Exploring Experiential Education in the Online Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Experiential Education in the Online Learning Environment

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Research indicates that experiential learning enhances learning and increases student engagement. As online education in higher education increases, incorporating experiential learning into the online experience has been occurring. For this case study, interviews with five online instructional designers and three online instructors examined answers to the questions of how online instructional designers and online instructors define, value, and design experiential learning in their online courses. Insights regarding the benefits and challenges of designing online experiential learning are discussed. Online instructional designers discussed coaching online instructors through the process of designing experiential learning for their online courses. Online instructors expressed that they have only begun to identify ways to design experiential education into the online environment. This research provides insight into how online instructional designers and online instructors feel about how they have integrated experiential learning into online courses. They are creatively working together to provide more experiential learning activities in the online environment and bringing the world to their students through online education.

Keywords: experiential education, experiential learning, online education, online learning
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Education has moved beyond the traditional classroom. Student enrollment in higher education online courses has been steadily increasing, at one to two percent per year, for the last 10 years (Seaman et al., 2018). Rapid advances in technology have resulted in the relative affordability of laptops, which facilitates college students taking their technology with them. Students and instructors alike can access their learning management system wherever and whenever they can gain access to the internet. Online education provides students the flexibility and convenience that they desire as they navigate a fast-paced 21st century.

Experiential education is another growing trend in higher education (Roberts, 2016), especially in traditional in-person courses and programs. Roberts (2016) reported that experiential education increases student engagement and success. Additionally, experiential education equips students with 21st-century skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking (Kuh, 2008), which are valued in the growing and changing careers of today (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Experiential education is attributed with guiding students to expanded critical thinking abilities and capacity for lifelong learning (Eyler, 2009); skills that employers value in the 21st-century workplace.

Statement of the Problem

There is a small but growing body of research exploring experiential education in the online learning environment. With the consistently increasing demand for online educational opportunities at the university level and the value of experiential education for students in enhancing their 21st-century skills, investigating experiential education in the online learning
environment could begin to inform how online courses might be designed and implemented to include the best experiences for students related to experiential education.

**Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore design and implementation activities related to experiential education in the online learning environment. More specifically, this research identifies and discusses experiential education activities that instructional designers and online instructors have designed and are currently being offered in the curricula.

**Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What types of experiential education activities do online instructional designers (or online instructors) choose to include in the online courses they design?

2. Why do online instructional designers (or online instructors) choose to include these experiential education activities in the online course design?

3. What do the online instructional designers (or online instructors) perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the various experiential education activities?
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature review explores published research regarding online education, experiential learning, experiential education, and experiential education in the online learning environment.

Online Education

The number of students taking advantage of online educational opportunities in higher education has increased by one to two percent every year for over a decade (Seaman et al., 2018). If over 80% of the course content is delivered online, then it is considered an online course (Allen et al., 2016). Over 6 million college students, nearly one-third of all college students in the U.S., enrolled in at least one online course in 2017 (Seaman et al., 2018).

In unprecedented fashion, the COVID-19 global pandemic that began in late 2019 and exploded in early 2020 thrust most K–12 and higher education into the online education environment, through emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020), in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus through a drastic reduction of physical interactions. Advances in technology, the extensive use of learning management systems (LMS), and high-fidelity video conferencing technology have been instrumental in this rapidly deployed transition from in-person instruction to emergency remote teaching. This rapid transition to nearly 100% emergency remote teaching instruction was expected to be temporary, with in-person instruction resuming when the health threat posed by the pandemic had passed. Future trends in online education may see a shift due to this widespread deployment of emergency remote teaching.

The opportunity to complete a course entirely online increases flexibility for the student. Flexibility provided through online learning means students can access their course content and
instruction from essentially anywhere. Asynchronous online learning removes the time constraint and allows students to access their coursework at a time that fits in their schedule and from any time zone. While synchronous online learning has a time constraint, it can provide instant student-instructor interaction (Anderson, 2004).

Other advantages of online learning include the ability to connect teachers remotely to students in locations that would otherwise not have access to qualified instructors (Means et al., 2013). Additionally, in some situations, the distribution of educational materials can be facilitated through online learning in a more cost-effective manner than face-to-face instruction. An instructor may be able to reach many more students through online learning than traditional, in-person instruction.

Online learning can aid in making learning more accessible. Access to education is critical to meet the future needs of our era. We live in an “information age” and what is being described by some as a “digital economy” (Pantazis, 2002, p. 21). Researchers believe that “to guarantee success in this environment, individuals must remain flexible, acquire new skills continuously, and identify new ways of managing knowledge” (Pantazis, 2002, p. 21). Education and learning have an important role to play in this digital era. Online learning can fulfill the “need and nature of learning in a connected world; and to explore the implications of a collaborative and constructive educational experience for a knowledge society” (Garrison, 2017, p. 6). Expanding learning opportunities to the online learning environment can provide relevant and timely education for this digital era.

Effective educational opportunities can be provided through online instruction. Teaching and learning must be effective to achieve the goal of education. Means et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of 45 studies that illustrated that online learning can be as effective, if not more
effective, than traditional in-person instruction. Swan (2003) explored the impact of interactions on learning and identified one of the strengths of online discussion boards as the facilitation of divergent thinking that may not occur in in-person student interactions.

Some proponents of online learning suggest further advantages, citing technology’s ability to support increased student interactions and participation. An online discussion board that requires all students to share their reflections can act as an equalizer, providing a voice to all students, and the sharing is not constrained by time limits. Some researchers view online course delivery as more than a content provider; but as an opportunity to provide richer content that enhances the learning experience (Means et al., 2013).

Many educators are resistant to online education because they fear a lack of connection with students. But many researchers have explored the relationships that can be established in online education. Garrison et al. (1999) researched the ability for students and instructors to connect in the online learning environment, and developed the Community of Inquiry (CoI), a theoretical framework, that explores educational relationships developed in an online learning environment. Garrison asserted that the student’s social presence and their ability to connect with each other—as well as their instructor—on a social level can happen in online learning and can have an impact on the student’s academic experience (Garrison et al., 2010). Garrison reported that online learning can support and provide “the ability to bring educational participants together in communities of inquiry” (Garrison, 2017, p. 171), which is an important element in online and experiential learning.

**Experiential Learning**

In higher education, students are commonly instructed in the traditional lecture fashion. Early in the 20th century, Dewey (1923) argued that experience belongs in education by
explaining that reflection, or thought, is part of a learning experience. He explained “reflection in experience” as the “relation between what we try to do and what happens in consequence” (p. 169). This early idea tying experience and learning together was broadened and developed more in later years.

