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This chapter introduces some of the forms and practices of experiential education and raises some challenging questions about the role that pedagogy plays in institutions of higher learning.

Forms and Issues in Experiential Learning

David Thornton Moore

Programs falling under the general rubric of *experiential education* take a number of forms, varying on several dimensions; what is offered here is a schematic overview. In general, they all involve students in activities that look rather different from more traditional classroom-based methods: the formal lecture and discussion, the reading assignment, and the sit-down examination. Although these experiential activities go by different names in different program formats, they share the core characteristic of students' direct engagement in productive work outside the classroom. In some way, the activity is thought to bring the student-intern in contact with the phenomena, concepts, and problems addressed in classes, curricula, and disciplines (Sweitzer and King, 2004).

Experiential Learning Approaches and Forms

The various approaches to experiential learning share some philosophical and theoretical foundations, as well. Nearly everyone cites John Dewey, from *How We Think* (1910) to *Experience and Education* (1938), drawing out the simple principle that "experience is the best teacher." More subtly, they use Dewey's conception of learning as an active process of grappling with conditions and problems in the world; constructing and testing solutions; and interacting with others to make sense and make progress. Some of them acknowledge with Dewey (1938) that not all experience is educative, that some experience can thwart or discourage further learning.

Many draw on David A. Kolb's *Experiential Learning* (1984) as a theory about how learners apprehend and transform various kinds of knowledge

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based in experience; in certain circles, this text is a bible for practitioners. Others cite Donald A. Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) for its discussion of how professionals think in action. Still others have advocated the use of theories of situated cognition (Kirschner and Whitson, 1997), activity (Engeström, Miettinen, and Punamaki, 1999) and practice (Chaiklin and Lave, 1993) as a way of understanding learning as a function of experience (see Moore, 1999a). Most often, though, advocates of experiential learning focus more on practical matters than on theory.

Those practices vary on several key dimensions: their programmatic forms and activities, their missions and philosophies, their constituencies and participants, their pedagogical practices, their locations in the university or college, and their claims about impacts and results. What follows constitutes a brief review of some of those forms.

Internships. Considered the most generic of the terms used to denote experience-based learning activities by college students, the word *internship* is sometimes used by people in both service-learning programs and cooperative education for the out-of-classroom element of their students' work; people in the liberal arts disciplines such as sociology and psychology also use it to refer to the field component of their courses. Even those noncredit programs based in career services offices use the word.

In structure, the internship may be a free-standing activity not connected to a classroom, the experiential equivalent of an independent study: A student gets credit (the amount depends on hours per week spent in the field) for working in a business, a social agency, or a cultural or governmental institution. She may work alongside regular employees of the organization, or may execute a specialized project on her own or in a small team; she may sit in on staff or board meetings or attend public events; she may interview or observe certain people to get a sense of what goes on there. Conversely, the internship may be an add-on to a classroom course, an activity conceptually related to the theme and substance of the class, in which the student spends, say, three or four hours a week volunteering in a social agency or shadowing a corporate executive. On the other hand, the internship may *not* be for school credit, but still entail direct work in some kind of organizational setting.

Internship programs typically articulate several kinds of missions: exploring the intersection between theory and practice (Sweitzer and King, 2004, p. 9), career exploration and development (Fedorko, 2006), or personal and professional development (Inkster and Ross, 1995). They also make various claims about enhancing critical thinking and conceptual understanding, responsible and ethical behavior, and the capacity to work with diverse people. Some are contained in an academic unit; others are found in an interdepartmental space under the provost; and still others are housed in career services or community service offices.

Pedagogical practices vary across forms and schools, as well. Most credit-bearing programs require some form of guided reflection: learning

contracts, journals, written papers, and sometimes concurrent seminars (Sweitzer and King, 2004; Milnes, 2003). In Chapter 5 of this volume, Joseph A. Raelin more fully explores this work-based form of experiential education.

Service-Learning. Perhaps the most widely analyzed form of experiential learning in higher education is service-learning: out-of-classroom community service activity combined with the study of academic concepts and theories. The precise relationship between those two major elements is a matter of some controversy. Some practitioners focus on the service; others stress thinking through theory (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz, 1999). Most, however, do insist on at least some degree of reflection on the experience, on exercises, discussions, and readings that place the service work in historical, sociological, and political contexts (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Butin, 2005).

The missions of service-learning programs focus on the twin dimensions of enhancing student learning and development and meeting social needs and promoting social change (Butin, 2005). Practitioners of service-learning tend to rest their work explicitly on ethical and political principles: for example, social justice or celebration of diversity (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz, 1999).

