Should I Encourage Experiential Learning During Class? How?

Presented by:
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Presenter Bio:

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Why Experiential Learning Inside the Classroom?

- Students prefer active learning
- Lectures are not engaging
- Boredom is a problem

Agenda

- What is (& is not) experiential learning
- When to use it
- Examples of activities
- Steps for design & implementation
What is Experiential Learning?

“... a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, & value from direct experience”

—Association for Experiential Education

Faculty Roles

• “Guide on the side,” not “sage on the stage.”
• Guide students through process of learning; “watch them learn.”
• Select learning experiences, co-create safe learning environment.

Experiential Learning is NOT:

• Transferring knowledge to be regurgitated
• Students teaching themselves
• Lightweight, fluffy
• Busy work
• Experience alone
• Narrowly defined professional training
• Something that happens outside the classroom
Why Experiential Learning
Inside the Classroom?

- Faculty can immediately correct mistakes
- Good for students with busy schedules
- Works well for different learning styles, from abstract to concrete
- Fosters collaboration

Why Experiential Learning
Inside the Classroom?

- Works well in large classes
- Faculty can observe students in practice for direct assessment
- Easier to organize & control than out-of-class activities

Use Experiential Learning for:

- Synthesis & analysis of information to solve complex problems
- Application of concepts to practice in new contexts
- Effective communication
- Working collaboratively
Use Experiential Learning for:

- Exercise of well-reasoned judgment
- Learning how to learn
- Using a discipline’s knowledge to address social issues
- Other outcomes that involve relating, interpreting, decision making, etc.

Experiential Learning Isn’t Best for:

- Transfer of knowledge
- Memorization of data
- Identifying, ordering, checking
- When there’s only 1 correct answer

Example of EL Inside the Classroom

**Role Play**

- Students are given a situation that contains different perspectives
- Individuals take on different roles & work through the situation
- Works well in large classes
- The same situation can be varied & repeated
Example of EL Inside the Classroom

Problem-Based Learning
- Students solve complex problems that have more than 1 solution
- Students work in groups
- Students identify what they know, what else they need to know, & how to acquire more information
- Students resolve policy, ethical issues

Example of EL Inside the Classroom

Group Projects
- For hypothetical or real clients
- Can be nondirect service-learning
- Works well in large classes

Example of EL Inside the Classroom

Debate & Deliberation
- Debate is oppositional; capitalizes on weaknesses; goal is to win
- Deliberation is collaborative; seeks others’ strengths; goal is ground for common action
- Can lead to civic action
Critical Reflection: A Fundamental Practice of Experiential Learning

- How students make meaning of knowledge & experience.
- The process of analyzing, reconsidering, & questioning one’s experiences within a broad context of issues & content knowledge.

Critical Reflection in Experiential Learning

- What did I learn? Where did it come from? How reliable is it?
- What does it mean for me?
- What questions remain?
- How will I use my learning in the future?

Critical Reflection in Experiential Learning

- Individual or group
- Many forms
- Select form based on learning outcomes
- Use prompts to guide students to higher levels of complex thinking
In-Class Experiential Learning
Steps for Design & Implementation

1. Identify learning outcomes.
2. Create a safe environment.
3. Select an activity that pushes students to their learning edge.
4. Introduce students to the concept & practice of EL; cover basic material to be used.

5. Engage students; provide guidance & support as needed.
6. Allow for discussion of process & result.
7. Provide structure for critical reflection.
8. Obtain students’ feedback.

Assessment of Experiential Learning

- Consider assessing process & product.
- Use rubric(s).
- Provide rubric(s) early.
Example of Grading EL Reflective Analysis Papers

4 points = Exceptional, thoughtful critique that truly integrated course concepts & research into an analysis of the experience

3 points = Very good, thoughtful critique that applies course concepts & research

2 points = Average to below average analysis, does not thoroughly integrate course concepts & research

1 point = Completed the assignment, but did not provide a thoughtful analysis

—O’Brien, K. M., PSYC 319D, University of Maryland, 2010

Teaching is leading students into a situation in which they can only escape by thinking.
Thank you!
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