Dewey (1938) expanded on his ideas in experience and education by applying education to the real world. Dewey’s ideas represented a pivot away from education as a purely lecture-based experience to how people can learn from their experiences “between the process of actual experience and education” (Dewey, 1938, p. 20). Dewey sought to explain that education was not just about accumulating information, but education was meant to prepare people to be contributing members of society. Dewey started a conversation about experiential learning in education that has been expanding over the years.

Chickering (1977) built on Dewey’s idea of tying experience to learning and discussed that experiential learning is an individual learning process “when changes in judgments, feelings, knowledge or skills result for a particular person from living through an event or events” (p. 63). Based on researched concepts, Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed a framework of seven principles to improve higher education. These principles include facilitating student/instructor interaction, organizing student teamwork, deploying active learning, providing timely response, recognizing time investment, and expecting performance. Several of Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) learning principles align with Kuh’s (2008) high-impact learning activities. Areas of overlap between Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) learning principles and Kuh’s (2008) high-impact learning experiences include the student/instructor interaction, any active learning such as collaborative work and internships, and service or community-based learning. Kuh’s (2008)
extensive research on the college experience identified several best practices that include what are often called high-impact learning activities, such as active learning and group work.

At about the same time that Chickering and Gamson (1987) were discussing the value of experiential learning, Kolb was developing a four-step experiential learning theory. Kolb (1984) built his theory on the foundations of Dewey, Lewin, Piaget, and Vygotsky, among others. Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (1984) is considered by many to be the seminal work on experiential learning theory. Kolb’s four-step experiential learning cycle comprises: (a) have experience; (b) observe and reflect; (c) form abstraction; and (d) test new concepts.

Beard and Wilson (2006) discussed Kolb’s experiential learning cycle as an “almost taken for granted theory of learning” (p. 49). There are several strikingly similar models of experiential learning that include some variation of these four steps: (a) action; (b) reflection; (c) abstraction; and (d) application (Hajshirmohammadi, 2017; Stehno, 1986).

**Experiential Education**

Several researchers and educational experts use the terms experiential learning and experiential education interchangeably (Kolb, 1984). Itin (1999) discussed experiential learning and experiential education as different constructs. He defined experiential learning as the individual learner’s reflective cycle of making meaning from experience, and he defined experiential education as a “philosophy of education” (p. 91). Experiential education can also be explained as the purposeful design and inclusion of experiential learning activities in the educational environment. Itin (1999) further explained the relationship between experiential learning and experiential education by stating, “Experiential education will certainly seek to take advantage and maximize the opportunities for experiential learning” (p. 92).
Purposefully deploying experiential learning in education is experiential education (Roberts, 2016). Chickering pointed out that one of the values of experiential education is to help students learn to deal with a rapidly changing world. Chickering is one of the educational researchers who has used the terms experiential learning and experiential education interchangeably. In this instance, Chickering (1977) provided a statement about the pursuit and development of experiential education:

It reminds us that higher education can do more than develop verbal skills and deposit information in those storage banks between the ears. It can contribute to more complex kinds of intellectual development and to more pervasive dimensions of human development required for effective citizenship. It can help students cope with shifting developmental tasks imposed by the life cycle and rapid social change. (p. 86)

Luckmann (1996), editor of the *Journal of Experiential Education*, shared the Association for Experiential Education’s approved definition of experiential education:

“Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences” (p. 7). Luckmann later stated that experiential education is “learning through reflection on doing” (p. 24). Thus, experiential education is all about acting, doing, and experiencing educational opportunities in real-world situations to gain practical knowledge and skills.

There is an increasing volume of research that supports the value of experiential education approaches in higher education (Astin & Sax, 1998; Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Burch et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis exploring the correlation between experiential learning and learning outcomes. Their analysis of 89 studies revealed that students have measurably improved learning when experiential teaching methods were utilized in contrast
to traditional teaching methods. Burch et al. reported experiential learning methods improve learning outcomes by nearly one-half of a standard deviation.

In addition to improving learning outcomes, experiential education promotes higher order thinking. Bonwell and Eison (1991) reported active learning (a form of experiential learning) promoted higher order thinking and that students prefer active learning over the traditional lecture format. Bonwell and Eison (1991) conducted a large study of nearly 3,500 undergraduates from 42 universities and found that students engaged in service learning demonstrated improved academics, life skills, and civic responsibility.

The demonstrated connection between experiential education and preparation for becoming lifelong learners is another benefit of experiential education. Experiential education can guide students to richer comprehension of their studies, enhance critical thinking skills, and lead to lifelong learning (Eyler, 2009).

Many examples of the increasing volume of research that support the value of experiential education in higher education have been discussed. As Chickering and Gamson (1987) explained, “Learning is not a spectator sport” (p. 4). Learning should involve acting, practicing, and using knowledge and skills. Experiential education can provide support for the transition from college to the workplace and support lifelong learning (Eyler, 2009).

Throughout literature and academia, experiential education activities are discussed using countless terms. As examples, terms used for experiential education activities include active learning, collaborative learning, hands-on learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning (Roberts, 2016). Roberts (2016) used the working definition of “learning through reflection on doing” (p. 24) to explain experiential education.
In order to establish a common understanding, this thesis categorizes experiential education opportunities according to what Roberts (2016) discussed as an “ecosystem” (p. 46) or framework. Roberts (2016) argues that all experiential education in higher education can be sorted into one of “four core methodologies” (p. 46). Roberts’ (2016) four core methodologies are (a) community-based learning, (b) integrative learning, (c) project-based learning, and (d) active learning.

In Roberts’ (2016) framework, community-based learning includes community service projects and study abroad programs. Additionally, any learning that is tied to a specific location would fit within the community-based learning category.

Integrative learning is the second category in Roberts’ (2016) framework. Internships and any work-integrated learning would fit into the integrative learning category in Roberts’ framework. This type of learning experience is common in higher education. Students studying teaching are required to complete teaching practicums where they practice teaching in the classroom and nursing students participate in clinicals where they receive training in on-the-job settings. Business students commonly complete internships over the summer where they apply what they have learned in coursework to work experience in their desired industry.

The third category in Roberts’ (2016) framework is project-based learning. Roberts included learning described as inquiry-based, problem-based, and discovery-based in his project-based learning category. The terms commonly used vary across disciplines, but the basic process is similar. Any planned learning experience where students are presented open-ended or “messy” problems to work to create solutions for can be included in project-based learning (Roberts, 2016). The commonly offered capstone courses in the culminating year of an undergraduate’s education will often fit in the category of project-based learning.
Active learning is the fourth category in Roberts’ (2016) experiential learning framework. Active learning can include game-based learning, collaborative learning, and case studies. Active learning is a widely used term that is not strictly defined in the literature. Active learning employs “higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. iii). Active learning requires more than passively listening and taking notes in class, it has been shown to increase retention and motivate critical thinking (Bowen, 2012).