Service-learning activities are often attached to courses as either required or optional components, especially in departments in the social sciences and professions. A student in a course on urban poverty, for instance, might be required to spend three hours a week in a homeless shelter or soup kitchen; students in an international relations course in a New York City college might work an afternoon a week in a U.N. agency or in a nongovernmental organization (NGO). To varying degrees, the course instructors might draw on students' internship experiences as part of their discussions of issues such as economic development or human rights.

A number of texts offer pedagogical suggestions for service-learning practitioners (Schoenfeld, 2004; Cress, Collier, Reitenauer, and Associates, 2005). More systematic research has been done in the realm of service-learning than in any other form of experiential education. A peer-reviewed quarterly, the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, publishes studies ranging from evaluations of student impacts to theoretical explorations of ethics. A decade ago, Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles (1999) offered a book cleverly titled *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?*, arguing among other things that learning from service depends on serious and extensive reflection. More recently, Dan W. Butin (2005) edited an anthology on "critical issues and directions" in service-learning at the university level.

Cooperative Education. The third major form of experiential learning began in 1906 at the University of Cincinnati as a way of combining the school-based transmission of technical expertise with the traditional benefits of first-hand experience in the mechanical trades (Ryder, 1987, pp.

3–5). The core function of co-op education centers on building students' career skills and knowledge (Howard, 2004, p. 3). Although a few co-op programs operate in liberal arts colleges (Linn, Howard, and Miller, 2004), most serve preprofessional students in fields such as engineering, business, and healthcare.

The pedagogical strategies underlying co-op programs vary, but virtually all entail periods of work coordinated with periods of study. The conceptual connections between the direct experience and the classroom study are explored to varying degrees through varying pedagogies. Some institutions, especially those using a parallel format, insist on explicit and extensive reflection on the experience back at school; others appear to assume that the transfer from classroom to workplace is obvious, a matter of "application" (Ryder, 1987). Research on cooperative education is fairly extensive and tends to focus on questions of student effects (retention, performance in the major, career choice, starting salaries, post-graduation employment performance, and similar parameters) and on issues of institutionalization (administering and funding programs, attracting faculty support, and so on). *The Journal of Cooperative Education* is an excellent resource for learning more about this model of experiential education.

Other Models. While internships, service-learning, and cooperative education represent the most widespread forms of experiential learning, several others are common. One may be called student-faculty research, or undergraduate research experience (URE): the use of undergraduates as research assistants and collaborators by faculty members engaged in their own investigations (Kardash, 2000).

Community-based research (CBR), discussed by Elise Dallimore, David A. Rochefort, and Kristen Simonelli in Chapter 2, is a growing form of experiential learning in which faculty and students cooperate with local organizations to conduct studies that somehow meet the needs of communities. While CBR might be regarded as a form of service-learning, it can also be seen as a social science version of the laboratory, in which students gain first-hand experience of the process of formulating and pursuing researchable questions (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoeker, and Donohue, 2003).

Study abroad can be regarded in some ways as a form of experiential learning, as Lori Gardinier and Dawn Colquitt-Anderson argue in Chapter 3. Students not only take courses in regular classrooms, they also participate in a wide variety of culturally challenging encounters simply by living in a new place; moreover, some study abroad programs encourage students to do internships and service-learning with local businesses, nonprofits, and cultural organizations.

Issues in Experiential Education

Advocates of experience-based learning in higher education make a passionate case for the benefits of this program and pedagogy (Kaye, 2004).

Some evidence does suggest that, at least under certain conditions, it enhances student learning and development (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Linn and others, 2004; see various issues of the *Michigan Journal for Community Service Learning*, the *Journal of Cooperative Education*, and the *NSEE Quarterly*). Moreover, a number of commentators, particularly in service-learning, have addressed important issues related to experiential learning in higher education (Jacoby and Associates, 1996; Butin, 2005). In the remainder of this chapter, however, I want to identify and explore two major challenges that I believe face the field: whether experience is an appropriate source of learning in higher education, and, if it is, whether existing pedagogical methods realize its potential. I will take a position on these issues, but only tentatively.

