## Teaching OB in a Classroom as Organization Format: Your Questions Answered



### MOBTC 2018 at Coastal Carolina University

### Reflective Reinvention: Harnessing our Heritage to Reshape Management

## Abstract (100 word maximum)

Classroom as organization (CAO) is an experiential and transformational approach to teaching that can be applied to teach any management topic. In CAO the classroom becomes an organization and learning occurs by doing, where students are delegated responsibilities traditionally performed by the professor. The teacher is more of a coach, not addressing the class or lecturing, but rather helping the students to fulfill their roles, become part of a functioning organization, and learn organizational behavior by becoming an organization together.This presentation will give an overview of one example of CAO known as the XB (experiential based) classroom.

## Conference Track

This panel presentation is a part of the conference track “Reflective Reinvention: Harnessing our Heritage to Reshape Management”. The CAO methodology of teaching management and organizational behavior was established by Cohen in 1976, and continues to garner the interest of practitioners and researchers today. The Journal of Management Education has been the main source of published articles on this topic since its inception. This panel discussion highlights a form of CAO for the OB classroom called XB that was written by Roger Putzel. Presently there are members of MOBTS who teach using the XB Manual and who are working together to re-write and update that manual. The rich tradition of teaching CAO from the 1970’s until today is evident. MOBTS members intend to continue the practice and research of XB and other forms of CAO making it more accessible and easier to adopt in the future.

## Three Keywords

## Classroom-as-organization, XB Manual, organizational behavior experiential exercise

## Session format

Symposium: Panel Discussion

## Time Requested

60 or 90 minutes - Since this panel discusses a semester long Classroom as Organization approach to teaching a 90 minute session would allow the time to cover the basic overview and to address the questions of panelists. A 60 minute session could work as well, but would give a less in depth view of this form of CAO.

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## Introduction

The use of experiential learning in the OB classroom has a long and deep history. Classroom as organization (CAO) falls on the extreme end of the experiential continuum. This presentation addresses a form of CAO that makes the OB class an organization that provides OB learning, student evaluation, teaching and all other functions of the classroom. The teacher (the senior manager of the organization) is more of a coach, not addressing the class or offering any form of lecture, but rather helping the students to fulfill their roles, become part of a functioning organization, and learn organizational behavior by becoming an organization together. The XB classroom is presently being used in lower level college classes, upper level college classes and MBA programs.

## Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

Classroom as organization (CAO) is an approach at the extreme end of the experiential learning intensity (Sleeth & Brown 1984). Cohen (1976), Cotton (1975) and Claire (1976) were the first to produce classroom as organization models of teaching organizational behavior. Cotton’s experiment was a disaster (his own words) and was discontinued. Cohen’s form of CAO became the foundation for many variations of CAO over the years, including Clair’s variation. CAO models range on a number of points including: teacher lecture versus student teaching, teacher grading versus student grading, use of teams or groups versus whole classroom organization, and decision making by teacher or student. From 1976 to the present there are more than 20 forms of CAO articulated in research articles. The different models vary on all of the aforementioned characteristics of CAO. As described by Cohen (1976), the objective of the CAO:

…is not to simulate an organization, but rather to create genuine organizational issues for students, to put them in the position of an organizational member who must deal with such problems as: how does work get allocated; how does one work with others who bring different expertise to tasks; how does one influence and motivate subordinates, peers and superiors; how does one cope with ambiguity in solving difficult tasks which do not have any obviously correct single answer; how can disagreements among coworkers be resolved; and how will decisions be made (p. 14).

Proponents of CAO speak passionately about it and suggest they would never go back to regular teaching. And yet, since its initial description by Cohen (1976), CAO has not come close to replacing the traditional lecture format of teaching, nor has it become widely adopted. Why is this? This presentation offers information on how to do CAO for the OB classroom, but it also makes space for asking questions and posing concerns that professors may have as they consider adopting the CAO methodology.