Experiential education opportunities are easily recognizable as many of what Kuh refers to as high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008); Kuh’s research indicates that participating in high-impact practices increases student engagement and student graduation rates, and he recommended that students participate in at least two such activities. Kuh’s high-impact practices included first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects (Kuh, 2008).

Many of these high-impact practices fit nicely into the definition of experiential education and can be easily categorized into Roberts’ (2016) framework. Collaborative projects fit into Roberts’ active learning category. Diversity/global learning and community-based learning fit well into his community-based learning category. Internships also flow nicely into the integrative learning category of Roberts’ framework; most of Kuh’s high-impact practices that lead to student engagement and success are a form of experiential education.

There are many compelling requests to incorporate experiential education into the experience of higher education. Bass (2012) discussed the need for higher education to evaluate
and change the process of higher education. Bass highlighted the value added by utilizing high impact practices and experiential curriculum in higher education.

Experiential education can provide students with the skills that employers are looking for (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Many of the in-demand skills for today’s workforce can be taught through experiential education (Eyler, 2009). Experiential education can lead to “a deeper understanding of subject matter than is possible through classroom study alone” and help students expand their “capacity for critical thinking and application of knowledge in complex or ambiguous situations,” all while enhancing a student’s “ability to engage in lifelong learning, including learning in the workplace” (Eyler, 2009, p. 26).

**Experiential Education in the Online Learning Environment**

While there is plenty of published literature on experiential education for traditional in-person education, there is not as much literature investigating and defining experiential education in the online learning environment (Waldner et al., 2012). While a search in the ERIC database with an extensive search string to include experiential education and online learning resulted in some 2,000 hits, a deeper review of these articles quickly excluded most of the articles since they were either false hits or discussed several closely related areas including research in general, MOOCS, use of virtual reality in education, or professional development.

Upon closer scrutiny of the study abstracts, and after removing articles that discussed graduate school or K–12, the list of 2,000 search hits was narrowed down to 111. Of these 111 studies, there were a handful of individual case studies that explored the experiential education in one specific setting (Cole et al., 2019; Jurewitsch, 2012). Cole et al. (2019) conducted a mixed methods study of an online general education course that included purposefully designed
experiential learning activities. Students were found to have significant increases in their knowledge which students attributed to the lab (or experiential learning) assignments.

Problem-based learning (PBL) had the most representation in the literature. Gibbings et al. (2015) explored delivering problem-based learning (PBL), which is one of Roberts’ (2016) categories of experiential education, in an online university course. The authors proposed that PBL promotes a level of learning and skill acquisition that is needed to be successful in today’s work environment and are often referred to as 21st-century skills. Blackburn (2015) conducted a cross-case analysis of problem-based learning (PBL), purposefully designed experiential activities in online university level courses which provided evidence that students' higher order thinking and problem-solving skills are enhanced through the use of PBL-designed activities. Nordin et al. (2016) explored student attitude and engagement of PBL instruction in the online environment and found that student attitudes changed after experiential learning. Chagas et al. (2012) explored student regulation with online PBL-designed instruction and found student engagement sustained through the end of the course. Barber and King (2016) explored some of the pedagogical changes required, such as how to create community online through utilization of teamwork, to deliver PBL instruction effectively in the online environment.

In the extensive literature search, a few studies were located that explore the implementation of community-based learning (CBL) in the online environment (France-Harris et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2015). CBL is one of the four categories in Roberts’ (2016) experiential education definition. Lee et al. (2015) discussed the pros and cons of two examples of CBL activities that were designed and implemented in their online course. France-Harris et al. (2019) discussed one online course with CBL and found students described their experiences as “enlightening” and “educationally satisfying” (p. 35).
Current literature provides very little insight into purposefully designed experiential learning activities for the online learning environment. The purpose of this study is to discuss and explore experiential education in the online learning environment. This study had two primary goals: the first goal of the study is to understand what types of experiential education activities instructional designers and online instructors choose to design and include in the online courses they design and the motivation behind their design; the second goal of the study is to explore the perceived benefits and challenges of experiential education activities.
CHAPTER 3

Method

This research was designed as a descriptive case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with the aim of understanding the beliefs and choices that instructional designers make regarding experiential education when designing for online courses. The descriptive case study method was utilized since there is little information available about intentional experiential learning instructional design methods in the online learning environment. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described a case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 37). The bounded system for this case study was a single, large, private university’s online instructional designers and online instructors. The context, participants and data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations of this descriptive case study are discussed.

Context

This research study was conducted at a large private university in the western United States that primarily focuses on undergraduate student education. Most students that attend this university are traditional college students, gaining entrance immediately out of high school and completing the majority of their courses in-person and on campus. Completely online degree programs are not offered at this university at this time. There is a 30-credit hour residency requirement in place for the undergraduate students. There is a dedicated unit for designing, developing, and supporting online courses at the university.

There were 688 sections of 142 unique online course options (J. Hemingway, personal communication, April 6, 2020) available for students, and the online course offerings are expanding every year. In the last few years, the president of this university has proposed initiatives to expand both the online course offerings available for the undergraduate students, as
well as to focus on experiential learning on the campus (Worthen, 2016). There are currently six full-time instructional designers for online course development, the online courses are offered based on the semester schedule of the university, and the delivery of these courses can be offered 100% online or in some combination of an online and in-person blend.

**Participants and Data Collection**

Due to the low number of full-time instructional designers available, all of them were invited to participate in this study. They were invited to participate in one 45–60-minute, semi-structured interview. These interview questions guided the interview, but additional questions were asked as needed to capture more breadth or depth (see Appendix A). Only five instructional designers consented to be interviewed. Three of the instructional designers interviewed were female, and two were male. Due to the accessibility of only five instructional designers for interviews, three interviews were conducted with online instructors who have experience working with online instructional designers in designing and teaching online courses. One of the online instructional designers interviewed was female and two were male.

The online instructional designers interviewed had a range of two to six years of experience as online instructional designers in higher education. One designer had additional corporate and teaching experience, and another designer had several years of experience as a college professor prior to pivoting into instructional design. The online instructors interviewed have between two and five years of experience as online instructors in the higher education. All the online instructors had at least 10 years of experience as professors in higher education.

