

PERFORM, REFLECT, REDESIGN:

Why and How to Teach Management in Experiential Community-Engaged Ways

Abstract

I am currently conducting qualitative research to understand the long-term value of the experiential community-engaged pedagogies around which I have centered my teaching for nearly thirty years. In this PDW, I will share both what I am learning from my alumni about how their lives and careers have been and continue to be affected by their participation in experiential community-engaged learning (i.e., why it matters to teach in this way) and the nuts and bolts of teaching experientially and in partnership with communities for faculty who are interested in trying out or expanding these pedagogies (i.e., how to teach in this way).

Keywords: Community Engagement, Experiential Education, Long-term Impact

PERFORM, REFLECT, REDESIGN:

Why and How to Teach Management in Experiential Community-Engaged Ways

Introduction and Learning Objectives

My target audience for this **virtual professional development workshop** is anyone who is interested in bringing into or expanding on experiential community engaged methods in their teaching. As my academic career nears its end, I am moved to employ the pedagogy at the heart of my experiential teaching and course / program development – repeated cycles of performing, reflecting, and redesigning – to come to a deeper understanding of both the value and cost of the experiential community-engaged methods I have put at the heart of my teaching. In service of that goal, I have begun a qualitative research project to learn how my students' lives and careers have been influenced over time by having participated in my courses and programs that employ experiential community engaged methods. Based on the responses I have received to date from my past students, I have compelling data and stories to share with PDW participants about the long-term impact of learning in experiential community-engaged ways. I hope that hearing a few of my alumni's stories will inspire my PDW participants to try out this type of teaching themselves. I will devote most of the PDW to discussion about multiple ways to incorporate experiential community-engaged teaching methods into course and program design and will provide participants with syllabi and other teaching tools to help them get started. My intended outcome for this session is for the PDW participants to leave feeling both inspired to teach in these ways and more knowledgeable about how to do so.

The learning objectives are 1) to understand how students' lives and careers can be influenced over the long-term by their engagement in experiential community-engaged management education, and 2) to explore multiple ways of engaging in this kind of teaching.

I will interact with participants through their introductions, briefly sharing my own story of engagement in this type of teaching, sharing what I have learned through my research about the long-term impact on students' lives and careers of this kind of teaching, sharing teaching materials that I have used in three different courses that represent a range of depth of community-engagement, and active discussion of PDW participants' teaching experiences and questions.

PDW Overview

1) Participant Introductions

I will begin the PDW by asking participants to freewrite about why they chose this session and what they hope to get from it. Then, I'll have them introduce themselves by sharing what they wrote. My intentions for inserting the freewrite prior to the introductions are to encourage the introductions to be brief yet well focused and to promote everyone listening to each other rather than thinking about what they will say when it's their turn to introduce themselves. The participant introductions will inform how I shape our time together.

2) Introduce Myself

I will introduce myself by sharing my story of incorporating experiential community-engaged methods into my teaching (both inside and outside of the classroom). My first and longest foray into experiential and community-engaged teaching methods has been my 28 years of teaching an experiential introduction to organization and management course described in detail in Hendry, Hiller, Martin & Boyd (2017). In that course, groups of about 26 students form complex semester-long organizations that research, design, plan, and carry out service missions that address one or more related sustainable development goals and meet real needs of local non-profit organizations with whom they partner. In addition, they research, design, plan, and carry

out business and / or fundraising projects that fund their service operations. Critical to their learning are extensive company-wide written and oral report projects to plan, document, account for, analyze, and interpret their organization's decisions, actions, and results. The organizations that my students create, although temporary, are *real* organizations – with real community partners, clients, customers and donors, real jobs, real money, real conflicts, real complications, real challenges, and real consequences of student decisions and actions. Students learn from engaging deeply in authentic experiences centered around meaningful issues they have chosen to address and working in partnership with multiple, varied stakeholders. The course's pedagogy reflects a process philosophy of teaching, and learning, and employs a scaffolded process of support, the nature and level of which shifts over time, to guide individual and collective learning. With that said, the primary focus of the course is not on *learning to perform* – students' management of their projects - but rather on *performing to learn* - becoming intentional about learning from their own, other's, and collective decisions and actions. Fundamental to accomplishing that objective is guiding students through frequent, repeated cycles of *performance* (their individual and collective actions and interactions), *reflection* (facilitated by a variety of individual and collective storytelling and analysis methods that use managerial concepts, models, and theories as lenses for sensemaking, interpreting, and critically thinking about the interrelationships between their own and collective performances) and *redesign* (applying what they learn through reflection to plan their upcoming activities and future actions beyond the end of the course more effectively and responsibly). Evidence from my research with alumni suggests that students continue to interpret, reinterpret, and learn from their experiences long after the course ends, which is part of what will explore in the PDW workshop.

