

THE TWO-STEP FLOW OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:  
A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Louis C. Mancuso  
Xavier University of Louisiana

INTRODUCTION

J. Duane Hoover and Carlton J. Whitehead defined experiential learning in the following manner:

Experiential learning exists when a personally responsible participant(s) cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally processes knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes in a learning situation characterized by a high level of active involvement. [1, p. 25]

Thus, experiential learning has been used to mean anything from an encounter group experience to a “field experiment” in entrepreneurship.

Xavier University’s Marketing area has used the experiential learning technique combined with the traditional teaching methodology, the lecture method, for the past four years. It was discovered that when students are exposed to the lecture- experiential learning teaching methodology and summer intern- ships, the students are more mature and more willing to learn when they return to school. Thus, the two-step flow of experiential learning consists of the following: 1) a lecture- experiential leaning teaching methodology and 2) an internship.

THE TWO-STEP FLOW

An example of the two-step flow of experiential learning is as follows: a student at Xavier University took a course in Marketing Research during the 1977 Spring Semester. The research class teaching methodology consisted of a lecture and an experiential learning exercise. The title of the exercise was, “Why Blacks Are Not Buying the A.M.C. Pacer in the Metropolitan Area of New Orleans”. This project was sponsored by a local A.M.C. dealership. During the summer of 1977, the student received an internship with the Dow Corning Corporation at Midland, Michigan. The task consisted of a market research project.

The student’s job performance at Dow Corning was excellent and it has been observed at Xavier that he is more mature and more willing to learn.

Similar experiences have occurred in other Marketing fields,

## Exploring Experiential Learning: Simulations and Experiential Exercises, Volume 5, 1978

such as, Retailing and Sales. During the 1976 Summer Session a class in Retailing was taught using the lecture-experiential learning teaching methodology. The experiential learning teaching methodology used was a field experiment. The students were required to make recommendations on how the performance of the Xavier University Book Store could be improved. The analysis of the book store consisted of every phase of the operation from receiving to traffic flow. The results of the study was presented to the head of the book store operation.

A number of students have received internships in the retailing area. Most of these students receiving internships do better in school and appear to be more mature. One student having taken the Retailing course obtained an internship with a local retail establishment. The student has been promoted twice in her tenure at the store and the student's grades have improved considerably since experiencing an internship.

A third example of the two-step flow of experiential learning occurred last year when students were exposed to a Sales Force Management course. This course required the students to develop sales strategies and selling techniques. Two students taking the course received internships from Chesebrough Pond's Inc. Their duties required them to travel a certain geographic area to sell specific accounts in the area. Upon completion of the internship program the students were notified that they had attained first and third place nationwide in sales. When these two students returned to Xavier University they were more motivated and more willing to learn.

An interesting by-product of the internship program is that students not receiving internships or students not eligible for internships, because of class level, seem to try harder after hearing of the experiences of the students receiving internships.

### MEASURING THE EFFECTS

The Marketing area at Xavier University has received over the last two years approximately thirty internships. Observation of the students has revealed that students appear to be more mature and their grades appear to be higher when the students return from internship experiences. Testing instruments are being developed in a pre- and post- test mode to ascertain student motivation in school, student interest, and the student's feelings on attained knowledge. Also, testing instruments are being developed for the companies to ascertain their feelings on how the student accomplished the tasks assigned during the internship. Companies will also be queried to ascertain their interest in experiential learning.

### SUMMARY

The two-step flow of experiential learning from a casual

### **Exploring Experiential Learning: Simulations and Experiential Exercises, Volume 5, 1978**

observation reveals that the student returns to school more mature and more willing to learn. Companies appear to like experiential learning because it saves them money. The reduced time in training accounts for the savings. The students returning to school after internship experiences seem to affect their classmates by their accomplishments. This diffusion process motivates the students to do better in school so that they can obtain internships the following summer.

Three ingredients are needed to have the two-step flow of experiential learning 1) a professor willing to invest the time in the teaching methodology, 2) a professor willing to seek internship positions, and 3) companies willing to work with the school. When these three ingredients are brought together, the benefits to the students are considerable.

#### REFERENCE

1. Hoover, J. Duane and Carlton J. Whitehead. "An Experiential-Cognitive Methodology in the First Course in Management: Some Preliminary Results," Association for Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, The Proceedings of the Second National ABSEL Conference, Bloomington, Indiana: April 9-11, 1975.