All interviews were conducted by the primary investigator of the study. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed.
Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) provided the researcher the opportunity to explore the interviewee’s perception of experiential education and capture experiential learning activities they have designed for the online learning environment and explore the reasons for their decisions.

The primary researcher coded the transcriptions using a process of “open coding” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 204) to sort and identify common themes and categories. The construction of categories was an ongoing process throughout the review of the interview transcripts. The codebook was developed as the coding took place, using a constructivist approach in identifying and categorizing how the interviewees, five instructional designers and three online instructors, “construct knowledge or make meaning” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 207–208).

Following the completion of the open coding of the interviews, the common themes and categories identified were sorted, through several iterations, to distill the information into what Marshall and Rossman (2014) refer to as “buckets or baskets” (p. 224). The coded transcriptions were reviewed multiple times as themes were developed. As a theme emerged, a review took place to ensure that all references to the theme were captured along with the theme.

Using the constant comparative process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) the transcriptions were reviewed until saturation of information was reached, which was the point when no new meaning was being discovered through the review of the collected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). At this point, moved to deductive mode to create meaning through a constructivist approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). And then I worked to organize and present the findings of the research.
Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through “member checking” (Williams, 2018, para. 9). After the interviews are conducted and transcribed, the transcription of each interview was verified by each interviewee for trustworthiness. In an additional effort to establish credibility, an independent researcher conducted “peer debriefing” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237) and reviewed the transcripts and coding for consistency and thoroughness and all of their suggestions were incorporated.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the scope of the study, as there were a small number of participants. Another limitation was that the interviews were all conducted with instructional designers and online instructors at one university, thus not gaining a broad view. There is also a lack of triangulation due to the small sample size.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

This case study utilized open-ended interviews of online instructional designers and online instructors to examine the following questions:

1. What types of experiential education activities do online instructional designers (or online instructors) choose to include in the online courses they design?

2. Why do online instructional designers (or online instructors) choose to include these experiential education activities in the online course design?

3. What do the online instructional designers (or online instructors) perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the various experiential education activities?

The findings from the interviews have been organized to respond to the three research questions.

Types of Experiential Education Activities Included

The first research question asked what types of experiential education activities are included in designed online courses. The interviewees’ responses to this question have been categorized into the definition of experiential learning and examples of experiential learning designed for the online environment.

Each interviewee was asked to provide their definition of experiential learning. All responses in some way referred to learning as an experience. Two themes emerged in the definitions provided by the interviewees: one theme is that experiential learning enhances the learning experience; a second theme is the type of problems experiential learning utilizes.

Regarding enhancing the learning experience, one instructional designer referred to experiential learning as “authentic learning experiences.” Another instructional designer said,
“There are elements that can go into a course that create an experience that enhances learning that’s relevant to the students’ lives.” Yet another designer commented that “we can design experiences that can enhance learning.”

A second theme that emerged was the type of problems designed into experiential learning. Instructional designers and online instructors described three types of learning experiences: (a) real world and messy problems; (b) simulations; and (c) applications. One definition of experiential learning provided by a designer was learning as “giving students experiences that allow them to apply the concepts and knowledge that they’re getting in situations that are as close as possible to the kind of real world where they’re going to use it in their lives.” The idea of experiencing messy problems and real-world problems was included in the responses of two online instructors. One instructor commented, “It’s actually forcing them to be a participant in the process, rather than just a bucket that’s receiving information.”

One online instructor discussed experiential learning as an application of learning. The instructor defined experiential learning as “putting into practice, maybe some theories or fundamentals of their learning, but actually doing it in real world messy problems.”

The learning experiences of real world and messy problems, simulations, and applications are all learning experiences where students are forced to interact with their learning, and it is “not like textbook learning at all,” as one instructional designer phrased it.

**Examples of Designed Online Experiential Learning**

The experiential learning activity design examples that were designed by the instructional designers and online instructors have been organized into three categories: virtual learning activities, remote guided learning activities, and other experiential learning activities.
**Virtual Learning Activities**

The virtual tour type of experiential learning activities discussed were quite extensive. The tours are grouped into four groups, including virtual tours, computer simulations, virtual demonstrations, and virtual interviews.

The virtual tour activities designed included 3D video or virtual tours of historic buildings, such as the Taj Mahal or the Kremlin, for the purpose of studying architecture. Virtual gallery walks of museums, such as Paris museums, were designed to study humanities. Computer simulation activities for the online environment included virtual rock labs for biology classes, as well as a 3D viewer of rocks, that also provided characteristics of the rocks, provided another virtual lab type of experience. For planetary science courses, students were provided a computer model of a planetary system that provided additional planetary information. For an anthropology lesson, students were provided virtual skulls for a virtual lab. For a class teaching socio-economic determinants of health, a virtual role play scenario was set up for students to explore the impacts of different situations.

Virtual cooking demonstrations were used in multiple classes to teach various lessons. One virtual cooking class was used to demonstrate outdoor cooking; students would follow along with the demo, watch the cooking demonstration, and then provide a critique. The students would also create and record their own cooking demonstration. Another virtual cooking demonstration was utilized to teach an exercise science lesson with a desired learning outcome of students learning to prepare and eat healthy cancer fighting foods; the students would search for recipes that used healthy ingredients and then create virtual cooking classes.
The virtual interview was utilized in a few different courses. One expert was able to present from a different country providing cultural insights about bringing therapy practices into a different country.

**Remote Guided Learning Activities**

Another category of experiential learning experiences designed for the online environment discussed included remote guided activities for experiential learning that instructional designers and online instructors discussed included lab experiments, individual budgeting learning activities, cooking classes, and other outdoor activities. For a biology class, students conducted their own experiment in their living room through a guided experience. Students conducted a potato decay experiment on their own and photographed and video recorded the different aspects of decay.

Another remote guided experiment discussed was a budgeting activity where students had to track their expenses. In another class, students did their own outdoor cooking in their own space and guidance was provided virtually. A final outdoor set of outdoor experiences was arranged for students, and they received virtual remote guidance throughout their tour of various locations.

**Other Experiential Learning Activities**

The third category of online experiential activities described by the instructional designers and online instructors is a miscellaneous group of activities. This random group of activities included group work, real world analysis, reflection activities, and the most frequently discussed activity was the case study.

Group work activities were used in one course to have students come together and learn and prepare material together. The student groups would then prepare a video to teach the
remainder of the class. Another designed learning activity was a real-world analysis of social media usage that students then shared through discussion boards. Reflection and synthesis of learning activities was another common activity discussed.