The Mission Question. The first problem is whether experience *belongs* in the university, whether the fundamental purposes of higher education are served by students' working in businesses, government agencies, and arts institutions, or providing service in community-based organizations. The answer depends, of course, on one's conception of the mission of higher education—and on that score, there is deep division. There are *idealists* who see the university as a place for the study of classic texts, pure science, and theories unencumbered by practical realities (Bloom, 1987; Hart, 2001). Even Stanley Fish (2001), certainly no cultural conservative, argues that the university should only teach students to understand and produce scholarship. Fish has no problem with internships and community service—so long as they do not count toward graduation or earn grades (p. 21). On the other hand, *pragmatists* argue that the university should serve practical social purposes, though with a deep commitment to democratic values. Clark Kerr (1963/2001) is the leading example; Adrianna J. Kezar and her colleagues (2005) are more recent voices for that stance.

Another way to frame the question focuses on the forms of knowledge propagated by traditional university instruction and by direct work experience: Are they compatible? Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) provides a tool for addressing that issue by drawing on Aristotle's distinction among three kinds of intellectual virtue: (1) *episteme*, often translated as "science," is certain knowledge of the objective, the eternal, the universal, the rational (p. 55–56); (2) *techne*, sometimes called "art" or "craft," is "an activity [that is] concrete, variable and context-dependent" and whose "objective is application of technical knowledge and skills according to a pragmatic instrumental rationality" (p. 56); and (3) *phronesis*, translated as "prudence" or "practical common sense," goes beyond objective or instrumental knowledge to reach *judgment*, the process of deliberating not just on what *is,* but on what is *good* in relation to values and interests embedded in the context.

At the risk of oversimplifying, I will argue that the modes of knowing most common in the university tend toward *episteme* and *techne*. Especially in the liberal arts, and particularly in the "hard" sciences, students learn

about universals, about decontextualized concepts and theories. Even in the humanities, analysis is expected to be rational, a systematic interaction between the knower and the text. Knowledge in the epistemic sense is not about *application*, about the concrete; it is about the general, the abstract.

Professional education could be regarded as *teche*-based, but in most professional schools, faculty in fact seek a merger between *episteme* and *techne*: They focus on activity that is "context-dependent," but they attempt to impose regularities—theories, best practices—on that activity; they provide students with rough-and-ready rules and frameworks designed to tell them what to do in concrete practice.

The university is *not*, however, prone to engaging in phronetic inquiry, according to Flyvbjerg (2001). Faculty tend to pose questions like "how can I best understand this phenomenon?" (whether the phenomenon is the behavior of subatomic particles or the meaning of a Greek tragedy), or "what works on this problem?" (whether the problem is treating a child with autism or planning a new town).

Activity in the "real world" tends to engage participants more often in *phronesis*. There is always an element of improvisation, of bricolage, of seat-of-the-pants problem-solving, based in concrete situations but requiring judgments about the good and the right and the effective. Of course there are "best practices" manuals that try to smooth out contextual variations; and of course ethical deliberations are sometimes less than rigorous. But situated activity inevitably goes beyond the epistemic and the technical.

There is a second useful framework for analyzing the relation between knowledge-use in school and in the sites where students do internships and community service: theories of situated cognition and situated learning. The basic argument of this school of thought is that people think and learn differently in different social contexts (Kirschner and Whitson, 1997; Lave and Wenger, 1999): they formulate problems differently; they use different logics to solve those problems; they apply different criteria to judging ideas and actions. Jerome Bruner (1996) describes different "frames for thinking," or ways of making meaning—the actional, the propositional, the interpretive, the normative—and argues that different social contexts tend to favor one mode over the other. Clearly, the university tends to privilege the propositional-scientific, whereas real-world behavior tends toward the actional mode.

If we accept the premises of the situated cognition theorists, and return to the mission question, we can refine the problem: If experiential learning varies significantly from academic learning in terms of the nature of knowledge-use generally practiced in the university, does it really belong there? Clearly, there is a problem of fit: the kinds of knowledge-use in the workplace or service site do not map easily onto the kinds of knowledge propounded by the college curriculum.

That lack of fit does not settle the mission question. One could argue that the function of higher education *should* be revised to include enhancing students' capacity to engage in phronetic, actional, ethical, and contextualized forms of knowledge-use in a variety of situations. William M. Sullivan and Matthew S. Rosin (2008) lay out a new mission for higher education focused on bridging the existing chasm between theory and practice, between objective science and normative action. Thomas R. Bailey, Katherine A. Hughes, and David Thornton Moore (2004) conclude that, under certain circumstances and given certain practices, experience can be a meaningful and productive element of school-based learning.

Still, there is great resistance to experience-based programs among many faculty, administrators, and theorists of higher education. Many academics object to what they perceive as a political bias among practitioners of experiential learning (Bloom, 1987). They see progressive politics driving these programs, and question whether that leaning disqualifies them as an academic enterprise. Others, like Fish (2001), simply think experience is not an appropriate source of scholarly knowledge.

