

**In my own experience (as a practitioner):
Building bridges between instructor practitioner experience and their pedagogy**

Abstract

When business schools seek qualified faculty, two pathways of experience are most recognizable. The traditional path requires a proper academic credential, followed by peer-reviewed research publications. An experienced-based path is consistent with Gladwell's assertion that 10,000 hours of experience creates expertise. Despite the differences between these extremes, business schools often hire professors having a mix of original academic preparation plus real-world experience. Many business faculty join academia after years of industry experience, thus providing valuable perspectives to students. The purpose of this panel discussion is to hear from second-career business educators about how they incorporate varied experiences into management courses.

Keywords: experience, second career educators, pedagogy

Introduction

Faculty in management departments typically follow either traditional or non-traditional paths to earn positions as professors. The traditional pathway (Åkerlind, 2009; Harley et al., 2004; Huisman et al., 2002) to becoming an academic usually consists of pursuing an undergraduate degree, followed by a master's degree, and then a Ph.D. Business management, however, offers at least two other paths. One allows students to go straight from completing their undergraduate degree to pursuing a doctorate, which like the traditional path, allows newly managed PhDs and DBAs to obtain professorships without ever working outside of educational institutions. Unlike other disciplines, business schools also hire other faculty members, often called professors of practice, solely based on expertise gained through their professional experience. Crane et al. (2009), however, point out a third hybrid path, that is a combined background of academic credential and real-world work experience. This group is categorized as second-career professionals or second-career academics (LaRocco & Bruns, 2006). These individuals have transitioned to faculty roles by returning to graduate schools to earn doctorate degrees after some years (usually fewer than professors of practice) working as professionals in non-academic contexts (e.g., industry, government, etc.). Although this path may include an intermediate stint in the “adjunct” world, these faculty members eventually obtain terminal degrees to get into full-time faculty positions.

Though distinct, little is known about what faculty with both professional experience and formal education as management scholars uniquely bring to the classroom. We propose that the more challenging path they follow likely provides unique insights and thus tremendous potential benefits business schools and students. Indeed, practitioners and others with practical experience offer a great deal and are known for enriching management scholarship (Cagle et al., 1997). In

particular, they are able to share direct personal experiences from which students can learn (Bush & Bush, 1999; Varma, 2009). The purpose of this proposed panel, therefore, is twofold. First, we aim to draw more attention to this under-recognized group of colleagues. Second, we want to give them a chance to share how their unique backgrounds inform their pedagogy.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications

Vicarious experience can be an effective way to educate as established by Social Learning (cognitive) theory (Bandura, 1971). This theory argues that individuals can learn from each other using observation, imitation, and modeling. Connecting this concept to sharing experiences in the classroom crucially depends on the fact that students meditate how suitable these experiences may be, and how helpful in their future roles. When students are exposed to similar situations, they may remember the experience shared by the practitioner, and combined with any additional or situational information, they will act.

Although Social Learning provides arguments that explain the importance of sharing practitioners' experiences with students as a pedagogical approach, some other possible theories support this. When the lecturer shares his/her own experience as a practitioner, with a more current theoretical approach, and with situational adaptation to the organizational dynamics and business pedagogy, this becomes Evidence-Based Management (EBM).

EBM argues that managerial decision-making should be based on the best available evidence, the experience of the context and organization, and weighing potential stakeholders' interests (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). Considering that second-career academics lecture based on their programmatic course like all others but may also share their experience in a business context and show other stakeholders' positions, we can see that pedagogically this approach is well aligned with Evidence-Based Management (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006).

Based on these theoretical strands, and how they support the importance of practitioner experiences as forms of learning, it is evident that discussions of these pedagogical approaches will benefit the Management and Organizational Behavior lectures.

From the teaching standpoint, we argue that this discussion could open a conversation that leads toward the legitimization of the forms of pedagogy that mix traditional approaches, reinforced with the professional experiences of those second career educators.

Panel overview

We will use some or all the following questions as conversation starters:

1. How often do you incorporate your previous experience in your lectures?
2. How often do you contrast prevailing theory with your practical experience?
3. Considering that you have practical experience, how often do you rely on or invite speakers to your lectures?
4. How important is for you that your students know about your professional experiences?
5. What about your academic accomplishments and training?
6. Do you acknowledge your students that besides your practitioner experience you also have all the academic credentials?
7. To what extent, or how often, do you exaggerate real prior experiences, to emphasize the importance of key points of information? (Mastering your myths, or mastering your stories)
8. How intentional are you with planning the integration of specific personal examples into your lectures on specific topics? Or do anecdotes “pop up” into your brain as you lecture?
9. What suggestions do you have for other faculty wanting to incorporate practical experience into their pedagogy?

Panelists will share with audiences their classroom experiences when they have incorporated their previous career experiences into their lectures and assignments. Because we expect that attendees may also have these experiences, a key take-away for all attendees includes the idea that on each round of topics, we all can listen and learn from the audience's ideas and points of view. Another intended outcome is to normalize the perception that educators may have about incorporating practitioners' experiences. Additional intended outcomes include opportunities to engage in potential development of articles or other intellectual contributions.

Session Description

All panelists (6) on this session have at least five years' experience, and at least half more than ten, prior to getting into academia. Their research fields include Ethics, Negotiation, Cultural Intelligence, Talent, Operations, Gender, and International Business. The panel will follow the approach of pre-defined questions, previously shared with the panelists, so they can prepare their answers. Through answering the preset questions, panelists will share experiences and approaches; we expect these will vary depending on the courses taught by our panelists. We will also share syllabi with complete assignment descriptions, either in the form of paper copies (at the session) or via e-mail (by collecting e-mails and sending after the session).

Timeline:

- A. Solicitation of audience names and emails for later distribution of session summary and potential interest on the topic for research. **(5 minutes)**
- B. Introduction of theme and panelists. **(10 minutes)**
- C. Each question will be presented, and panelists will respond based on the time giving (5 minutes x 6 = **30 minutes**)

D. Plenary audience Q&A (**25 minutes**)

E. Wrap up, including next steps (**5 minutes**)

Total: 75 minutes. Although a 70-minute session would be ideal, we could also run this session in 60 minutes if needed to fit the conference program. Just keep in mind that our six panelists probably would like to use every single minute available.

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