Case studies were mentioned multiple times as experiential learning activities designed for the online environment. Case studies were used to have students present and then defend their ideas. In a business course, case studies were used to have students apply learning and explore situations where they could explore the implications of applications of recently acquired knowledge. Another case study involved role plays for students to explore public health issues. Another case study had students explore ethical decision making through a decision tree and then record, share, and defend their decision-making logic.

**Experiential Education Activity Design Choices**

The second research question addressed the question why online designers and instructors chose to include experiential education activities in their online course design. The interviewees’ responses to this question have been categorized into the value of experiential learning and additional insights.

**Value of Experiential Learning**

In response to being asked how they valued experiential learning all respondents expressed that experiential learning was valued. They described the value of experiential learning using words and phrases such as “high,” “huge,” “crucial,” “the best way,” and “the most powerful type.” Several interviewees commented on the ability of experiential learning to increase student engagement and to build community.

One instructional designer expounded on the value of experiential learning and said, “I think there has to be some key moments that are designed into the course where experiential
learning is kind of front and center. And those are the experiences that are (remembered) down the road.” A different instructional designer expressed a similar idea that “experiential learning is crucial for deep processing.”

One of the online instructors views the value of experiential learning at a high level. They said, “I believe in doing experiences to learn. I don’t think there’s any better way, so I’m totally committed to that kind of learning and then making that work online.” The instructional designers and online instructors interviewed all placed a high value on experiential learning. Most of them also referenced the applications of solving real world or messy problems; as one instructional designer said, “It just allows them (students) to go deeper.”

**Insights**

The primary researcher identified several insights from the interviews conducted with instructional designers and online instructors. These insights have been grouped by the primary researcher into three categories: coaching, untapped potential, and observations.

**Coaching.** Multiple instructional designers related having conversations with the course instructor to encourage or guide the instructor through the process of developing and adding experiential learning activities into their course.

One instructional designer related a conversation with an instructor,

How do you teach that in the class? What makes you a good teacher? Because let’s incorporate that. . . . How do you explain this? What activities do you do already? Or let’s come up with some activities, but the whole goal is to help students be able to achieve those objectives.

The instructional designer continued, “We just tried to tease that out.”
Another instructional designer explained their coaching type of conversation with the instructor while designing a foreign language course. The course instructor related how they would have students walk through a gallery, look at art, and then describe it using the language the students are learning, and the instructor commented that they can’t replicate that activity online. This is the point in the conversation where the instructional designer became a coach, and then asked the instructor if they realized how many museums have virtual tours available. The instructional designer continued informing the instructor that students can actually go to a museum in Paris, or Berlin, or Frankfurt, or wherever you want them to go. They have access to so much more than a local museum when you move to the virtual tour.

One instructional designer discussed assessing the time investment when working with faculty regarding designing experiential learning for an online course. Did the designer have the time to do a “sales pitch to sell them [instructor] on it?” If the instructor “is on board with it and willing to explore it—it’s a lot easier. But if they’re not, then it becomes a sales pitch and it’s harder to get it going.” The designer continued, “If they do that kind of stuff [experiential learning activities] in the classroom, then it’s easier to sell them on it.”

Yet another instructional designer discussed a coaching-type conversation with one of the instructors they were designing for. Because this instructional designer believes that experiential learning activities enhance student engagement and “they [students] have to have some real-world experience that connects them to the content.” So before beginning the design work on any course, the instructional designer meets with the instructor and asks them, “What makes your class so unique? Why should I take your class? What is it about it that makes students tell their friends you’ve got to take this class? And if they can’t come up with anything, then I say my job
is to help them come up with something so that your students will say, ‘Wow, I’ve got to take that class.’”

**Untapped Potential.** The second category of insights was informed by multiple comments from both instructional designers and online instructors that there is untapped potential in regard to designing experiential learning activities for the online learning environment. One instructor said, “Obviously the pandemic has made us think a lot more openly—I think about Zooming, for instance, and interacting in those ways, and I think we still probably haven’t taken full advantage of what that might mean for us.” This instructor continued, “I think that I’m still looking for more ways to have experiences online. I’m anxious to figure more things out. I think this makes it richer for students.”

Another online instructor discussed the untapped potential of the online learning environment, “I think that the more tools that are introduced and kind of proposed to the faculty—all of a sudden that kind of triggers new ideas for the faculty.” This online instructor further expounded on the idea of untapped potential by saying, “That’s kind of my mindset. That’s interesting that that’s [new tool] available now. Could I do something different, that I couldn’t do before?”

**Observations.** The third category of insights the primary researcher categorized as observations. These observations included a perspective change, an increased comfort with the online environment, and opportunity to have online instruction inform in-person teaching.

The observation that working to develop experiential learning opportunities in the online learning environment led to a perspective change was characterized by one instructor who said, “I definitely need to be more thoughtful about it [developing experiential learning opportunities in the online environment].” They continued, “I think rather than seeing it as a kind of
limitation—really seeing it as an opportunity and start to really think it through.” The paradigm shift occurred as the instructor was trying to recreate an in-classroom experience where they brought in guest lecturers. Instead of being frustrated, turning it into an opportunity to literally bring anybody from anywhere into the classroom through a virtual lecture.

A second observation regarding increased comfort with the online environment came from an online instructor who related how the first time they provided an experiential project online through Zoom, that the instructor received complaints from students. Now, the instructor thinks that “I think they wouldn’t even think twice about having to do a project together, whereas a few years ago it was daunting to them—they were frustrated with things like that.” The pandemic forced students and instructors through the uncomfortable learning curve of working together online, and now everybody is much more comfortable.

The third, and final, observation came from an instructor discussing what they learned from their students while teaching online. During a synchronous portion of an online class, the instructor monitored student progress through projects utilizing the poll option in Zoom. The instructor observed that it took longer than the instructor anticipated for students to complete some work together. This observation led to a different understanding about the scope and volume of work covered in the course. Through these observations of their online course, using tools available in the online environment, the instructor determined their course was covering too much material and the instructor subsequently reworked their course and streamlined content in an attempt to have an appropriate scope for the course.

**Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Experiential Education Activities**

The third research question asked online designers and instructors about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of various experiential education activities. The interviewees’
responses to this question have been categorized into the benefits and challenges of experiential education activities.

**Benefits of Online Experiential Learning**

A few themes emerged regarding the benefits of experiential learning. One theme revolved around the student experience and the other theme embraced the benefits of online learning. Additionally, some insight emerged outlining benefits to experiential learning opportunities that became available by moving into the online environment.

**Enhanced Student Experience.** Interviewees identified the benefits of online experiential learning for the student experience. Enhanced student experiences due to experiential learning identified included engagement, deeper learning, and student application of problem solving.

