

## THE LECTURE VERSUS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: COMPARING THE RESULTS OF TWO TEACHING STYLES FOR MARKETING EDUCATION

Clay Daughtrey, Metropolitan State College of Denver, Campus Box 79,  
PO Box 173362, Denver CO 80217-3362; (303) 556-2114

### ABSTRACT

Effective teaching methods have been debated for years. The lecture is routinely denounced in education literature while teaching methods that incorporate experiential learning are praised. The purpose of this study was to compare the two teaching styles in regard to educational outcomes and student satisfaction. Two marketing classes were compared, where one received a series of lectures and the other participated in an experiential learning exercise. Results showed that there was no difference between the two classes in terms of the educational outcomes and that little difference was found in student satisfaction. Due to the considerable difference in preparatory time between the two teaching methods, these results are useful as professors decide which pedagogy to use.

### INTRODUCTION

During the past twenty years, a paradigm shift has been occurring in higher education from teacher-centered instruction to a student-centered approach. Faculty members across the country are attempting to move their classes from the passive transfer of information to the active learning of students (Bobbit et al. 2000; Jeffries 2001; Kennedy et al. 2001).

The term "Active Learning" includes many different pedagogies including: experiential learning, service learning, discussions, case studies, questioning, peer teaching, group learning, debates, role playing, simulations, computer-based interactive learning, and problem based learning (Lake 2001). These methods are intended to give students a higher level of learning and learning skills than passive learning techniques such as the lecture. Current research has not concluded that this is the case for all students (Davis, Misra & Van Auken 2000; Karns 1993; Merritt 1998; Razzouk & Smith 1992).

This purpose of this study was to assess how well undergraduate students learned marketing principles through experiential learning, compared with a series of equivalent teacher-controlled lectures. In addition, their perceptions and attitudes about the teaching styles and the instructor were analyzed.

### LECTURE VS. ACTIVE LEARNING

Effective teaching methods and pedagogies have been debated for years. The lecture has been under attack for its lack of active involvement by students and for its passive transmission of knowledge to students (Bobbit et al. 2000; Lake 2001). Other disadvantages of the lecture include the speakers ability to bias information, listening attention fades after 15 minutes, and long-term retention is limited (Morgan et al. 2000). "Cognitive theory has suggested that only active processing of information and not just passive reception of that information, leads to learning" (Lake, 2001 p896), yet a majority of classes taught on college campuses are taught with the passive lecture method. With all of the criticism in the research about the lecture, there are still notable advantages to this teaching method. Lectures provide the ability to share information with large groups of students, are orderly and systematic, are relatively simple to prepare, and are generally accepted and understood by the collegiate student (Clow & Wachter 1996; Lake 2001).

Current research shows that active learning and in particular, experiential learning is becoming an increasingly popular teaching method (Bobbit et al. 2000; Daughtrey & Frontczak 2002; Kennedy et al. 2001). Benefits of this teaching method include career exploration and preparation opportunities, personal growth, an understanding of the larger community, development of problem solving skills and creativity, and the connection of theory to practice (Daughtrey & Frontczak 2002).

Disadvantages of this type pedagogy include: large amounts of preparation and managing time, lessened sense of control, and an increased

number of outside individuals involved in the process that are not under the professor's control. Additionally, students need to keep up with readings and work on their own, and there is a chance of lower student evaluations because they might not be comfortable with this type of pedagogy. Qualities that are learned through experiential learning such as, self-confidence, problem solving, creativity and insight are hard to measure and not expected on the part of the student to have these areas developed. Lastly, faculty teaching with this method could face animosity from colleagues for doing something that is out of the norm at the college (Kennedy et al. 2001).

Although many studies discuss the value of experiential/service learning and methods to incorporate it into a course or curriculum, none could be found that measured the educational outcomes of the method. This study was designed to fill that void.

### **METHOD**

Two sections of the same marketing course (Sport Marketing) were taught in the Spring semester of 2002. One was taught through the traditional lecture and test method. These expository lectures were taught through examples, storytelling, overhead transparencies, Power-Point presentations and humor to keep the interest of students. The other course was taught using experiential learning as the pedagogy. Students participating in this course acted as the marketing agency for a college's athletic program. They conducted marketing research for the athletic program and used that data to develop marketing and sponsorship plans for the men's and women's basketball programs. In addition, they also had the task of implementing the plans and evaluating their success.

Students in each section received the same quizzes and tests. Each course had the same learning objectives and received the same course content, readings, test reviews and grading scale. The same instructor taught both classes and had been teaching at the undergraduate level for six years at the time of the study. Additionally, the instructor had taught this particular course for five years by using the lecture, as well as experiential learning techniques.

### **SAMPLE**

A convenience sample was used consisting of 58 students taking Sport Marketing courses. Thirty-five students were registered in the experiential learning course, which met twice a week during the day, and twenty-three were in the lecture course, which met once a week at night. All students involved in the study were of junior or senior status at a large, western United States, urban institution and ranged in age from 20 to 40.

