DEMYTHIFYING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CURRICULUM IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

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Overview

- Introduction
  - What is experiential learning?
  - Experiential learning initiatives in higher education
  - The myth of experiential learning in education abroad
  - Why is experiential learning important in traditional study abroad destinations?

- Experiential learning initiatives
  - In a study abroad center in Barcelona (CEA)
  - In a local university in Barcelona (UPF)

- Discussion
Learning and Experience

The things we have to learn before we do them, we learn by doing them (Aristotle)

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand (Chinese proverb – Confucius)

Learning is experience. Everything else is just information (Albert Einstein)
What Is Experiential Learning?

“The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming experience”

DAVID KOLB (1984)
Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model

Concrete Experience

Active Experimentation

Reflective Observation

Abstract Conceptualization
Experiential Learning Initiatives in Higher Education

- Study Abroad
- Experiential learning in the classroom
- Supervised civic engagement
- Service Learning
- Internships & seminar
- Faculty supervised Consulting project with company
The Myth of Experiential Learning in Education Abroad
The Myth of Experiential Learning in Education Abroad

We had the experience but missed the meaning

T.S. Elliot
Experiential Learning in Traditional Study Abroad Destinations

- Challenges in traditional destinations
  - Cultural differences between the US and the host country may not be that obvious in traditional destinations (e.g., Europe) as in non-traditional destinations (e.g., Africa, Asia)
  - High number of American students in traditional destinations
  - The “American experience” abroad
  - Students’ motivation to study in traditional destinations may have nothing to do with learning about the culture

Experiential learning initiatives in traditional destinations are crucial to overcome these challenges
Experiential Learning Initiatives in A Study Abroad Center In Barcelona

CEA Barcelona
Experiential Learning Programs in CEA Barcelona

- International Service Learning
- SLA: Theory & Practice of Teaching and Learning
- Structured Volunteering
- Global Career Development Program
- Academic-Integrated Cultural Activities Program

NSEE Award 2013
International Service Learning and SLA: Theory & Practice of Teaching and Learning

15-week course
Credits: 3
Language of instruction: En/Sp

Class contact hours: 30
Service hours: 30
Structured Volunteering

Coordinated by the Experiential Learning Coordinator, who is in contact with students, organization/school, and course instructor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOLUNTEERING ORIENTATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPLICATION &amp; INTERVIEW WITH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COORDINATOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTERCULTURAL LEARNING WORKSHOP</td>
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<td>FIRST MEETING AT THE ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3 HOURS/WEEK OF FIELD WORK</td>
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<td>INDIVIDUAL FOLLOW-UP WITH STUDENT &amp; ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL</td>
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<td>MIDTERM REFLECTION WORKSHOP</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FROM THE ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL</td>
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<tr>
<td>RE-ENTRY &amp; CAREER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP</td>
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Global Career Development Program

15-week course
Credits: 1
Language of instruction: En

Class contact hours: 15
Externship hours: 6

- Sharing experiences & expectations
- Job shadowing
- Interviews with other professionals
- Participation in professional events
- Visits to companies, institutions, etc.
- Mock interviews, resume, cover letter
- Reflection on study abroad experiences and career development
- Development of career action plans

ACTIVITIES WITH MENTORS
Students’ Enrollment in Experiential Learning Programs (2010-2014)

**Enrollment by EL Program in Fall Terms**

- **Global Career Development**
- **Second Language Acquisition**
- **International Service Learning**
- **Structured Volunteering (total)**

**Enrollment by EL Program in Spring Terms**
Students’ Enrollment in Experiential Learning Programs (2010-2014)

Total Number of Students Enrolled in EL Programs by Term

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>99</td>
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Percentage of Students Enrolled in EL Programs by Term

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Percentage</td>
<td>1,7%</td>
<td>3,6%</td>
<td>14,1%</td>
<td>25,5%</td>
<td>37,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Percentage</td>
<td>0,7%</td>
<td>5,8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,1%</td>
<td>22,4%</td>
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Experiential Learning in General Courses: The Curriculum In and Out of the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curricular Activities Out of the Classroom</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Field studies</td>
<td>• Fully integrated in all courses; mandatory</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Self-guided activities with instructions</td>
<td>• Designed and organized by each instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural encounters</td>
<td>• Take place during class time (90 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Language exchange events</td>
<td>• <strong>Linked to academic pre-activity and post-activity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Guest speakers</td>
<td>• Assessed; count for a percentage of the final grade</td>
</tr>
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From the Cultural Activities Model to the AICAP