Benefits discussed regarding the student experience include increased student engagement, deeper learning, and improved student application of knowledge. One online instructor described the increased student engagement through the feedback received “is they are actually learning it as much or more in the online context because instead of three or four students getting the opportunity to comment on something, every single student is getting the opportunity to give feedback to each other. In some ways, I think it’s much more accountability for engagement.”

One of the instructional designers described a high level of student engagement with a learning activity that was a budgeting lesson. The students were completely engaged due to the nature of the activity, and they expressed disbelief at their own behavior after recording their personal expenditures. The instructional designer said, “They could not believe that they did it,”
and that the “student course evaluations just went sky high because everything that we did in that
class related to their very own life.”

**Enhanced Life Experience.** Deeper learning as a benefit of experiential learning was
expressed by a few instructional designers and online instructors. As one instructional designer
stated, “Let’s design some experiences that are going to help those things stick.” Another
instructional designer talked about the benefit of experiential learning is that it brings “challenge,
choice, collaboration, relevance, interest, and curiosity—which are all intrinsic motivators.”

Discussing deeper learning through online experiential learning, one instructional
designer made the observation that “In some ways, I think they’re learning it better because
there’s so much guidance and coaching along the way that they don’t necessarily get when
they’re in the . . . lab by themselves.”

Another benefit of experiential learning that was identified is problem-solving. Problem
solving is an in-demand skill for the 21st-century workforce. One instructional designer discussed
the ability “for students to see the relevance of (experiential learning activities)” and the ability
to “prepare students for real world experiences.”

One online instructor discussed the value of applying learning to real world situations.
With the application and exposure to case studies that apply the lessons just taught, students start
to see the benefits. “They start to realize this actually aligns with something—I can see how this
would broaden my (student’s) mind.”

**Online Benefits.** Regarding benefits of experiential learning in the online environment,
there were several observations. Many of these benefits are identified as benefits in the online
learning environment, but some particular benefits were identified specific to experiential
learning. Some additional benefits for students observed included increased student access and
flexibility, which are well known benefits of online educational opportunities. Students can also benefit from the flexibility and convenience of online access to education.

Benefits of moving experiential learning online can be summarized with the statement, “The world is our campus” (Fors, 2004). One instructional designer discussed the ability to improve a simulated experiential learning experience by taking it out of the classroom and putting it in the online environment. While designing learning activities for a humanities class, rather than being limited by the on-campus museum for a gallery, the instructional designer can now draw from museums across the globe. A learning activity to apply what students have learned about architecture may have been looking at pictures or touring a local museum. Now many museums have virtual tours available, leading to some high-quality virtual tours affording students the opportunity to explore the architecture of many different buildings in many different countries, all from their laptop.

Another example of how moving experiential learning activities online can expand the options was discussed by an online instructor who organizes lecture series, where they bring in professionals to talk about their experiences in industry. Rather than being limited to professionals that they can physically bring into the classroom, in the online environment, they can bring guest lecturers in from across the globe. One of the side benefits noted is that they can bring in a more diverse lecture series panel, and really bring the world to the student. While the opportunity to bring in guest lecturers from around the globe could enhance the diversity of thought in the classroom, this activity does not necessarily fit with the definition of experiential learning. This is an example of where improvements to understanding experiential learning can be made so instructors can be more effective using it in their online classes.
Challenges of Online Experiential Learning

The challenges identified by the interviewees of providing experiential learning in the online environment coalesced around three different actors involved in experiential learning: instructional designers, online instructors, and students.

Challenges for Instructional Designers. The challenges facing instructional designers designing experiential learning for the online environment include resources and design challenges. One of the main resource challenges for designing experiential learning that instructional designers face is expense. One instructional designer’s attempts to mitigate the expense challenge by utilizing as many existing products as possible. While that is not possible in all situations, this designer has been able to leverage existing products rather than building every project from scratch.

Another challenge facing instructional designers is lack of time. The designer does not struggle with coming up with ideas, the struggle is in having time to develop those ideas.

None of the instructional designers interviewed felt that they have a challenge of coming up with ideas. But coming up with ideas that are feasible within the time and financial constraints does require some creativity.

Some instructional designers discussed the challenge of convincing online instructors that it is possible to incorporate experiential learning activities into their courses, and that there can be resistance on the part of the online instructor that the instructional designer is working with. Two instructional designers discussed the challenge of trying to coach an instructor into designing experiential learning for the online environment. It appears that it can take some time for new online instructors to realize that they can incorporate some experiential learning into
their online courses. One instructional designer said that “if they do that kind of stuff in the classroom, then it's easier to sell them on it.”

**Challenges for Online Instructors.** Two instructors specifically referenced the challenge of imagining how to design experiential learning in the online environment. One instructor said, “the biggest challenge for me has just been imagining the new ways to be able to replicate what you might get in the classroom.” A different instructor said,

I think a lot of it’s just limitations in the mindset of the professors. It’s just something we don’t think a lot about . . . We know we do it in real life in person, but when it comes to online, I think we kind of have this assumption that a lot of these things wouldn’t work well. But the more I experiment with the online approaches to some of these things, it seems to work just as well. And so I think that’s just something that professors need to practice more.

In addition to the challenge of just imagining it, a few challenges for instructors trying to design experiential learning into their course include measurement challenges and student guidance. An example of an easy measurement of a student’s learning is an easy-to-grade exam. To evaluate an experiential learning experience, you are more likely trying to measure a process, rather than an input. And this type of measurement is more complex and time consuming.

Another challenge for an instructor in providing online experiential learning is guiding a student through an experience. One instructor discussed the challenge of designing an experiential learning activity for a student that leads to the desired learning outcomes by referencing their own experience as a student, “Sometimes I think the experience they (instructor) want me to have is not what I am having.” The same instructor further expounded on the challenges of guiding a student through online experiential learning by explaining that the
student is, “in some ways, defining what it is that they’re learning to which I think is kind of an advanced concept.”

**Challenges for Students.** Students also have some potential challenges with experiential learning. In addition to the instructor’s personal insight from the student perspective of the experience not necessarily aligning with the goal of the instructor, students may feel frustrated and challenged. When challenged, some students submit their complaints through course surveys. One instructional designer explains student behavior by saying, “some students are going to complain because students learn best when they’re forced out of their comfort zone, and they choose to engage in the struggle.” The instructional designer continued, “but a really good course is going to push them, and you will get some complaints any time you push students.”
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how online instructional designers and online instructors think about and design experiential education in the online learning environment. All the instructional designers and online instructors interviewed have designed experiential learning activities for their online courses.