Over time I expanded my experiential community-engaged approach to teaching and learning beyond that course. Soon after earning tenure, I became involved as a faculty leader in two service learning alternative break programs – one in Nueva Vida, Nicaragua and another in New Orleans, Louisiana. Although not credit-bearing student experiences, both programs immersed students deeply in week-long in situ experiential learning through hands on disaster relief and recovery work in collaboration with and guided by local community partners. As a faculty leader in these programs, I worked alongside students and, together with my faculty, staff, and student co-leaders, facilitated frequent reflection sessions to help students process and learn from their work experiences. Both of these programs created compelling opportunities for students' and my own interdisciplinary learning about complex interrelated social and environmental challenges, their historical and political contexts, and ways in which multiple sectors' (government, civil society, and business) and organizational forms (e.g., worker owned cooperatives, public-private partnerships, grass roots organizations, federal agencies, etc.) were engaging with the challenges.

One outcome of my involvement in my first alternative break program was that soon thereafter I developed an elective course, Organizing for Justice and Social Change, in which we study multiple systemic inequities and the opportunities and challenges they create for actively living our lives as journeys full of hope, intention, and meaning through working to create a more just world. We study many different organizational forms and ways of managing, drawing on knowledge from a range of disciplines including management, political science, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, history, art, and literature. Central to the course's pedagogy is that students work in and regularly reflect on semester-long placements in local community organizations with social justice missions.

My involvement in the service learning alternative break programs were pivotal experiences in my gaining the courage and understanding to both co-found and co-direct, with psychology and economics faculty colleagues, a three-week interdisciplinary study abroad summer program in Cape Town, South Africa focused on addressing the legacy of apartheid through social entrepreneurship and community development. Throughout our three weeks in Cape Town, students engage in and regularly reflect on small team internships in local non-profits, grassroots organizations, and social businesses in which they carry out projects (designed in collaboration with their community partners) that address real community needs through organized activity informed by management, psychology, and economic theory and concepts.

3) Explain Long Term Impact of Experiential Community-Engaged Teaching

I will briefly share preliminary results from qualitative research I am in the process of conducting. The research is focused on understanding the long term impact of experiential and community-engaged pedagogies on the lives and careers of alumni of the courses and programs I described above. I have collected responses to the prompt below from 104 alumni and am currently in the process of conducting content analysis of the research participants' responses.

*I am reaching out to you because I am hoping to learn about any long-term impact that you believe taking my _____ course [or participating in the _____ alternative break program that I led] during your time at _____ University has had on your life and career. **If you believe that your life and / or work has been affected in any meaningful way by what you experienced and learned in that course [program], I'd be thrilled to hear back from you with a brief story describing the impact the course has had on your life and / or work over the years since you completed it.***

Of course, there is no obligation for you to respond to my email! Please only respond if what you experienced and learned in the course has meaningfully affected your life /career. If you do respond, I would appreciate your being honest with me. Please don't be afraid to tell me about meaningful negative effects, if that has been the case for you.

I will share a few slides that depict the coding structure and associated excerpts from student responses and stories that demonstrate the range and depth of long-term impact of this kind of engaged teaching. I hope that this evidence will inspire PDW participants to either try out or continue to teach in experiential, community engaged ways.

4) Discuss the “How Tos” of Experiential Community-Engaged Teaching

How I move forward with this section of the workshop will be informed by the number of participants and what I learn about their interests and experience from their introductions. Given that my session will be a virtual one, I expect that it will attract a relatively small number of participants. If that is the case, I will facilitate this part of the PDW as a large group discussion. However, if the group is large enough to warrant it, I will use break out rooms for parts of the discussion so that each participant will have more opportunity to share their thoughts. What I have written below may change in the moment to better accommodate the participants' interests.

- a) **Share and Respond to Questions about My Course Materials.** I will give participants electronic access to a pdf of teaching materials that will provide more detail about how to incorporate experiential community engaged methods into their teaching. After downloading the pdf, I'll project the pdf by sharing my screen and briefly explain what is included. I'll respond to any questions that participants have about the materials.

- b) **Solicit questions / discussion topics from participants and discuss what they want to discuss.** I'll encourage participants to write questions and desired discussion topics into the zoom chat feature. I'll facilitate discussion of these questions and topics. I will strongly encourage experienced participants to share their teaching experiences and methods with the group so that we can have a broader range of experience than my own to inform those who are new to this kind of teaching. I'll encourage participants who have struggled with this type of teaching to share their struggles so that the group can help them think through potential solutions. I'll encourage people who are interested in trying out this kind of teaching, to share their particular circumstances so that the group can help them think through how to get started. I'll encourage direct interchange between all participants.
- c) **Takeaways Freewrite.** In the last few minutes of the session, I will ask participants to freewrite about what they want to remember from this session.

References

Hendry, J. R., Hiller, T. B., Martin, E. C. & Boyd, N. M. (2017). Context and Pedagogy: A Quarter-Century of Change in an Introductory Management Course. *Journal of Management Education*. Vol. 41(3) 346–384.