### Cultural Activities Program
- Coordinated by Student Services Team
- 2 overnight trips
- 3 one-day trips
- 14 cultural activities (2-3 hours)

### Academic-Integrated Cultural Activities Program
- Coordinated by Academics and Student Services Teams
- *Spain in Depth* (2)
- *Exploring Catalonia* (3)
- *Barcelona Hands-on* (14)
Applying the Experiential Learning Model

**EXPERIENCE**
- Active participation: Listening, watching, doing, speaking, interacting, feeling

**REFLECTION**
- Tasks, journals, essays, class discussions

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**
Transformation of Cultural Activities

- Watch castellers
- Castellers workshop with locals (watching and doing)
- Instructor’s intro to cultural tradition + workshop
- Academic assignment in Catalan Language & Culture
Transformation of Cultural Activities

- Same activities
  - Different approach
  - Modified itinerary
- New activities with an educational component
## Integration of Optional Cultural Activities in the Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY / TRIP</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
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</table>
| BARÇA SOCCER MATCH      | MEDIA & POLITICS
                            | COMMUNICATION & GLOBAL COMPETENCE
                            | SPORT & CULTURE           |
| VISIT TO CASA OKUPA     | INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
                            | SPANISH FOR BUSINESS      |
                            | ADVANCED SPANISH          |
                            | COMMUNICATION & GLOBAL COMPETENCECE
                            | INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING |
| MADRID                  | ARCHITECTURE & PAINTING
                            | CONTEMPORARY SPAIN        |
                            | SPANISH CIVIL WAR         |
                            | MEANING & MYSTERY IN EUROPEAN PAINTING |
                            | SPAIN & AMERICA: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP |
                            | SPANISH CIVILIZATION & CULTURE |
                            | TRAVELLERS, EXILES & TOURISTS: THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN LITERATURE & CINEMA |
Integration of Optional Cultural Activities in the Curriculum

- Syllabi include the recommendation to complete specific AICAP activities

The following AICAP activities are specially recommended for this course:

- National Museum of Catalan Art (MNAC)
- Madrid & Reina Sofia Museum Visit
- The Land of Three Cultures: Girona & Besalú

You will have the option of completing an assignment based on these activities, which will count towards your grade on Art Exhibition Reflection (15%)
AICAP Evolution

Number of Courses Integrating AICAP Activities by Term

- **Fall**: 0, 10, 25, 35, 45
- **Spring**: 5, 15, 25, 35, 45
- **Summer**: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50

Percentage of Courses Integrating AICAP Activities by Term

- **2012**: 0%, 11%, 0%
- **2013**: 58%, 63%, 81%
- **2014**: 76%, 78%, 94%

Note: The graphs show the evolution of courses integrating AICAP activities over the years 2012 to 2014.
Students’ Participation & Perception of Learning in the AICAP

**Students’ Participation in the AICAP**

- No
- Yes

**Students’ Perception of the AICAP**

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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*The AICAP helped me connect my experiences in these activities with the knowledge acquired in the courses*

Survey completed by 88 students
Faculty’s Perspectives: Students’ Participation in the AICAP

**Average of Activities per Course**

- AICAP: 2.5
- Field Studies: 2.0
- Guest Speakers: 1.0

**Integration of AICAP in the Curriculum**

- Mandatory: 25%
- Semi-optional: 17%
- Optional: 58%

**Survey completed by 30 instructors**

**Students’ Participation: 38%-51%**

High variation across courses
Faculty’s Perspectives: Experiential Learning

Students' grasp of the course content is enriched by Field Studies / Guest Speaker sessions

- Strongly disagree: 19%
- Disagree: 43%
- Neither: 38%
- Agree: 81%
- Strongly agree: 71%

Field Study / Guest Speaker assignments facilitate students' connections between their experiences and the course content

- Strongly disagree: 29%
- Disagree: 38%
- Neither: 43%
- Agree: 71%
- Strongly agree: 43%

AICAP assignments facilitate students' connections between their experiences and the course content

- Strongly disagree: 0%
- Disagree: 50%
- Neither: 50%
- Agree: 100%
## Faculty’s Perspectives: Assignments & Assessment

### PRE-ACTIVITIES
- Read an article related to the activity
- Research about the topic and complete a blog entry
- Prepare questions for guest speakers

### POST-ACTIVITIES
- Reaction papers
- Reflection papers connecting the experience with readings or course content
- Answer questions
- Writing an entry for a blog, journal, etc.
- Report linked to readings and illustrated with photos taken during the activity
- Language task
- Moodle debate
- Explaining the experience in a video assignment
- Oral presentation
- Report of an interview to locals