Types of Experiential Education Activities Included

Every instructional designer and online instructor interviewed was asked to provide their definition of experiential learning and some examples of online experiential learning activities they have designed.

Definition of Experiential Learning

While every interviewee provided a definition, the definitions were centered around two themes. The first theme was that experiential learning enhances the learning experience, and the second theme discussed the type of problems experiential learning utilizes. Providing a solid, workable definition of experiential learning can be challenging.

Luckmann (1996), editor of the *Journal of Experiential Education*, provided two different definitions of experiential education. The first definition is the AEE-approved definition: “Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences” (p. 7). A second, more succinct definition that Luckmann provided was that experiential education is “learning through reflection on doing” (p. 24).
While the designers and instructors provided great definitions, none of them mentioned the reflection component of any of the four step models, which include (a) action, (b) reflection, (c) abstraction, and (d) application (Hajshirmohammadi, 2017; Stehno, 1986).

The definitions provided by the interviewees fit more closely with Luckmann’s (1996) more concise definition that experiential education is “learning through reflection on doing” (p. 24). However, the online instructional designers and instructors shortened the definition further, closer to experiential education is “learning through doing,” without mentioning a purposefully designed reflection portion of the learning process. While many examples of designed experiential learning activities included a reflection portion, reflection was noticeably absent from their definitions.

**Examples of Designed Online Experiential Learning**

The interviewees, both online instructional designers and online instructors, discussed many different experiential learning activities that they have designed into their courses. These examples included virtual activities, remote/guided activities, and other activities. The opportunity clearly exists to design online experiential education, the challenges instructional designers and online instructors are facing to include experiential learning in their online courses are ideas, time, and resources.

While there were some terrific examples of online experiential learning activities provided, some of the learning activities discussed by the interviewees, at least on the surface, did not appear to fit the definition of experiential learning activities. Reviewing Roberts’ (2016) framework, the described four core methodologies of experiential learning activities: (a) community-based learning; (b) integrative learning; (c) project-based learning; and (d) active learning. The examples of designed experiential online learning activities shared by the
interviewees primarily fell into Roberts’ (2016) active learning category. Notably absent were any community-based learning or integrative learning experiences. A few examples were shared that could fit in the project-based learning category, but most designed learning activities shared fit into the active learning category.

There were a few activities shared by instructional designers and online instructors that did not appear to fit well into any of Roberts’ (2016) four categories. One instructor discussed having guest lecturers from around the globe utilizing a Zoom-type technology. While this is a great opportunity to bring in diverse voices and guests, I would not necessarily categorize it as experiential learning.

Case studies were mentioned a few times as designed online experiential learning activities. While the case study model of teaching is more interactive, it does not necessarily meet the definition of experiential learning. Not all case studies would not fit into Roberts’ (2016) experiential learning activity framework. An example of a case study that could fit into Roberts’ experiential learning activity framework would be a real and current case study. For example, bringing in an expert to discuss a situation that is currently unfolding and asking the students to brainstorm and present possible solutions could fit into Roberts’ framework.

A few designed learning activities revolved around virtual labs. One of the designed virtual labs discussed by an online instructional designer was creating a virtual geology lab, where students were able to interact and experiment in the rock identification process. This type of virtual lab activity is a good representation of designed online experiential learning activities which fit into Roberts’ (2016) active learning category.

While the majority of the designed online experiential learning activities mentioned by interviewees could be categorized and fit into Roberts’ (2016) experiential learning framework,
there were several activities mentioned that do not seem to strictly qualify as an experiential learning activity.

Based on the responses by this small sample of online instructional designers and online instructors, there is an opportunity to educate online instructional designers and instructors regarding the definition of experiential learning and what truly qualifies as an experiential learning activity.

**Experiential Education Activity Design Choices**

Every online instructional designer and online instructor interviewed was asked how they value experiential learning. In addition to how they value experiential learning, there were some design process insights gleaned from their responses.

**Value of Experiential Learning**

All the online instructional designers and instructors interviewed expressed that they placed a high value on experiential learning. While value was assigned as high, it was an interesting observation that there were some challenges in providing a definition and providing examples that aligned with the definition.

**Insights**

Three insights that emerged from the interviewees’ responses can be categorized as coaching, untapped potential, or observations.

**Coaching.** Online instructional designers face a few decisions while working with the online instructors in the design process. One instructional designer said that when it comes to designing experiential learning into a course, they first decide whether or not they have time to have a coaching-type conversation with an online instructor. If they do not have time, designing experiential learning into a course may be skipped due to time constraints. If they decide they
have time, the instructional designer then invests their time into a coaching-type conversation to help the online instructors cultivate ideas of course appropriate experiential learning activities that the online environment offers. Both online instructional designers and online instructors have seen instances where the online environment actually enhances the opportunity for experiential learning activities.

Online instructional designers could benefit from more resources, including time and professional development. If an instructional designer is operating under time constraints that preclude the coaching-type conversation mentioned, then they clearly need more time to develop courses in order to provide rich experiential learning activities in their courses.

**Untapped Potential.** The concept that there is untapped potential in designing experiential learning activities in the online environment was explicitly discussed by a few online instructors. Their experience in designing for the online environment is showing them that there is a lot of potential to expand and deepen the experiential learning in the courses they teach. One of the most compelling things an online instructor said about untapped potential is, “I think that I’m still looking for more ways to have experiences online. I’m anxious to figure more things out. I think this makes it richer for students.” Additionally, every new technological tool developed potentially provides a newly developed experiential education opportunity.

**Other Observations.** Some additional observations included perspective change, increased comfort with the online environment, and the opportunity to have online teaching inform in person teaching. With experience in designing for the online environment, some online instructional designers and online instructors experienced a paradigm shift. The paradigm shift was a change in perspective that designing for experiential learning in the online environment was no longer a restriction, but rather an opportunity to bring more of the world to the student.
With the rapid shift to the online environment precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the comfort level of instructor and student with the online environment has increased. Due to the increased comfort level with online collaboration, some instructors interviewed are more willing to assign students to group work in online courses. Since implementing student collaboration is an important part of expanding experiential learning opportunities, some barriers have been removed making it easier to design experiential education into online courses.

A final observation was that instructors can learn more about their students through utilizing tools available through online instruction. Utilizing these tools and learning about the learning speed of their students has been used by one instructor to inform their in-person teaching. Understanding how long it takes students to complete learning activities is valuable information in determining the appropriate scope for a course. Used creatively and effectively, online tools can help inform the speed and depth of student learning.

**Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Experiential Education Activities**

Every instructional designer and online instructor interviewed was asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of online experiential education activities.

