

Experiential Learning Enters the Eighties, Volume 7, 1980

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO DESIGN A RESEARCH -BASED AND CLASSROOM- EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR EXERCISE

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ABSTRACT

The bulk of our examination of experiential learning has focused upon application of the various techniques we call “experiential.” Past ABSEL meetings have had several interesting and relevant sessions on such topics as group size effects, the importance of debriefing, facilitation skills, evaluation methods, and even one on the “ethics of deceit.” These sessions, mostly focusing on sharpening our “experiential skills,” have contributed to the development of our field(s) and to the development of ABSEL members as individual practitioners.

It is interesting to note, however, how little we have tended to examine the quality of the content of the experiential exercises we so freely use in our classroom and/or consulting activities. The fact remains whether or not we have always avoided using low-level, transparent, or even simply “Mickey Mouse” techniques and/or content in our exercises.

The allegations of low validity have been particularly focused upon the Organizational Behavior (OB) field, and terms like “touchie-feelie” often roll too freely off the lips of our skeptical and/or critical colleagues. We feel that one way to address these criticisms, and, more importantly, to continue to develop the Organizational Behavior experiential field, is to look closely at the quality of the content our OB exercises contain. We feel that experiential exercises in OB should be based, whenever possible, on the established research literature of OB.

The purpose of the tutorial is the presentation of a technique which would allow instructors to design research - based and classroom - effective organizational behavior exercises.

The technique requires that the exercise topics meet two criteria:

- 1) There must be substantial empirical support for the phenomenon.
- 2) It must be a phenomenon/topic of interest and important in the area of organizational behavior.

The first criterion must be met in order to insure that the created effect is sufficiently robust to withstand the methodological compromises necessary to accommodate classroom constraints. The second criterion insures that the exercise is based on a non-trivial phenomenon.

Examples of successful exercises will be presented and an opportunity for participants to develop skills in the selection of topics and classroom adaptations of experimental paradigms will be provided.