a organizational behavior; MGT principles of management; OT organizational theory.

^b Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study 1980 (5) and The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1980 (11) were used to identify whether institutions were 2-year or 4-year, private or public, and institutional size.

^c The number of institutions used to calculate the means are not the same as for type of user and institutional support because institutional size was not available for some of the institutions.

background than would typically be found in 2-year institutions. Analysis of the data in Table 1 reveals that in fact the highest percent of adoptions for 2-year institutions is for the principles of management oriented packages (21.0%) followed by personnel/human resources (10.2%), organizational behavior (7.3%), and organization theory (2.3%).

For source of institutional support Table 1 reveals that the majority of the institutions are public (61.0%) rather than private (39.0%). For only one package (H) is the number of 2-year institutions greater than the number of 4-year institutions. Table 1 also reveals that the average number of students in 4-year institutions is greater than for 2-year institutions for eight of the ten packages. Likewise, the average number of students in the public institutions is greater than in the private for all ten of the packages.

DISCUSSION

By analyzing publishers' adoption lists we have identified frequency of institutional use for ten experiential learning packages. Further by looking at characteristics of the users we have seen that the majority of users are 4-year rather than 2-year and public rather than private institutions.

Three limitations of this study which indicate that we are understating the extent to which institutions use experiential learning packages should be noted. First, by focusing only on publishers' adoption lists experiential learning packages developed at institutions but not published are neglected. Yet such experiential learning exercises are frequently published in journals (1,2,3) and proceedings (7,10), and therefore are available for use. Second, the experiential learning packages included in this study represent only management oriented packages when in fact there are packages available for other functional areas as well. Thus, the packages included represent only a small sample of those available. Horn and Cleaves (4) list hundreds of experiential learning packages for various functional areas. In addition, the reader will recall that we requested information for 27 packages but received replies regarding only 13. Finally, the reader should be aware that we did not survey all publishers, and, therefore, may have missed some of the larger institutional adoptions. For example, Pfeiffer and Jones (9) have now published numerous annual volumes containing experiential learning exercises.

This paper has documented that there are many institutional users of experiential learning packages. More research is needed, however, to more precisely identify characteristics of institutional users which might influence design and promotion of these packages. For example, questions such as the following need to be

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answered: Are the adopters institutions which have large classes (200 or more students) or are we typically dealing with small classes? Are the packages the major part of the course or merely a supplement?

APPENDIX

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