**Benefits**

The benefits of experiential learning are well documented (Burch et al., 2019) and many of the documented benefits were mentioned by the interviewees, including increased student engagement, deeper learning, and improved application of knowledge. Online instructional designers and online instructors repeatedly described deeper learning and increased student engagement due to their designed experiential activities. With the right approach, online courses can be designed to enhance the experiential learning beyond what can be afforded in the classroom.
Along with the benefits for students, moving to the online environment, in the words of one online instructor, “really opens up the world.” One experiential activity example that “opened up the world” was an activity that had been a tour of a local museum and designing that activity for the online environment became a virtual tour of a famous art museum.

Rather than viewing the online environment as a limitation for designing experiential education, recognize an opportunity to really embrace and explore the expanded opportunities that the online environment provides. As new technology and tools become available, these tools may provide an opportunity to enhance and expand the online teaching environment.

**Challenges**

Instructor insights included the need to experiment and practice with designing experiential learning for the online environment. As one online instructor expressed, “We know we do it in real life in person, but when it comes to online, I think we kind of have this assumption that a lot of these things wouldn’t work well. But the more I experiment with the online approaches to some of these things, it seems to work just as well. And so I think that’s just something that professors need to practice more [emphasis added].”

**Implications for Future Research**

Additional research exploring the experience of designing experiential education for the online environment could provide more examples for online instructional designers and online instructors. Good examples may be effective in inspiring the creation of additional online experiential education. Additional research exploring the student experience with online experiential education could provide additional insight into how the student learning experience can be enhanced.
Implications for Practitioners

Online instructional designers may benefit from knowing that it can be beneficial to take a coaching type of approach when working with online instructors to design experiential education for the online environment. Both online instructional designers and online instructors may benefit from examples of online experiential education. The idea that new tools provide new opportunities for designing experiential education activities may prompt exploration and aid in the realization that there is untapped potential for designing experiential education for the online environment.

Conclusion

Higher education has started to do more than what is known as the traditional classroom, and online education has experienced a rapid explosion. Experiential learning is another growing trend in higher education (Kolb, 2015; Roberts, 2016), since experiential education helps prepare students for the 21st-century workplace (Eyler, 2009). With more students demanding online education, it is important to have experiential learning be a part of that online education, so that students have the best preparation possible for the 21st-century workplace they are entering (Kuh, 2008; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Online instructional designers have the benefit of exposure to many courses and disciplines. The online instructional designer’s experience can be leveraged to coach the online instructors through the process of adding experiential education to their courses. Online instructional designers could benefit from more resources, both professional development resources to enhance their understanding of experiential education and expose them to more examples of designed experiential learning activities, as well as the necessary time to be able to
always have the coaching conversation that may be required to enlist the support of online instructors in designing experiential learning activities.

Online instructors seeking to enhance their courses through the addition of experiential learning feel they have just scratched the surface and every new technology brings the potential of new activities. Together, online instructional designers and online instructors are creatively working to bring experiential learning into the online environment and bringing the world to their students through online education. Transforming online education through the addition of experiential learning activities is a worthy pursuit and this case study indicates that there is opportunity for improvement.
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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

To: [Recipient]

From: [Name], [Title]

Date: [Date]

Title: [Title]

Brigham Young University's IRB has approved the research study referenced in the subject heading as exempt level categories 1 and 2. These categories do not require an annual continuing review. Each year near the anniversary of the approval date, you will receive an email reminding you of your obligations as a researcher and to check on the status of the study. You will receive this email each year until you close the study.

The study is approved as of [Date]. Please reference your assigned IRB identification number in any correspondence with the IRB.

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

1. A copy of the approved informed consent statement can be found in IRIS. No other consent statement should be used. Each research subject must be provided with a copy of a way to access the consent statement.
2. Any modifications to the approved protocol must be submitted, reviewed, and approved by the IRB before modifications are incorporated in the study.
3. All recruiting tools must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to use.
4. Instructions to access approved documents, submit modifications, report adverse events, can be found on the IRB website, IRIS guide: [Link].
5. All no-serious unanticipated problems should be reported to the IRB within 2 weeks of the first awareness of the problem. Prompt reporting is important, as unanticipated problems often require some modification of study procedures, protocols, and/or informed consent processes. Such modifications require the review and approval of the IRB. Please refer to the IRB website for more information.
APPENDIX B

Instruments

Semi-Structured Interview for Instructional Designers

1. How do you define experiential learning?

2. Can you share some examples of experiential learning activities that you have designed for the online learning environment?
   
a. How would you categorize these experiential learning activities?
      i. Project-based
      ii. Active learning
      iii. Community based learning
      iv. Integrative learning

3. Based on your experience, what are some of the challenges of experiential education in the online learning environment?

4. Based on your experience, what are some of the benefits of experiential education activities in the online learning environment?

5. How would you design and implement future experiential education activities in the courses you design?

6. What value do you place on experiential education activities?

7. (For instructors only) How long have you taught online?

8. (For instructional designers only) How long have you been an online course designer?

9. (For instructional designers only) Who, of the faculty that you have worked with, do you recommend talking to about designing experiential education activities into an online course?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences with experiential learning in the online environment that I haven’t asked about?
APPENDIX C

Search String

ERIC

("Experiential Learning" OR “Experiential Education” OR "Field Experience Program*" OR "Internship Program*" OR "Job Shadowing" OR "Service Learning" OR "Cooperative Program*" OR "Place-Based Education" OR "Practicum*" OR "Problem-Based Learning" OR "Work Experience" OR “Project-Based Learning”)

AND

(“Online learning” OR “Distance education” OR “Online instruction” OR “Online education”)

AND

(outcome or data or subjects or experiment or result* or empirical or quantitative or statistic* or study or research or finding* or analys* or method or patients or participants or design or measure or “clinical trial” or random* or “controlled trial” or rct or 'clinical article'/de OR 'clinical trial'/de OR 'cohort analysis'/de OR 'controlled clinical trial'/de OR 'controlled study'/de OR 'evidence based practice'/de OR 'feasibility study'/de OR 'human experiment'/de OR 'major clinical study'/de OR 'pilot study'/de OR 'randomized controlled trial'/de)

NOT

(“Medical” OR “MOOC*” OR “Workforce” OR “Workplace” OR “Blended” OR “Preservice” OR “Preservice” OR “Student Teacher*” OR “Career” OR “Job” OR “Editorial” OR “Mobile Technolog*” OR “Pharmacist*” OR “Pharmaceutic*” OR “Pharmaceutical*” OR “Adult learning” OR "Proceedings" OR “Elementary School” OR “K-12” OR “Secondary Students” OR “High school”)