The XB manual is a model of CAO that falls on the extreme end of all the variables in CAO: student teaching, student grading (ranks), use of whole classroom as organization and decisions made by students. It is a comprehensive format for teaching the OB classroom in a fully CAO manner. The use of CAO in general is limited to few professors and this holds true for the XB manual as well even though it is a pre-packaged, fully integrated form of CAO. XB can be highly successful in helping students develop the skill side of learning OB in much more depth than a regular classroom could. The presenters believe that the slow adoption rate of this form of teaching is partially due to professors feeling intimidated or confused by how different XB is from a “normal” classroom experience, and unsure of how to make it work. This presentation introduces the XB Manual as a resource for professors and offers insight from others who teach XB to help prepare them for adopting the methodology. The organizers of the panel will also take notes on professors’ concerns and fears about adopting the manual since they are involved in re-writing it to make it easier to use and more accessible.

## Learning Objectives

* Participants will understand the basic premise of CAO and the specific way that XB utilizes a CAO approach.
* Participants will understand a broad overview of how the XB classroom functions.
* Participants will walk away with the knowledge, connections, and community support to begin the journey of becoming an XB teacher if they feel it is a good fit personally, for their student population and for their administration.

## Panel Discussion Overview

This panel represents seasoned professors who are highly experienced in teaching XB/CAO as well as those who are newer professors who have just started teaching in this way. One of the authors will present on the panel and the other will moderate the panel discussion. The authors have both taught XB and are in regular communication with the XB teaching community. We will invite members of this community to be on the panel who can address each topic. The various voices on the panel will help highlight some of the benefits and difficulties in adopting this method of teaching OB as well as some practical advice on how to get started and be successful. The moderators will work with panel members before the conference to address topics succinctly and in a way that can easily be understood by professors new to XB. Participants will gain insight into what the journey might look like from adoption into becoming more fluent in this style of teaching as well as discovering the unique learning opportunity that it offers to students. The purpose is to introduce this methodology of OB teaching as well as to help teachers of OB gain the insight, understanding and connections to feel confident to adopt the XB methodology.

## Session Description

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| **Time**60 min.(90 min.) | **Objective** | **Content** |
| 0-5 | Welcome & Introduction | * Introduce speakers
* Outline format of the session
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| 5-15 | Overview of CAO | * Ask for participants experience/knowledge of CAO
* Fill in with brief history/explanation
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| 15-25(15-45) | The XB Manual | * Various panel members will answer these specific aspects of XB
* Overview of how it works in general
* Birdseye view of a semester
* Why rank grading?
* Weekly memos
* Reading task forces
* How to grade in XB
* Major outcomes of XB - why is it so great?
* Advice - if you were to get started for next semester what would you do, how would you prepare?
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| 25 – 55(45 – 85) | Panel Discussion | * Each participant writes one or more questions. Panel moderators collect questions and ask the most relevant/most asked questions to the panel.
* Anticipated topics to be covered: why teach XB? What kind of a person can do it? What kind of teaching does it involve? What are the benefits? Drawbacks? How can I be prepared to teach it? How do I get started? Is there a support community?
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| 55-60(85-90) | Recap | * Hand out information sheet with XB manual info, the contacts of the panelists and organizers, and a way to connect with the support community.
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## Resource Needs

There are no additional resource requirements beyond beyond the typically available classroom resources (i.e. PC computer/projector, whiteboard/markers)

## Unique Contribution

Although the XB manual style of teaching has been presented before at OBTC, this is a unique piece of work that presents the material in a way that it has not been presented before at MOBTS or elsewhere.

## MOBTS Experience

This is the first time submitting to MOBTS for Dr. Thomas. This is the second time submitting to MOBTS for Dr. Chappell.

## Resources

Clare, D. A. (1976). Organizational behavior, Inc.: Variation on a theme. The Teaching of Organizational Behavior, 2(3), 15-20.

Cohen, A. R. (1976). Beyond simulation: Treating the classroom as an organization. The Teaching of Organizational Behavior, 2(1), 13-19.

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Sleeth, R. G., & Brown, D. R. (1984). Plan the Intensity of Your Exercises. Organizational Behavior Teaching Review, 9(2), 60-71.