The Pedagogy Question. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that a strong case can be made for incorporating experience into the curriculum and pedagogy of the university, that experience is a legitimate source of higher learning. The second question I propose to address is whether our teaching strategies make good educational use of that opportunity. Coming at the issue from another direction, what value is added by the university to the inherent educational value of the direct experience of work or service? I am asking this question on a conceptual level; I do not propose to review the literature on student outcomes in experience-based programs, but only to raise some concerns about pedagogy.

Imagine this case: A student is taking a course on organizational sociology, where she is reading Max Weber on bureaucracy; during the same term, she is doing an internship with the New York City Department of Education, one of the world's great bureaucracies. My question is this: What educational benefit does she get by doing those two things at the same time? Does she use Weber to understand the dynamics of her experience at the office? Does her experience at the office enrich her grasp of Weber? What might her professor do to enhance the synergy between these two modes of knowledge?

Part of the problem stems from the insight about situated cognition: What are the terms by which this student would explore the intersection between Weber and her work? At the internship site, she thinks in an actional mode: How can I bring these people together for a meeting? If I bring up this issue to my boss, will she think I'm stupid? Weber, on the other hand, operates at the level of organizational patterns—systems of rules, career paths, modes of leadership—not at the level of personal experience. So how does one form of thinking enhance the other? I once interviewed a student who was doing an internship at a municipal planning

agency as part of a course on urban politics; I asked him if any of his readings connected to his experience, and he mentioned Marx: "It's all about power, right?" That "application" of Marx to the contingencies of his agency's work seems fairly thin.

One way theorists discuss this problem is by raising the question of *transfer of learning*: How and under what conditions does knowledge from one context carry over into another? David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon (1989) found that transfer does occur, but only when someone calls the learner's attention to the connections and encourages her to examine them repeatedly. Similarly, Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, Jr. (1999) found that the impact of service-learning on such cognitive skills as understanding the complexities of a social problem depends on the intensity of the reflection process: the effects do not show up with even moderate reflection. A number of practitioner-theorists have insisted on the crucial importance of reflection as an element of experiential pedagogy (Weil and McGill, 1989; Boud, Cohen, and Walker, 1993). These pedagogical strategies do exist, and they can be effective *if* they are pursued rigorously.

But there are factors constraining the efficacy of school-based practices for enhancing experiential learning. For one thing, students often resist it: They tend to care more about doing the work than about reflecting on it; and they often see the internship as a mode of career exploration, as a foot in the door, and not primarily as a learning experience. My own observation in the course of interviewing college interns and observing service-learning courses is that the instructor sometimes has to pull teeth for students to do the rigorous reflection. Or they do it, but on a personalistic and emotional level: "My boss is such a jerk!" or "I really felt like an adult!" These conversations are useful entries into deeper and larger issues and ideas—but it takes some persistence to get them to go there.

Without interrogating the work or service experience with some degree of intensity, the student gains little from its straddling the academic and the real worlds. The value added by the school, I would argue, is minimal in that case: The student could have learned the same things just by virtue of having a part-time job or service activity. Experiential pedagogy, done right, is extremely rewarding—but also extremely demanding (Moore, 1999b).

Concluding Remarks

A very large portion of college students these days do internships, cooperative education, or service-learning. The common wisdom among college students today is that an internship is a crucial element of their higher education experience, especially as a strategy for easing the transition to a career. Indeed, the proportion of students who do internships of one kind or another at some point during their undergraduate careers may be exceeded only by the number of them who post to their Facebook pages.

The typical student, that is, spends some time in an organized, recognized, sometimes accredited out-of-classroom but school-sponsored learning activity: working in a business or a medical center; performing some kind of community service; participating in an Alternative Spring Break project; engaging in field-based research to fulfill the requirements of a course.

If these experiences are structured effectively and processed rigorously, they can add a great deal of value to students' learning and to the educational strength of the university. In fact, they have the potential to transform higher education, to broaden and deepen the nature of knowledge and learning that goes on in the college, and to alter the relationship between student and teacher and between university and community.

But these transformative effects depend on careful planning and execution, on avoiding the tendency to fall back on the adage that "every experience is educational," on pushing students—and faculty—to think rigorously and extensively about the intersections between theory and practice. We need to foster critical thinking through decisive methods of instruction, so students can understand not only how to do things, but why they work the way they do, and what ethical principles are at stake as they engage in real-world activity.

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