### **INSTRUMENTS**

The results were measured in two ways. The first method was the use of a pretest and a posttest. Instructor-made pretests and posttests, consisting of eleven short answer questions, were used to measure cognitive learning of course subject matter. Questions on the test were focused on sponsorship and public relations, which are unique to the sport marketing class and not covered in depth in any other marketing course at the college. To establish content validity of the tests, faculty members who were experienced instructors of sport marketing analyzed the questions. Students in each section were given a pretest the first day of class and a posttest during the last week of classes for the semester. The posttest measured long-term retention of sponsorship and public relations principles that were covered the second and the eighth week of a fifteen-week class respectively. Both tests were unannounced and students had no knowledge that either of the tests was coming.

Student satisfaction of the course, content and the instructor were measured using a survey. The survey was adapted from a questionnaire developed by Sandler and Kamins (1987) and was administered during the last week of the semester. The survey had 17 questions and used a Likert scale ranging from 1-9 with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 9 being "Strongly Agree." Forty-four students completed the pretest and posttest, 27 from the experiential group and 17 from the lecture. Forty-eight completed the in class surveys, 32 from the experiential and 16 from the lecture. Reasons for the different numbers in the data sets include students missing the day when the measurement devices were given or coming late to class/leaving early.

### **RESULTS**

Results from the pretest and posttest were interesting. The lecture class had an improvement

of 54.35% between the pretest and posttest. The experiential learning class had an improvement of 54.46%. The total difference between the two teaching methods in this study was .11%. See Table 1 for the pretest and posttest scores as well as the range for each test.

TABLE 1

|                       | Pretest   | Posttest     | Mean Difference |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|
| Lecture               | 8.47%     | 62.82%       | 54.35%          |
| Range                 | (0 - 42%) | 24% - 92%    |                 |
| Experiential Learning | 9.23%     | 63.69%       | 54.46%          |
| Range                 | (0 - 34%) | (22% - 100%) |                 |

Results of the student satisfaction survey showed the differences between the means were within .13 for more than half (8 of the 17) of the questions. Some of those questions and their mean difference follow:

- "I enjoyed this class more than most" (.07).
- "This class encouraged critical thinking" (.09).
- "I learned a great deal about marketing from this class" (0.0).
- "These activities suggest the instructor cares about me learning marketing" (.13).

The largest difference (1.06) occurred on the question that measured whether students recommended the lecture or experiential learning for future classes. The experiential learning class had a 7.00 mean and the lecture class had an 8.06 mean

### DISCUSSION

Results of the pretest and the posttest showed little difference between the two teaching methods with both improving roughly 54%. The tests measured the cognitive learning of specific sport marketing principles and the difference between the classes was only .11%. This low variation in scores shows that neither proved to be a better teaching method than the other. This is important because the amount of work from the standpoint of the professor was considerably different. The lecture class required less preparation while the experiential learning class demanded many hours of time (roughly three times more than the lecture). These hours included setting up the experiential learning exercise with the athletic department, weekly meetings with the athletic department staff,

after hours attendance at athletic events so research and promotions conducted by the class could be supervised, and other miscellaneous duties from meetings with the facilities staff to handling complaints. These extra responsibilities took away from time that could have been devoted to the professor's professional development and/or service. Depending on the institution in which a professor works the time spent on experiential learning might be better spent on areas that directly affect tenure, promotion and merit increases. If the cognitive results are similar, many might opt for the easier lecture method so that other components of the job can be accomplished.

With the satisfaction survey over half of the questions revealed little difference between the means (< .13) showing that the two classes answered similarly in terms of satisfaction on those points. In fact, on all questions the biggest difference was only a 1.06 on a 9-point scale. In this particular question, the lecture group recommended this type of pedagogy be used in the future more than the experiential group. This result was surprising because personal experience and the literature suggested that students preferred active learning exercises. In this case, that was not the result. This result offers support that the lecture, although not looked at favorably in the literature, is of value to the students.

Other questions where there was at least a .5 difference included:

- "Activities were enjoyable"-experiential learning students enjoyed the activities more by .53.
- "I was highly involved with these activities"-experiential learning students scored higher by .56.
- "I was satisfied with my work on class assignments"-experiential learning students scored .50 higher.

These questions showed that experiential students felt that they were more involved and enjoyed the experience more than the lecture students (although not by a large margin).

### LIMITATIONS

Effects were measured in a relatively small convenience sample. For the results to be applicable to other marketing courses it needs to be replicated. In addition, the "halo effect" may have been a factor. Using the same test for the pretest and posttest, although they were administered 3 months apart, could also have challenged the validity of the results (Jeffries 2001). Additionally,

there may have been a difference between the members of the class, night students versus day students. Lastly, the option was available for students to change classes after they were told of the study. In this case only one person switched but this impacts the randomness of the study.

### CONCLUSION

Many faculty members see active learning as the answer to the educational problems of college students. This study has shown that, contrary to this popular opinion, the lecture is as effective in the enrichment of cognitive learning as experiential learning. Additionally, students generally like it as much as the active learning style and in many cases more. The instructor used current educational research and attended workshops on how to be a better instructor. The extra knowledge in the lecture might have been a reason for the lecture to be judged favorably by students.

Experiential learning projects are, in some cases, difficult to develop, time consuming and difficult to monitor while the lecture is relatively fast and easy. Professors have many other aspects to their jobs such as service to the college and community, as well as contributing to the academic field through intellectual contributions. In many institutions intellectual contributions, not teaching, are used to measure the "quality" of the professor. If this is the case and the cognitive results of the lecture are similar to active learning methods, then it makes sense that the lecture is the most often used teaching method on college campuses.

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