### ASSESSMENT: 10%-30% of the final grade

Non-mandatory AICAP Activities count towards the Participation grade (10%) or towards the grade of a specific FOA that includes alternatives to AICAP activities.
Faculty’s Perspectives: Benefits and Challenges of the AICAP

Benefits
- Learning about the culture from different perspectives
- Connection between theory and reality
- Access to sites that cannot be visited during class time
- Increase students’ responsibility for their involvement

Challenges
- Motivate students
- Lack of alignment between AICAP schedule and related classes
- AICAP activities are not tailored to specific courses
- Find a suitable way to grade AICAP activities
Conclusions

- Administrators’ initiatives may have an impact on students’ experiential learning in traditional destinations
  - 25%- 40% of students participate in EL programs/courses
  - 40%-50% of students benefit from the AICA Program
  - 100% of students have the chance to benefit from structured experiential learning activities out of the classroom
- Faculty involvement is crucial in these initiatives
- Coordination between different teams enhances communication, mutual understanding, and work towards common goals
Experiential Learning Initiatives in A Local University In Barcelona

Universitat Pompeu Fabra
The UPF Experiential Learning Program

Why to develop an Experiential Learning Program at UPF?

Program components:

• Academic Internships Abroad

• Undergraduate Research Abroad
The UPF Experiential Learning Program

The UPF EAP Experiential Learning Program goals:

- Serve the needs of students
- Institutional internationalization strategy
- Contribute to the growth of the field
Academic Internships

Why Academic internships for-credit in a “host” institution?

• The internship program aims
  • To connect students with their career of interest
  • To help students gain multicultural awareness and intercultural competence skills in a structured and intentional way
  • To integrate the student in the host society by providing him/her with training and applied learning
Academic Internships

The UPF model:

- Project-based internships
- Customized projects and placements
- For-credit only
  (6 ECTS)

Intercultural Communication
(SEMINAR)
(22 contact hours)

Project to be developed at the workplace
(PLACEMENT)
(100 hours)

October 24, 2014
Academic Internships

- Pre-arrival preparation and coaching
- On-site supervision
- On-site coaching
- Guidance on re-entering
Academic Internships

Examples of industries

- Accounting
- Architecture
- Communication
- Graphic Design
- Hospitality
- Journalism
- Market Research and Business
- Marketing
- Museums and Cultural Institutions
- Public Relations
- Technology
Independent Research Abroad

Why independent research projects abroad?

• To connect students with the practices of academic work in their career of interest
• To help students gain perspective on the cultural and destination-specific aspects of researching in their field of interest
• To contribute to the internationalization of UPF research groups and labs
Independent Research Abroad

The UPF model

• The research project is customized to each student, in coordination with a tutor at UPF and the student’s academic advisor at the university of origin => enhancement of collegial and academic relationships and further academic collaboration

• The student research is hosted within a UPF research group or lab – depending on the nature of the project – ⇒ Integration in the host university out of the classroom

• The student is assessed by his/her immediate supervisor and may also be evaluated by an academic board if it applies to the nature of the project
Independent Research Abroad

**ECONOMICS**
- Applied Economics
- Economic History
- Life Course Dynamics
- Survey Methods

**LAW**
- History of Law

**HUMANITIES**
- Literature
- Comparative Literature
- Literary Creation
- History
- History of Ideas
- Urban Studies
- History of Science

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**
- The State-Building Process in Latin America
- Nationalism
- Governance

**BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS**
- Marketing
- Public Relations
- Advertising
- Spanish Film
- Television and Media

**MEDICINE AND BIOLOGY**
- Evolutionary Biology
- Brain & Cognition
Our Challenges

• Aligning the expectations of all stakeholders

• Formulating an appropriate credit transfer system

• Determining costs, student fees and faculty *honoraria*

• Ethics and Integrity

• Customizing each student project
More opportunities

• Institutional awareness

• Synergies among faculty from sending and hosting institution

• Benefits of pairing with local students

• Talent attraction
Demythifying Experiential Learning. The UPF Experiential Learning Program

**Customized approach**
- Identifying the right student for each experience (internship or research)
- Identifying the right placement or research project for each student

**Curricular articulation**
- Working, determining and agreeing on the requirements to assess each experience and bear the credit

**Transdisciplinarity**
- Co-work among faculty and internship or study abroad coordinators
- Co-work and coordination of procedures and policies across all UPF groups and departments (!)
- Determining costs, fees and honoraria
Thank you!

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